A Dramaturgical Approach to the Performance of Selected Choral Works of Samuel Barber

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts Degree

Faculty of Music
University of Toronto

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2019

Abstract

The purpose of the study is to demonstrate how a dramaturgical approach to the interpretation and performance of the choral music of Samuel Barber aids the conductor in developing well-informed performances of his music. Exploration of score markings, contextual information including the composer’s biography, a twentieth century overview and the musical climate of the day, and background about the texts and their writers all contribute to producing well-grounded and knowledgeable performances of Barber’s compositions Reincarnations and The Prayers of Kierkegaard. Various ideologies on what constitutes a well-informed performance and the importance of the performer are explored: Nicholas Cook’s ideas on score vs. script, Peter Kivy’s thoughts on composer intention, Richard Taruskin’s questioning of the importance of authenticity, Gary Tomlinson’s discussion on the virtues of contextual information, Clifford Geertz’s comparison of thick vs. thin descriptions, and Randall Dipert’s three-tiered system of identifying levels of intentions. Studies by Gary E. McPherson on children’s musical development and Philip Brett on sexual identity and its effect on artistic development give reason
to explore Barber’s personal life. A brief overview of how the conductor’s approach to self-expression and composer intention is also included. Barber’s childhood experiences, education, social circle, studies in Europe, and long-term relationship with Italian composer Gian Carlo Menotti all contribute to the man and composer Samuel Barber became.

Thorough exploration of the texts chosen, formal theoretical analyses, reflection on all of the contextual information and application of the conductor’s own imagination and expression then create the basis for making informed decisions on interpretive and vocal matters for the performance of Barber’s choral music. This dramaturgical process is applied to the two choral works chosen and examples of possible interpretations are presented.
Acknowledgements

I am forever grateful to my supervisor, Dr. Hilary Apfelstadt, whose encouragement and guidance have made me a better conductor. Thank you for your mentorship.

I thank the rest of my panel as well: Dr. Gillian MacKay and Dr. Jeff Packman for their time and patience in completing this project.

Thank you to Dr. Mary Rykov and Dr. Deborah Bradley for editing my work and educating me in the art of academic writing.

I want to thank my mother and father for all they have provided for me in my life. Dad, I wish you could be here to celebrate this achievement with me. Mom, thank you for all your love and for being my biggest fan.

Christopher Jarrett—I am so glad to have you in my life and I thank you for your love and support throughout this process—I couldn’t have done it without you.

I am grateful to all my friends and family for their words of encouragement. In particular I’d like to thank Dr. Dianne Walser-Jebb, Monsignor Leo Clutterbuck, Dr. Mike Brook, Dr. Erika Reiman, Father Paul McNeil, Maria Volante, and Brian Thorne for their efforts in this project.

I also want to express my gratitude to my choirs for seeing me through this long process: the St. Julia Church Choir, Chorus Hamilton, and Fanshawe Chorus London.
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Chapter 1

Introduction and Purpose of the Study

There are likely as many approaches to interpreting music in pursuit of a well-informed performance as there are scores and musicians to perform them. Creating an all-encompassing rubric for the interpretation of a musical score is impossible, however. Each performer has a different perspective on what is and is not important in score preparation for performance. Throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, experts have debated the importance of respecting appropriate performance practice, uncovering a composer’s intentions, and acknowledging personal feelings in musical performance.

Following performance practices of the time period became a high priority for performers in the middle of the twentieth century.\(^1\) It became common to recreate performances of past eras through the use of original instruments, being especially attentive to rules about dynamics and ornamentation and duplicating the size of original musical forces. Creating well-informed performances still remains elusive, however, as there are no recordings or living witnesses to validate the various choices made. Even if there were, it is not always possible to perform a work exactly as the composer had intended or to simulate the sounds he or she may have envisioned during the composition process. Yet ignoring research about performance practice and composers’ intentions allows the performer a kind of carte blanche that may create issues regarding the integrity of rendition, execution and, ultimately, intended meaning.

One of the challenges performers face is deciding how closely they should follow the score and what element of artistic freedom, if any, exists for them. Is the score a text to be followed to the letter or a script that can be modified to allow the performer to have input into the creative process? Composers such as Stravinsky, Schoenberg, and composer-conductor Leonard Bernstein believed the score gives all the necessary indications for the performer to deliver an

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effective performance. In this view, the performer is often seen as simply a conduit between the score and the audience, functioning as an unwanted middleman.²

British musicologist Nicholas Cook believes that the score is the intermediary between the composer’s thoughts and the audience experience. Cook distinguishes between score and script. Instead of treating the score as an artifact to be followed literally, he advocates that the score should be thought of as a script, in which there is room for individual interpretation where the performer becomes part of the performance equation. Score-as-script considers the performance of a musical score as a *process* rather than a *product.*³ Cook offers insight to the music process versus product debate that I find useful among the many dissenting voices.

Even if an interpreter places tremendous importance on the composer’s intentions, not all intentions are the same. Rather, scholars such as Peter Kivy have argued that there are different levels of intention, and that interpretive decisions ought to be made on their relative importance.⁴ He also asserts that performers have a moral obligation to carry out the will of the deceased, and that the score is perhaps the most important way deceased composers communicate their intentions. We must honour these important instructions,⁵ as will be detailed later in this chapter.

As a conductor, I concur with Kivy. I also believe that discerning the composer’s intentions is essential; my responsibility as conductor is to honour the composer’s voice as much as possible, based on my study of the score and knowledge of the composer’s work in general. But following a score literally can lead to lifeless and static performances as the score alone may not necessarily convey everything the composer wanted to express. To uncover the spirit of the composer’s intentions when preparing to perform a musical work, musicians must also examine the context of the work. Contextual information outside of the score can greatly aid in creating an interpretive vision that addresses historical and musical accuracy, as well as the composer’s

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⁵ Ibid.,105.
intentions, attitudes, and sentiments. Contextual information inferred with integrity can lead to well-informed performances.

I suggest that three important steps are necessary to bring a musical work to life. First, a performer must do extended research on the score, text (if present), and contextual information regarding the composer and the composition. Second, the performer must compile these findings, reflect upon them, and create an understanding of the intended meaning of the work as it illuminates personal, societal, and artistic interactions. Third, the individual performer must use all his or her musical knowledge to convey that meaning through the performance. The musical score then becomes a script that is modified with contextual information. There is no absolutely “correct” performance of a musical work, but this process allows the performer, in this case the conductor, to be as well-informed as possible in preparing a piece for performance.

Whether the composers provide directions in the score as they do in contemporary works, or whether they are less specific as in compositions of the Renaissance, Baroque or Classical periods, the music is open to interpretation by performers. Throughout the nineteenth to twenty-first centuries, composers have employed very specific markings in order to give the performer more detailed information about their intentions for performance. Exact metronome markings, specific dynamics, and descriptive tempo and expressive indications became more prevalent as time went on; however, the execution of indications such as espressivo or andante con moto, for example, may have wide variances in interpretation. The individual ideas of performers may dictate many different results in performance, as artists make subtle decisions that may affect the meaning and interpretation of the score. As well, different versions of scores may have discrepancies among them; the composers themselves often changed details during rehearsals or after pieces had already premiered. Even in recordings on which the composer is the conductor, there still may be alterations from the original markings in the score. Richard Taruskin writes that composers do not always express their intentions in the score: he gives the five contrasting recordings that Stravinsky made of The Rite of Spring as an example of the complexity of the
artist’s intention. In this case, the composer himself varied the tempo from recording to
recording.⁶

Taruskin directs the performer to “try to decide how the composer intended it to go.”⁷ It may be
impossible to know composers’ intent exactly, but many of these issues may be resolved, or at
least informed, by researching the composers themselves. Biographical information, education,
cultural and artistic environment, and other personal contextual details about the composer can
help performers discern how the composer thinks or thought. Understanding the mindset of the
composer during the creative process may give the performer a clearer path to knowing and
respecting the composer’s artistic wishes, not just in letter, but in spirit, as a musical work is
brought to life in performance. Indeed, uncovering the expressive intentions of a composer may
affect many aspects of performance. Tempo markings, dynamics, and articulations may be
interpreted more specifically with knowledge of related contextual information. For the choral
conductor, vocal colour and diction may also be affected by the interpretive conclusions which
are part of the expressive whole.

The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate how a dramaturgical approach to the interpretation
and performance of the choral music of Samuel Barber aids the conductor in developing well-
formed performances of his music. A dramaturg is a person who functions as an advisor to the
artistic team of a dramatic or operatic production. He or she is responsible for uncovering any
and all pertinent contextual information that may help to shape the artistic outcome. This
information aids the director, the writer, the set, lighting and costume designers, and may even
influence media and advertising campaigns by generating a comprehensive artistic concept.
Because theatrical and operatic productions are highly dramatic and dependent on visual
elements, the dramaturg’s influence can be readily seen.

Choral singing in the Western art tradition tends to rely much more on the aural element, that is
the sound. Perhaps because it is less overtly dramatic on the surface, conductors have not
embraced the need for dramaturgical advice. I propose that the choral world would be well

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⁷ Ibid. //7
served by a dramaturgical approach. This would involve the exploration of score markings, surveying contextual information including biographical details on the composer, an historic overview of the musical climate, and gathering background information about the texts and their writers. These elements all contribute to producing well-grounded and knowledgeable performances of choral music. In this document, I apply this approach to Barber’s compositions, *Reincarnations* and *The Prayers of Kierkegaard*. Based on all the information I have gathered about Samuel Barber, I believe this method of score preparation is consistent with his own meticulous approach to music.

In Chapter 2 the letters between Barber and his mentor and uncle, Sidney Homer, illustrate that both men believed that music had something to convey and they enjoyed performances that moved them emotionally. The letters also show that Barber wanted musicians, in particular conductors, to respect the score and pay attention to what the composer had to say. Still, he always appreciated the conductor’s creative input to bring his and others’ music to life. Barber hoped the conductor would take the time to understand the meaning of the music and communicate this to his or her musicians and audiences. In the letters between Barber and his uncle, documentation exists to this effect: “The ‘feelings’ of the composer are the first and most important thing in every musical undertaking.” Barber doesn’t try to control everything about his compositions’ performances, but there are many specific indications in his scores that help the performer to understand his intentions.

It is important to decide which pieces of information to use—and this may be different for each conductor—as each individual has different priorities or levels of intention for a performance. In this thesis, I share significant information discovered in my research and then make a case for a particular interpretation or interpretations. The search for an absolute answer is elusive, but perhaps the best way to approach the preparation and performance of music, especially choral music that employs text, is to borrow some of the processes from the theatrical or operatic world and the dramaturg.

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8 Samuel Barber, letter to Sydney Homer, January 10, 1951.
9 Sidney Homer, letter to Samuel Barber, August 17, 1936.
1.1 The nature of dramaturgy

The collection of contextual information pertinent to the artistic work to be performed is often the job of the dramaturg in a theatrical production house. While this role is specific to theater and opera, I believe it has potential and validity for choral music settings as well. In fact, I have used several aspects of dramaturgy in much of my preparation for choral rehearsals and performances throughout my career, though I never referred to it or thought of it as such. Moreover, many of the most influential conductors throughout my education have recommended this style of analysis to explore a new piece of music. I contend that a dramaturgical approach commonly used in theatre productions can productively be applied to choral music analysis and musical performance. This thesis will show how dramaturgy may be informative, illuminating, and instructive for exploring selected choral works of Samuel Barber. Priorities of choral conducting more often pertain to accuracy of pitch, clarity of ensemble, and good vocal production. Choices in vocal colour and the telling of a story do not always make it to the shortlist of priorities. This additional step of creating a dramatic event in choral music is as important to me as it seemed to be to Samuel Barber in his choral output.

Michael Chemers, Associate Professor of Theatre Arts at the University of California Santa Cruz, identifies dramaturgy as key in the process of “bringing an inert script into a live piece of performance.” He goes on to say “[t]he dramaturg is someone who is good at uncovering information and transforming it into knowledge which is practical information, information that can be then used and integrated into a performance—to create an artistic whole.”

Theresa Lang, author of Essential Dramaturgy, looks at dramaturgy holistically rather than as a list of individual tasks to be done. She embraces all of the duties or acts of the dramaturg to create a dramaturgical perspective. Employing this view, dramaturgy becomes a way of being and an outlook on life and the world around us. Her definition turns the word dramaturg, most

11 Ibid.
often used as a noun, into a verb: “to curate an experience for an audience.” With this definition in mind, she suggests that in this broad scope, one can “dramaturg” virtually anything. Her process as a dramaturg can be narrowed down to three steps: setting parameters for the project, compiling the information needed for that project, and constructing the most effective mode of presentation for that information.

Lang’s approach involves the dramaturg first formulating questions that help conceive an appropriate plan for the work at hand. These questions involve decisions as to which historical facts are important to the project, and which facts do not enhance the final performance. They become the basis for the contextual information collected and provided to the performing artists. Lang gives an example of what information might be collected and how collaborators might utilize this information:

If we answer a question about the symptoms of tuberculosis, the actor needs information that will let him mimic them, the designer is looking for a way to show the effects of those symptoms on the physical world, a technician may need to know if there is movement that affects the construction, and the audience may need to know stages of the illness to understand how sick the character really is.

Professional dramaturgs are important collaborators for many theatre and opera productions around the world. It seems logical that this process could be effectively transferred to the duties of the choral conductor when approaching a new piece of music. Assuming the role of the dramaturg may aid the conductor in the planning and teaching of the music to the members of the chorus, with the ultimate goal of expressing, as much as possible, the composer’s intentions. As such, dramaturgical research provides a means of expression and connection for artistic collaborators.

Following this model, the dramaturg-conductor might examine notes and personal writings of the composer, uncover pertinent contextual information about the piece as well as biographical and

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13 Ibid., 7.
14 Ibid., 9.
15 Ibid., 15.
16 Ibid., 16.
contextual information concerning the composer. All of this information then helps the conductor illuminate the story the composer is trying to tell. In the case of Samuel Barber’s choral music, the texts are of primary importance to his compositional process, so approaching these choral works as a dramaturg makes sense.

One important point Lang makes is that the dramaturg for a theatre company does not specify an opinion about the final artistic choices made: he or she merely provides all of the information for the decision-maker. The final artistic choices are left up to the director of the work or, as is the case in choral music, the conductor. In the theatre, the dramaturg and the director may be two different people. The choral director, however, plays both the roles of dramaturg and conductor gathering all of this information and applying it to the artistic process.

By using dramaturgy as a basic premise, I do not presume to prescribe a specific way to perform Barber’s choral music. Rather, I aim to give conductors ideas on how to make critically informed interpretive decisions for performing two of his choral compositions: Reincarnations and the Prayers of Kierkegaard. With choral works, many of the performance issues relate to vocal technique and ensemble clarity. Coming to a more detailed artistic vision of the story may reduce these technical issues as well. For example, a consensus on the dramatic plan may help the choir breathe as an ensemble and inform dynamic and articulation details. The goal is for conductors to apply the contextual information in a manner that addresses understanding with integrity to these compositions as they study, rehearse, and perform them. I contend that all of the unearthed facts can help conductors build a detailed understanding of both the compositions and also the composer. Ultimately, the end result should be effective and meaningful interpretations and performances of Barber’s choral music.

The two contrasting choral works considered in this thesis are Barber’s Reincarnations (a set of three shorter a cappella works) and the Prayers of Kierkegaard (one of two large-scale choral-orchestral works composed by Barber). My discussion aims to show how the dramaturgical process may be implemented to explore both chamber and large-scale choral works. I present an overview of some important experiences in Barber’s life, investigate the compositional world around him, explore his choice of texts, and then use this information to create in-depth analyses

17 Ibid., 23.
of the works, followed by musical and vocal directives on how these compositions might be interpreted and performed.

### 1.2 Outline of the study

The first three chapters of this thesis identify philosophies of music-making in general and the influences that might have affected Samuel Barber specifically. Chapter 1 illustrates why the contextual research of the dramaturg is helpful for analyzing and performing musical works. I first examine musicological and ethnomusicological discussions on music and its interpretation with regard to authenticity, performance practice, and contextual research. I also provide psychological and sociological evidence to show the need for personal contextual information, including family life and sexual orientation, to gain understanding of the composer and his artistic development. I then delve into what some conductors and composers think about musical interpretation, and finally, I review other related literature to show how my research supplements that literature. Ultimately, I conclude that this kind of research is necessary to best understand and perform the choral literature of Samuel Barber.

In an effort to address the issues in Barber’s compositions raised in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 outlines the most important influences in his life. Part of this process involves exploring the letters he and his uncle Sidney wrote to each other. Sidney Homer, also a composer, was one of the most influential and supportive figures throughout Barber’s life. These letters give insight into their relationship, Barber’s personality and values, and his development and growth as a composer.

Chapter 3 outlines the important musical events and trends of the twentieth century that relate to Barber’s music. The twentieth century was a tumultuous time, both in human and music history. Barber was a bit of an anachronism: his love of melody and use of tonality was often dismissed as old-fashioned. Both the ultra-modern compositional climate and the unsettled global political climate influenced Barber and his compositions.

Chapters 4 and 5 consist of detailed analyses of the two representative works chosen for this study, including historical context, study of the texts used, as well as detailed theoretical analyses of these works. All of this information is then used to discuss the interpretive decision-making process and help develop a plan for the musical and vocal implementation for performance. This
study will result in a guide that leads to well-informed and evocative performances of these choral masterpieces.

1.3 Context: Composers’ intentions

Scholars of Western art music have differing opinions on the importance of researching and applying information outside of the musical score to interpretative and performance decisions. On one end of the spectrum is music theorist Wallace Berry, who believes that the only information needed to inform successful performance of a musical work is the structural and theoretical analysis of the score. Composers such as Stravinsky and Schoenberg also agreed that the score gives all the indications necessary to provide an effective performance of a piece of music. But musicologists and philosophers including Nicholas Cook, Christopher Small, Peter Kivy, and Richard Taruskin believe there is more to performing music than just the execution of the physical notes written by the composer, and I will discuss their views in detail below. The role of the performer, personal interpretation, ethical responsibility to the composer, application of contextual information, and discovering levels of intention are all relevant to finding meaning and understanding in a musical work. As for the dramaturg, all of this discussion and questioning informs the final performance.

Nicholas Cook is one of the most active contributors to debates among musicologists about the place of interpretation in performance. His article “Between Process and Product: Music and/as Performance,” describes many of the twentieth-century discussions on the performative aspect of music. There is great debate on whether “music” comprises the physical score or the performances of these musical works. Is it the product or process that is most critical to the decision-making? Is the score something to be respected and followed precisely in mechanically executed performances, or does the performer have authority in the performance process, thus rendering it more flexible or fluid? Cook suggests that both researchers and performers should consider the score as script, creating a partnership between the composer and

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19 Ibid., sections 3-4.
the performer. He asserts that many musicians “have forgotten that music is a performance art at all” and believes that discussions on music marginalize performance. Cook also concedes that musicians can go to the other extreme, revering specific performances and performers that bring compositions to life. In particular, jazz music is a genre in which much more importance is given to the performer. Since the score doesn’t exist in its traditional form, the “real music” occurs in the particular execution the performer creates for the audience and may be different each time it is performed. Although classical music rarely has this level of improvisation, each performance of a composition is still unique, partly due to the performer’s contribution. Cook cites in his article the work of Lydia Goehr, a philosopher who has had a large impact on musicologists. Goehr, also a critic of the “reified musical work,” championed the idea of a musical work as really just an historical concept created by the Western art music tradition that emerged around 1800.

Cook’s view of music as a process (the act of performance) rather than as a product (the physical score) goes against the ideas of many composers and conductors, including Stravinsky and Bernstein. They believe that performers can be the corruptors of the composer’s intentions as expressed in the score. Challenging this notion resonates with Cook’s ideas, which de-privileges the composer’s intent and the score alone by emphasizing the importance of process—that is, performance that realizes the score’s directives. Cook suggests that what is needed is “a proper balance and mutual respect between musicians,” seeing the importance of both the instructions of the physical score and the creativity a musician brings to a performance.

Author and musicologist Christopher Small places performance ahead of the score, arguing that “performance does not exist in order to present musical works, but rather, musical works exist in order to give performers something to perform.” He created the word musicking to transform

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20 Ibid., section 6.
21 Ibid., section 2.
22 Ibid., section 3
23 Ibid.
24 Taruskin, Text and Act, 13.
the word *music* into a verb to better define the act of making music. Another author and philosopher, Stan Godlovitch, uses the act of storytelling as the best model for what a musical performance really is. Merely stating the words of a piece of literature can be dull and lifeless; the creative storyteller, however, brings the story to life and engages the listener.

Godlovitch also believes that “works massively underdetermine their performances.” Because performances bring much more to a piece of music than what is merely on the page, the performer must make decisions about dynamics and timbre not specified in the score. Nuances of timing essential to performance interpretation often deviate from the metronome marking indicated by the composer. Peter Kivy refers to this as the “gap between ‘text’ and performance.” As Cook suggests, thinking of music as a script rather than as a text to be followed to the letter allows performers the ability to express their own interpretive ideas on the journey from score to performance. If the score is a script, there is no one authoritative way to perform a piece of music: once performed, these works become “arrangements” of the original score created by the performer. Performers are essential for unlocking what the text may mean and for interpreting how musical markings may be executed. “Process and product, then, are not so much alternative options as complementary strands of the twisted braid we call performance.” In continuing to think about the collaboration between the score and the performance, it is important to look next at what other information may further inform the performer in the quest for the “perfect” performance.

The score and the information therein may not be enough for a performer to create a well-informed and expressive performance. American musicologist Gary Tomlinson, in the article “A Web of Context for Musicology,” extols the necessity of looking at the culture and environment of the composer as an essential way to understand and find meaning in a composition. Although Tomlinson himself is not interested in how these findings may affect performance, the information discovered may inspire an even more well-informed approach to performing musical

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compositions. The work of cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz helps form Tomlinson’s main tenet in the article: “that in order to understand individual human actions we need to interpret the cultural context from which they arise.”³¹ Tomlinson applies Geertz’s interpretive analysis of a cathedral to musicology, and contends that “musical art works are the codifications or inscribed reflections of human creative actions, and hence should be understood through a similar interpretation of cultural context.”³²

The types of analysis proposed by Ryle, Geertz, and Tomlinson suggest that the analyses of theorists such as Wallace Berry may provide steps for understanding the formal structures of a piece of music, but they are not sufficient to make meaningful and effective performance decisions. Geertz in particular believes that theoretic analyses provide only “thin” descriptions to be used in making interpretational decisions.³³ To get to a “thicker” understanding of a composition, musicians must look outside of the musical score for contextual information regarding the composer and composition. All of this research in addition to theoretical analyses then can productively inform decisions on interpretation and eventually decisions for performance. The key is that different elements may have different levels of importance in the final presentation.

Applying this concept to the choral music of Samuel Barber, it becomes clear that the outside contextual information discovered may be equally as important as the markings in the score for the conductor. Although composers can prescribe specifics in tempo, dynamics, and even the mood of the piece, there are subtleties of changes in tempo, vocal colour, dynamics, and diction that cannot be precisely written. These can make a performance memorable, conveying the subtleties of feeling that audience, performer, and composer may all share. Engaging in this type of research parallels that of the dramaturg, who makes decisions on how a play will unfold. The time period in which the play was written, information about the playwright, and other contextual information all influence the artistic decisions made by the director. For drama

³³ Ibid.
theorist Baz Kershaw, it is “a fundamental tenet of performance theory ... that no item in the environment of performance can be discounted as irrelevant to its impact.”

Musicologists Peter Kivy and Richard Taruskin bring their own differing viewpoints to the topic of contextual information and the idea of an authentic performance with respect to how music should be researched and how interpretations should come about. Kivy believes that the performer has a moral obligation to discover the intentions of the composer. Once discovered, these intentions will then provide the most authentic performance of the composer’s works. Taruskin, on the other hand, believes there is no way to uncover the composer’s true intentions and is critical of the widely held belief that musical authenticity depends on finding and adhering to such intentions. He goes as far as likening this notion of authenticity to a twentieth-century propaganda advertising ploy. In the end, however, both scholars do share the idea that a deeper understanding of a composition is helpful in performance; they differ in opinion on the level to which a performer should adhere to the findings of the past to current performance practice.

One of the ways performers approach the performance of the music of the Renaissance, Baroque, and even Classical eras, is to seek out the performance practices of the specific era. These generalized practices begin to inform the researcher as to the intentions of composers and performers of past eras and provide the first step in understanding the performance ideals of specific eras. “One can make reasonable, if not infallible, inferences about Bach’s intentions by examining the historical artifacts of his day, both the written ones and the others. Intentions are revealed amply by what the intenders leave behind.”

Kivy not only believes that performers should do their best to determine the composer’s intentions about a piece and then comply, but also that it is their obligation to do so. They should aim to infer intentions and bring out certain parts of the score because that is the way the

38 Ibid., 100.
The composer intended it to be performed.39 “The composer’s way would more often than not win out; and even if it did not, it would nevertheless not be easily overridden.”40 Kivy adds that historical accuracy is not necessarily valuable in and of itself, but he believes it helps in achieving the best performance of the music. “I think there is a strong urge on the part of musicians to honor composers’ intentions per se, an urge so strong that they will often, if not always, honor them over all considerations of musical aesthetics.”41 He describes this urge as a missionary zeal or moral imperative.42 He considers honouring the wishes and intentions of dead composers as a way of avoiding injury to the deceased, even if the composer never experiences the pain of betrayal or its discovery.43

Composers’ intentions, therefore, can weigh heavily in the decision-making process, but it may not be possible to accommodate all these intentions in a single performance. Kivy refers to the work of Randall R. Dipert44 and his three-tiered system of identifying levels of intentions. Low-level intentions are concerned with the means of production, such as the type of instrument to be used, fingerings, and other related considerations. Middle-level intentions are concerned with the intended sound through temperament, timbre, attack, pitch, and vibrato. High-level intentions concern themselves with the effects the composer intends to produce in the listener. One cannot necessarily achieve all the intentions simultaneously, as these different levels may be at odds with one another. “In such cases we will have to decide which of his [sic] intentions we are most anxious to realize and, presumably, high-level intentions take precedence.”45 Through research we not only discover some of the possible intentions of the composer, but we can also discover a sense of what the composer does not intend in his or her works.46 The obligation for the

39 Ibid., 101.
40 Ibid., 102.
41 Ibid., 104-5.
42 Ibid., 105.
43 Ibid., 108-9.
46 Ibid., 103.
performer to fulfill duties to the composer can get complicated, as certain duties can be overridden by other, stronger ones.  

Kivy, citing Dipert, goes on to say that there are three possible reasons why musicians attempt to play a piece the way a composer intended. First, there is a moral obligation to respect the composer’s wishes, especially if he or she is deceased. The second reason is that keeping an historic artifact (the music) intact may be a priority, and finally—perhaps what many performers believe has greater artistic merit—to perform the piece with the composers’ intentions in mind. While these three levels offer the “why” of prioritized intentions, as Kivy says, the how of our best performances will be achieved if we work to unearth these intentions not just in letter, but in spirit. Arriving at the composer’s intentions is considered a criterion of “great, and sometimes decisive, significance.”

Musicologist Richard Taruskin is critical of the very specific and, in his view, problematic ways authenticity has been defined, the ways the notion has been used or abused, and the kinds of constraints that have been put on scholars and performers in terms of how they think about and play music. Some believe that achieving historical authenticity is finding and adhering to what the composer intended when creating his or her musical works. Taruskin questions this theory entirely, suggesting that it is, in reality, the most modern of ideas rather than a historically held belief. It also can give permission to the performer to avoid making musical decisions by simply following historical performance practice guidelines. Some people even leverage certain views in the name of composer’s intent and authenticity to assert their own authority and intent. Taruskin thus sees certain notions of authenticity as detrimental, since they “privilege one philosophy of performance over all others” and may have nothing to do with what the composer truly intended.

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47 Ibid., 111.
48 Dipert, “The Composer’s Intentions,” 212.
50 Ibid., 115.
51 Taruskin, Text and Act, 90.
52 Ibid., 90.
Another word that might replace *authentic* is the word *appropriate* when discussing historical musical ideas; however, this word also may lead to negative judgements made on performances.\(^{53}\) The notion that a truly authentic or appropriate performance path exists creates a gap or pattern of negative thought in the performer’s understanding of what he or she knows and what one might have understood if one was in the room when the composer composed. Another way of thinking about this would be to seek “historically aware” or “historically informed” performances.\(^{54}\) I concur with Taruskin that this type of decision-making completely discounts the role of the performer and what he or she brings to the performance. Like people who hold fundamentalist views of the Bible that discourage individual interpretation, many fundamentally minded musicians hold similar beliefs about the musical score. Fundamentalist interpretations of music can leave the performance without depth or soul. In order to avoid the criticism of being historically inaccurate, many conductors and performers influenced by the concept of “authenticity” avoid adding any of their own creative impulses or ideas when shaping the performance, choosing to simply follow the letter of the score.\(^{55}\)

Taruskin uses the differences in Stravinsky’s five recordings of *The Rite of Spring* to show how a composer’s intentions can change over time. Taruskin does not say that we should forego researching contextual information for performances as Stravinsky’s about tempo apparently did; he merely suggests the performer should not be restricted to a particular notion of “authenticity” to make musical and interpretational decisions.

Despite some arguments that disregard contextual information as superfluous for making performance decisions, I am convinced that all information collected from the score, as well as outside influences that affected the composer and the score, enlightens the interpreter and may lead to informed decisions about performance procedure. This method of interpretation and performance goes beyond the score as an artifact and includes the performer in the decision-making process. The score becomes a script containing literal instructions as well as revelations of the intended spirit of the composition. Employing this procedure gives due respect to the

\(^{53}\) Ibid., 90-1.
\(^{54}\) Ibid., 93.
\(^{55}\) Ibid., 93-5.
creator of the work as well as to the performer who is creating the latest “arrangement” of the composition at hand.

Just as the dramaturg presents all the information to the director of a play, the conductor needs to thoroughly investigate and make his or her own decisions about which elements represent the highest intentions of both the composer as well as the conductor. Samuel Barber was very specific in many aspects of notes in the score and directions to the conductors with whom he worked, but there were always some details (as stated before, subtle changes in tempo, vocal colour, dynamics, and diction) that must be decided by the conductor. These decisions can effectively be based on contextual information as well as by utilizing the conductor’s own skills as a musician. When all this information is digested and used to create a well-informed performance, the music will convey Barber’s artistic ideas, and we get closer to the composer’s intentions. As we will discover throughout the course of this thesis, Barber himself was a proponent of following composer’s intentions, making it all the more essential, I believe, for musicians to discover Barber’s own ideas in attempting to perform his music.

1.4 Context: Developmental research

Much of the musical dramaturg’s research lies in the exploration of a composer’s experiences, such as their biographical information, education, cultural and artistic environment, and other personal contextual details, to see what influence these have on the creator’s identity and therefore his or her creative output. The information acquired in this type of analysis provides a wealth of information for the conductor to delve even deeper into the mind of the composer.\(^{56}\) Throughout much of the twentieth century, the relationship between a composer's work and his or her “person” or subjective background was factored into the interpretation of artistic works in the Western art music tradition to apply relevant stylistic traits and performance practice from that period of the composer’s life or historical era of music, rather than to find any deeper meaning in the music. The contextual information researched by the dramaturg provides a robust understanding of composers and their musical works, which can create musical and well-informed performances.

\(^{56}\) Lang, *Essential Dramaturgy*, 8-10.
Considering music in cultural context is a foundational principle in the field of ethnomusicology. This contextual approach, also used in musicology, considers that nationality, economic class, sexuality, education, politics, and other human associations inform musical meaning. The general premise is that contextual matters inform the personality of the artist and therefore shapes the musical output.

The home environment is the first area of influence for any musician. Gary E. McPherson, Chair of Music Education in the School of Music at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, says:

During the past 30 years, some of the most important advances in understanding children’s psychological functioning and achievement have come from research that focuses on the socialization processes that occur in the home, with results showing a consistently positive effect of parental influences on student achievement, attitudes, behaviour, and learning (Asmus, 2006; Pomerantz, Grolnick, & Price, 2005). As with other areas of children’s development, the home environment is crucial in early musical development (Asmus, 1985, 1986; Brand, 1986). Beginning at a young age, children develop resilient attitudes, beliefs and expectations about their potential to learn music that have been instilled in them through interactions with their parents (McPherson & Davidson, 2002, 2006). Parents are critical to a child’s ongoing success in all areas of their education and this is particularly true in music, a subject that involves particularly high demands (McPherson & Zimmerman, 2002).

McPherson proposes various parenting goals, styles, and practices with which to raise children in a positive musical culture. Some of these include specific behaviours; for example, being present at music lessons and concerts, and realizing the socialization goals they hold for their child (e.g., being successful at music, enjoying musical participation). McPherson argues that we have known since the 1950s that parental expectations and aspirations are closely connected with children’s level of self-esteem, motivation, and achievement. Furthermore, the manner in which

58 Ibid., 93.
parents regard music has far-reaching consequences for children’s musical education. He argues that much of a young musician’s aesthetics and value system are influenced by parental ideals, home environment, and cultural considerations. Samuel Barber’s home was full of positive musical influences and elite musical standards, which will be further discussed in Chapter 2.

British musicologist Philip Brett’s ideas regarding the relationship between an artist’s sexual identity and his or her creative output are also extremely important for my dramaturgical approach to Barber’s music. Brett was not only an iconic figure in musicology for his pioneering work on gay and lesbian issues, but he was also a choral conductor himself. He pioneered what many call “Queer Musicology,” a relatively new field of study because the study of sexuality is a modern phenomenon. More importantly, the newness of considering the importance of sexuality for musical interpretation means that although a long history of homosexuality in music exists, it is impossible to narrate. Brett’s work seeks to understand how late-medieval composers like Nicolas Gombert, Dominique Phinot, Tiburzio Massaino, Johann Rosenmüller, and Jean-Baptiste Lully may have shared the “shame for their sexual desires, and whether even that affected their composition.”

Brett believes that the fear inherent in being accused of sodomy throughout history must have been an important influence on these men. His point is that it is more than merely the state of being gay that may affect a musician’s aesthetic proclivities; it is also the myriad of emotions, mind sets, beliefs, and judgements—individual and societal—that affect the composer and the composition. The aforementioned composers suffered in some way because of their homosexuality. For example, Gombert served a three-year sentence in the galleys, Phinot was executed by burning at the stake, and Massaino went into exile. Gombert's first book of motets may have been assembled as a kind of apology that he hoped might gain him a pardon (Lewis, 1994, pp. 33–67).

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60 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
Brett further states that “our homosexuality is a crucial part of our identity, not because of anything intrinsic about it but because social oppression made it so.” In the past, most homosexuals internalized their oppression because this subject was simply not considered worthy of or fit for public discussion. Brett argues that the oppression of being “in the closet” affects one’s personality and therefore influences the individual’s artistic expression. Many famous figures were ashamed of their homosexuality. Irish patriot Roger Casement said it was “a terrible disease that ought to be cured,” while liberal humanist Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson felt “I am like a man crippled.” Brett states that the ways in which composers expressed these feelings of oppression or sadness in their music may be difficult to decipher; although musicology has as yet little experience with their cryptography, the feelings are arguably always there.

Advocacy for gay rights in the US emerged only in the last third of the twentieth century, and debates over these rights continue to the present. According to US law in 1950:

> The homosexual is an inveterate seducer of the youth of both sexes, and . . . is not content with being degenerate himself, he must have degenerate companions, and is ever seeking younger victims. . . . Some male sex deviants do not stop with infecting their often-innocent partners [with homosexuality]: they descend through perversions and other forms of depravity, such as drug addition, burglary, sadism, and even murder. Once a man assumes the role of homosexual, he throws off all moral restraints.

Homosexuality in the 1950s and 1960s was considered a mental illness, and both men and women were publicly humiliated, physically harassed, fired, jailed, or institutionalized. For this reason, many people lived double lives in order to keep their private lives out of the public eye.

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63 Ibid.
It was only as a result of the 1969 Stonewall Riots in New York City that gays collectively began to demand equal rights.\textsuperscript{66}

### 1.5 Conductors’ and composers’ philosophies on performance preparation

Based on this dramaturgical approach to performance and the writings of the musicologists, philosophers, and developmental researchers cited thus far, all of the information uncovered must now be scrutinized by the conductor for relevance to the project at hand. Conductors should incorporate the pertinent research information to create their own informed performance plan. Uncovering the creative spirit of the intentions of the composer may be even more important for the performer during score study. Such study also allows a deeper formation of the affect of the piece and forces the performer to address the feelings he or she will try to convey in the performance.

The concept of evoking or conveying feeling in performance is addressed in Frederick Harris Jr.’s text, \textit{Conducting with Feeling}. This unique conducting textbook delves into the controversy surrounding the expression of feeling in music. Harris quotes Bernstein as an exemplary proponent for feeling in music:

> It is not so much imposing his will on them like a dictator, it is more like projecting his feelings around him so that they reach the last man in the second violin section. And when this happens—when one hundred men share his feelings, exactly, simultaneously, responding as one to each rise and fall of music... then there is human identity of feeling that has no equal elsewhere.\textsuperscript{67}

Harris also cites conductor and composer Karel Husa, who asserts “that while the degree of emotion may differ from piece to piece, the involvement must be intense, along with a perfect

\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., 2.

knowledge of the score.”68 Orchestral conductor Gunther Schuller also believes that the conductor has a moral obligation to the composer, especially those who are deceased, to express the musical wishes left in the score and the histories. The humility a conductor should feel when approaching a piece of music “then translates into a fierce determination to know completely and profoundly the work in all of its aspects, to explore the letter and the spirit of the work, to plumb its expressive and emotional depths, in order to reveal its essence.”69 Beethoven and Wagner went so far as to call music die heilige Kunst (the sacred art),70 thereby creating a great responsibility for the conductor in his or her preparation. Schuller goes on to say:

[I]t is the conductor’s job to understand the process by which a thousand and one such “inevitable” choices are made by the composer and, as I say, to retrace those steps of creation, to re-create in his [sic] conducting that decisional process, not in some merely mechanical rendering, but in a manner that is emotionally, expressively inspired by that process.71

This kind of preparation and conducting can bring excitement and vitality to old and new compositions in performance.

In a conducting workshop that I attended in January 2012, orchestral conductor Michael Adelson stated this in a very efficient way. He suggested that conductors should ask three main questions as they prepare a musical score for performance:

1. What? What is in the score that gives us direction that we need as conductors to carry out the intentions of the composer?

2. Why? Why did the composer write the piece in this way—what influenced him or her to do this?

68 Frederick Harris Jr., Conducting with Feeling (Galesville: Meredith Music Publications, 2001), 8–9.
70 Ibid., 7.
71 Ibid., 13.
3. How? How do we perform the piece incorporating the information above? 

The “what” in this approach includes harmonic analysis of the piece and a study of all the markings (dynamics, tempi, articulations, and expressive descriptors). The “why” includes all the contextual influences uncovered in the dramaturgical approach to the study of a piece of music. Finally, the “how” takes into account all the aforementioned research to make specific choices for all the aspects of the choral performance (vocal colour, diction, dynamics, articulations, and overall mood). A combination of objective study of the score and research into important contextual details of the composer’s life leads to subjective, but educated, interpretive decisions which aid the conductor in performance.

1.6 Existing research on the choral music of Samuel Barber

To date, there are eight doctoral and masters’ theses that delve into the choral music and/or the texts used in the music of Samuel Barber. Most of these studies include practical analyses of various choral works by the late composer. Some contain detailed discussions of harmonies/tonality, form/structure, motives, rhythm/meter, texture, and text setting. None of these documents, however, give perspectives on interpretive expression for the conductor or how to communicate these kinds of ideas to singers and audiences. In their theses, Randall Johnson, David Castleberry, and Michael Berg all offer formal theoretical-structural analyses of much of Barber’s choral output. William Skoog compares the late choral music of Barber to that of

Howard Hanson. Joseph Modica\textsuperscript{77} gives historical background and musical analysis of *The Virgin Martyrs*, with some discourse on the mood and personal response to the text-music combination. Jeffrey Wright, II\textsuperscript{78} addresses the biographical details and compositions during Barber’s time serving in the army, the conflicts between his civil duties and his dedication to composition. He also includes some of the issues that arose from being homosexual and in the army at that period of time, but he analyzes Barber’s instrumental music, not his choral works.

Anthony Zwerdling’s thesis\textsuperscript{79} researches the history of the Celtic Literary Revival, Barber’s relationship to these texts, and analyses of the solo songs Barber wrote with these texts; again, no choral music is analyzed. Donald Nally’s thesis\textsuperscript{80} provides a history and discussion of the poets and poetry used by Barber, as well as detailed analysis of selected choral music with regard to Barber’s musical response to these texts in harmonic, melodic, rhythmic, and textual terms. Nally gives detailed notes on the texts used and how Barber set them, with some discussion of the mood and emotions evoked, but provides no interpretational strategies or specific vocal directives.

None of these theses combines all the information—the texts, musical analyses, and life experiences—to give practical interpretive and vocal directives for performances of Samuel Barber’s choral music. The dramaturgical approach of my study takes all of this information into account and gives insight into the dramatic and expressive elements present in Barber’s compositions. I also suggest strategies for implementing these artistic decisions in performance.

\textsuperscript{80} Donald Nally, “To immerse myself in words: Text and Music in Selected Choral Works of Samuel Barber” (PhD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1995), https://search.proquest.com/pqdtglobal/docview/304197553/BFF26F46374F441CPQ/6?accountid=14771.
1.7 Chapter One conclusion

This chapter has made a case for following the dramaturgical approach to preparing Samuel Barber’s *Reincarnations* and *Prayers of Kierkegaard* for performance. All of the information collected may not be directly valuable to the performer; therefore, each conductor must weigh the importance of the information to carry out his or her interpretation of the composer’s intentions. As more information is discovered, the performer arrives at a deeper understanding of the Barber as composer and his artistic intentions. Chapter Two presents information about the life of and influences on Samuel Barber.
Chapter 2
The Life of and Influences on Samuel Barber

Collecting information on the composer is often one of the first steps that a musician will undertake as he or she prepares a musical composition for performance. This may also be one of the first avenues a dramaturg might take to better understand the playwright (theatre) or composer (opera). Understanding the composer’s environment and life experiences can give important insights for interpretation. In the case of Samuel Barber, there are several important pieces of information that help a conductor form an informed view of Barber’s compositions.

For all individuals, multiple and various influences prompt reactions, responses, and choices that shape their lives. Samuel Barber was no different. Numerous factors influenced both his personal and also his professional life. His supportive family, comfortable socioeconomic background, high level of education, and homosexuality all contributed to his worldview and artistic output. Understanding these influences is helpful for interpreting Barber’s compositions and what informed their creation.

The circumstances of Barber’s parentage, upbringing, and the circle of his family and friends lay the groundwork for his artistic proclivity. Barber was born into a comfortable and distinguished American family in West Chester, Pennsylvania. His father was a doctor, a pillar of the Episcopalian community, and his mother was a sensitive amateur pianist. His aunt, Louise Homer, was a leading soprano at the Metropolitan Opera. Louise was married to Sidney Homer, a respectable composer of American art songs. Barber was especially close to his Uncle Sidney, who moulded the integrity and aesthetic values of his nephew more than anyone else in the family. When Homer died in 1953, Barber was profoundly grieved.

Barber’s principal biographer, Barbara B. Heyman, suggests that of the many influences on his music, three are most important in developing his unique compositional style: 1) his formal music education at the Curtis Institute of Music, 2) the intellectual influence and personal relationships encountered during his European studies, and 3) the personal guidance and advice of his mentor and uncle, composer Sidney Homer. These would prove to be the pivotal life experiences that played a role in the development of the young composer. 82

Barber studied nine years in Philadelphia at the Curtis Institute of Music, which was a traditional, European-oriented, and institutionalized educational environment. 83 He was a “triple threat” at the school, studying piano, voice, and composition, and eventually became accomplished at all three. Curtis founder Mary Curtis Bok was the daughter of the prominent publisher, Cyrus H. K. Curtis. Bok had a wide circle of important friends, and her advisory board comprised many of the greatest artistic talents in the world. Mary Bok’s educational philosophy reflected the elite standard of education to which Barber was exposed:

It is my aim that earnest students shall acquire a thorough musical education, not learning only to sing or play, but also the history of music, the laws of its making, languages, ear-training, and music appreciation.

They shall learn to think and to express their thoughts against a background of quiet culture, with the stimulus of personal contact with artist-teachers who represent the highest and finest in their art.

The aim is for quality of the work rather than quick, showy results. 84

Mary Bok actively aided young musicians in their career goals by providing personal encouragement and financial support. Bok took a special interest in Barber in 1934, shortly before he was to graduate from the institute. As well as providing financial patronage, she introduced him to Carl Engel at G. Schirmer, Inc., the firm that became Barber's exclusive publisher. Bok invited the young composer to spend summers at her summer home in Rockport,

83 Ibid., 4.
84 Ibid., 33–4.
Maine, where she and her husband Edward provided cottages for select graduates and faculty members. Her financial support also enabled Barber and his long-time partner Gian Carlo Menotti to purchase “Capricorn,” their home in Mount Kisco, New York in 1943. Capricorn housed Barber during some of the most productive years of his professional life. This home became a gathering place for the elite and gifted artists, poets, musicians, and theatre people who became their friends.

Barber studied with some of the finest artists of the day. He studied piano with George Boyle and Isabelle Vengerova, voice with Emilio de Gogorza, and composition and music theory with Rosario Scalero, who himself had studied with the eminent Austrian musicologist, Eusebius Mandyczewski.\(^{85}\) Particularly under Scalero, Barber received a rigorous education in counterpoint, in writing for multiple genres, and training in diverse musical forms. Heyman suggests that this part of Barber’s education left a distinct mark on the young composer. His remarkable sense of form and well-crafted design, both of which are consistently present in his musical works, are unquestionably the result of his studies with Scalero who, according to Menotti, “was a very intelligent teacher and he taught in a very original way. He never taught us rules; he wanted us to find out for ourselves what the rules were through the study of great music.”\(^{86}\) Scalero also placed a great deal of importance on the theory that music must “breathe,” or have a sense of flow. The ideal musical composition to Scalero was not one that simply followed rules and regulations, but one having a distinct artistic life into which the composer had “breathed.”\(^{87}\)

The city of Philadelphia gave further inspiration and education to the young composer. Every Friday afternoon after his lessons at the Curtis Institute, Barber was able to hear the Philadelphia Orchestra in concert. As he grew older he lived in Philadelphia and attended the Saturday night concerts, which “was the place to be for any young Philadelphian with intellectual ambitions.”\(^{88}\) During this period of the Philadelphia Orchestra’s history, Leopold Stokowski introduced the

\(^{85}\) Ibid., 34.
\(^{86}\) Ibid., 35.
\(^{87}\) Ibid., 36.
\(^{88}\) Ibid., 36.
Philadelphia audience to more Russian and French music than they had heard the orchestra perform in the past. Barber’s fortunate economic conditions, as well as his immense talent, provided him with incredible learning opportunities from his exposure to these artistic experiences.

Barber was a very bright young man and led a privileged life as a composer. He and his many friends were not the starving artists of the Romantic era; these young people indulged in a “caviar and champagne” lifestyle. After the success of his first compositions, Samuel Barber never again needed to actively search for places to have his music performed or to engage talented performers to perform them. Barber had an innate “ability to draw toward himself gifted musicians who recognized the quality of his music and thus coveted the opportunity to perform his works.”89 Writing for some of the world’s greatest musicians allowed Barber to create more sophisticated kinds of compositions. Many of the leading conductors and musicians across the globe commissioned pieces by him and performed his compositions.90 Even in the early days of writing vocal music, the young Barber had a singer of great artistic talent and a personal support, his aunt, mezzo-soprano Louise Homer.

The Curtis Institute of Music, therefore, greatly helped form Barber’s musical aesthetic. The Eurocentric education instilled in him a high level of craftsmanship and attention to detail. This education supported his continued use of tonality—with a heightened use of chromaticism and rich harmonic language to express his artistic ideas. It also contributed to his clarity of expression in shorter forms of composition similar to that of Johannes Brahms’s music. Barber had great respect for Brahms and derived the ability to fit an abundance of musical ideas into compact formal structures. Barber’s gift for melodic expression may also be attributed to his education in the musical language of the past. The Philadelphia Orchestra allowed the composer to experience the rhythmic complexity of Russian music and the lush harmonic language of French music under the baton of Stokowski—elements that are part of Barber’s musical language.

89 Heyman. *Samuel Barber*, 41.
The second important influence was the intellectual and artistic influence provided through his European travels and studies. In the summer of 1928, Barber made his first trip to Europe to travel, continue his studies with Scalero, and work on a violin sonata he had begun before he left Philadelphia. This first European journey began a lifelong love affair with European society and culture, particularly Italian culture. But he also experienced many new cultural traditions, ways of life, and world views in France, Italy, and Austria. In Europe, he met many influential people who would further his compositional development and his career.91

In Paris, Barber attended as much theatre and as many concerts as he could, hearing many performances by world-renowned performers. He travelled the countryside while composing, visiting the Scaleros daily, where they made much fuss over him. At one of these visits, he heard a recording of the Philadelphia Orchestra performing Brahms’s Symphony No. 1 in C Minor, Op. 68 on Scalero’s new portable Orthophonic record player and was completely taken with this new technology.92

After falling in love with Venice, he made his way to Vienna, where he had numerous appointments relating to his musical life. Barber even visited Scalero’s teacher, Eusebius Mandyczewski, at his home in Mönichkirchen on his seventy-second birthday. He heard for the first time a real Gypsy orchestra in Budapest, Mozart’s operas in Salzburg, and Wagner’s operas in Munich.93 This was an impressive set of experiences for a young composer on his first excursion abroad. These performances and meetings with influential musicians were life-altering for Barber.94

His second trip to Europe in 1929 was extraordinary for different reasons. That summer was to be one of the happiest times in Barber’s life. He began composing a concerto for piano and orchestra, the largest piece he had written to date. Perhaps more important was the presence of his travelling companion, Italian-born Gian Carlo Menotti, whom he met at the age of seventeen

91 Heyman, Samuel Barber, 54.
92 Ibid., 55-6.
93 Ibid., 56-7.
94 Ibid., 56-59.
at the Curtis School in Philadelphia. In letters to his parents, he cast the trip in a very special light, somewhat spiritual, even romantic.\textsuperscript{95}

It has been more than a dream-like voyage, because every moment of happiness has been too real for fantasy. And yet, only in books and romances, does one believe that such days and nights exist—noons of blinding suns and chilling winds, and grave midnights of washing seas and many stars. And Gian Carlo and I drink it all gaily together, be it liquid spaghetti or bad white wine.

We have spoken to no one on the ship and are only interrupted in our interminable séances on deck chairs by a pleasantly occasional visit from Maria Teresa Scalero.\textsuperscript{96}

The two men assisted each other with their respective languages, sharing literature and ideas. They toured through Italy together, and Menotti showed Barber the cultural life of Italy, as Barber had done for Menotti in the US. They spent two weeks at the Menotti villa at Cadegliano; here Barber experienced a different kind of familial life than he had known at home, a kind of intimacy in which there is a “perpetual intercourse of the families.”\textsuperscript{97}

His relationship with Menotti became one of the most important in Barber’s life. Barber and Menotti were lifelong companions and professional colleagues, eventually sharing the home in Mount Kisco, New York, financially aided by the generosity of Mary Curtis Bok. This love affair was never spoken about openly, like many other homosexual partnerships in the early to mid-twentieth century. Samuel Barber was 59 years old when the gay rights movement began with the Stonewall uprising in New York City, and so most of his life as a homosexual was spent in secret. Most likely, he felt that this secrecy was important for the sake of his career.

Following Brett’s ideas about how experiencing life as a gay man might shape compositional output (see Chapter 1), we might infer that the melancholic nature of much of Barber’s music is due to his closeted sexual identity and unspoken relationship with Menotti, as well as the fear

\textsuperscript{95} Ibid., 68.
\textsuperscript{96} Ibid., 68.
\textsuperscript{97} Ibid., 70.
and/or shame of being outed, which may explain this sadness, at least in part. Indeed, I discuss this below.

The third, and arguably most important, influence on Samuel Barber's life and musical development was that of his mentor and uncle, Sidney Homer. Barber and Homer wrote to one another throughout Barber’s education and European travels until the end of Homer’s life. A letter Homer sent to the young composer at Curtis shows how considerably Barber loved his uncle’s songs and also showed Homer as a selfless mentor. Homer introduced many of the artistic principles that shaped Barber’s music throughout his life, as can be seen in this note to Barber:

> Of course, I want you to know all my songs, but as for using them as models, that is a different matter. If you write naturally and spontaneously, you will develop a style of your own, without being conscious of it. It is the unconscious charm that is so elusive and valuable, in art, as in Life. . . .

> Everything depends, now, on the development of your taste and the refinement of your sensibilities. If you think of music from the point of view of sensationalism and publicity, your work will show it. If you learn to love the poetic under-current and the subtilties of beauty and spirituality which have been expressed in music, your work will show it just as much. The wonderful thing about art is that a man can conceal nothing; it reveals him as naked and unadorned. . . . Sincerity and beauty seem to stand the test, but love for mankind and willingness to serve humbly seem to fill the world with joy.  

Barber often set texts by eighteenth and nineteenth century poets that Homer had chosen as well. These included the artistic endeavours of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Robert Herrick, Sir Thomas Wyatt, Walter Savage Landor, Robert Louis Stevenson, Alfred Tennyson, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Lord Byron, Robert Burns, and Charles Kingsley.  

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98 Ibid., 37–8.
99 Ibid., 43.
Homer served as a teacher and a trusted counsellor, helping to develop Barber’s skills with encouragement and criticism when necessary. After Stokowski turned down Barber’s piano concerto, his uncle had some words of advice:

There is one thing that I want to make clear to you, and that is that resentment does not get us anywhere. It only eats the heart out of the resenter, and what is there to that? . . . Things happen, they always have and they always will. But, also, things change. Through it all, a rhinoceros hide is a good thing; the bigger the talent the tougher the hide, say I . . . Resentment eats the heart, but philosophy is an armor that protects the source of future work, which is the one thing that must be kept inviolate. 100

Homer’s advice and encouragement would continue to sustain and support Barber’s creative output and motivation throughout his compositional career. Barber did not let the critics or perceived setbacks impede his creative process, and Homer’s words helped the young composer to keep focused on his ideals. Barber’s penchant for emotionally potent poetry and literature is largely attributed to Sidney Homer’s influence. 101 More importantly, Barber was not just inspired by texts—he mentions being “moved” by them. 102 The search for honest and emotional expression is also something he shared with his uncle. This pursuit results in the attention Barber gave to the details of a composition, particularly the dynamic markings, rhythmic text setting, and tempo indications. All of these details seem to come from emotional intentions; his dynamic markings and tempi often have expressive descriptors, and the meaningful setting of texts was probably the most significant aspect of his compositions aside from the lyric quality of his melodies.

Barber rarely revealed his personal feelings or details of his personal relationships to the public, keeping his life private, very private. The next section explores more personal details about Barber that shed light on the melancholy that pervaded his life and music, as so many writers on

100 Ibid., 76–7 (italics in original).
101 Heyman, Samuel Barber, 46.
102 Heyman, Samuel Barber, 278.
Barber have pointed out. This information gives the performer even more insights into the mindset of the American composer.

2.1 Personal details

Barber’s editor at G. Schirmer, Paul Wittke, gives us many personal details about the composer’s life. Wittke seems to have had a more personal relationship with Barber than most, often describing him as charming, happy, and content in social situations. Wittke says that Barber had an intimidating presence when he walked into a room, but he could make people feel immediately comfortable when he addressed them personally.\(^\text{103}\) Barber could also be tough about getting what he wanted artistically, not as a bully, but rather by using his charm and intellect to convince others he was right.

Barber was quite a different person in his personal life—melancholic and insecure both artistically and also in his personal relationships. The word *melancholy* is used often to describe much of Barber’s musical output as well. Wittke describes the unpredictability of the composer’s moods and his refusal to discuss his musical works in progress with anyone. Indeed, as Wittke asserts, “Music was his life, his private world, and he carefully guarded any attempt to breach the ramparts.”\(^\text{104}\) Wittke also suggests that the musical gestures Barber uses throughout his compositions may offer clues to a subtext in his works. Only with an in-depth study of the scores and an understanding of Barber’s inner turmoil can one fully explore a possible deeper meaning or emotional level in his music.\(^\text{105}\)

The musical experimentation of the twentieth century held little interest for Barber. He continued to compose music much like his late-Romantic predecessors. Wittke comments on how the composer stayed true to his own path:

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\(^\text{104}\) Ibid.

\(^\text{105}\) Ibid.
It took courage to be Samuel Barber in the 1940s; he said so himself. This was the time of the emerging giants—Copland, Thomson, Sessions, Piston, Carter, and company. But despite the derision of his enemies, no one ever denied his polished style or his integrity, nor did they resent his honesty in admitting he wanted to reach a large musical audience. In this he was more than successful. . . . [B]eneath his charm he was deadly serious about his art and had no interest “in superficial nonsense,” by which he meant most of the intellectual and musical currents floating around at that time. He . . . went his own solitary way. . . . Barber’s style—his musical logic, sense of architectural design, effortless melodic gift, direct emotional appeal—remained steadfast no matter what harmonic or rhythmic sophistications he added later.\footnote{106}

Wittke also suggests that there definitely was a “meaning” to Barber’s compositions, although the composer sometimes evaded the topic by saying it’s “just music.”\footnote{107} He suggests that Barber’s choice of the bleak poetry of \textit{Dover Beach} at the young age of 21 shows that melancholy was “endemic to his nature,”\footnote{108} and that \textit{Knoxville, Summer of 1915} provides a glimpse into Barber’s own adolescence in West Chester, Pennsylvania.\footnote{109} Barber says about \textit{Prayers of Kierkegaard} that “one finds here three basic truths(;) [sic] imagination, dialectic, and religious melancholy. The truth he [Kierkegaard] sought after was a truth which was a truth for me.”\footnote{110}

Wittke goes on to say that “the emotive dramatic power and relentless drive of their [with Martha Graham] efforts in the ballet \textit{Medea} (1946) are the result of their complete immersion in the complex and ever reverberating meanings of myth.”\footnote{111} And although the ideas of love and its pitfalls are used in many of his compositions, Wittke claims Barber’s second large choral work, \textit{The Lovers}, is his most audacious work:

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{106} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{107} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{108} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{109} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{110} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{111} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
It is a frank exposure of his undisguised feelings. The cool Barber here exposes a cauldron of emotion, bordering on the world of Menotti—“Love has a bitter core, Vanessa.” It is a prime example of Barber’s ability to fine-tune the sensuous appetites—either restrained or demonic—an ability that gives so much of his work its power and immediacy.\textsuperscript{112}

Barber’s setting of Joyce’s \textit{Fadograph of a Yestern Scene} (1971) also gives insight into the composer’s internal world. Wittke notes that “this gentle, autumnal music, a remembrance of things past, is a resigned acceptance of life’s illusions. It gives us a clue of what Barber was going through during his last years, both emotionally and philosophically.”\textsuperscript{113}

Wittke also offers some insight into the relationship between Barber and Menotti, and their eventual separation. Barber may have appeared more controlled than his Italian partner on the surface, but Menotti had to take care of Barber, whom he said could be over-sensitive and quite emotional. Wittke goes on to say that Barber used musical means in his compositions to reveal “his complicated feelings.”\textsuperscript{114} Closer to the end of his life, separated from Menotti and alone in New York, Barber “battled depression, loneliness, alcoholism, and creative difficulties.”\textsuperscript{115} Menotti was, however, by Barber’s side when he died in January of 1981 from an incurable cancer.

Literary critic Thomas Larson has also written about the “endemic melancholy” that pervades Barber’s life and music. Exploring the source of “emotional tension” in the \textit{Adagio for Strings},\textsuperscript{116} Larson is fascinated by the character of Barber’s music and suggests there is a definite correlation between the music and the man.

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid.
And yet some dark emotion rooted in his core shaped Barber’s childhood and adolescence—lodged in him from birth and emerging as he grew—which might account for his composing a piece of such immense sorrow so early in his life.¹¹⁷

Larson suggests that not only was Barber’s talent apparent at a young age, but perhaps his melancholic nature as well.

He was “making up tunes on the piano” at the age of two. He penned his first piano piece, prophetically entitled Sadness, twenty-three bars in C-minor, at age seven.”¹¹⁸

Larson also believes that Barber’s choices in literature give “access to his inner life, for his choice of texts say a great deal about his emotional makeup.”¹¹⁹ This harkens back to Wittke’s point about Barber’s setting of Dover Beach at such a young age.

A letter that Barber wrote to his mother at the age of nine also gives important insight:

NOTE to Mother and nobody else
Dear Mother: I have written this to tell you my worrying secret. Now don’t cry when you read it because it is neither yours nor my fault. I suppose I will have to tell it now without any nonsense. To begin with I was not meant to be an athlete [sic], I was meant to be a composer, and will be I’m sure. I’ll ask you one more thing.—Don’t ask me to try to forget this unpleasant thing and go play football.—Please—Sometimes I’ve been worrying about this so much that it makes me mad (not very),

Love,

Sam Barber II¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 25–6.
¹¹⁸ Ibid., 26.
¹¹⁹ Ibid.
¹²⁰ Heyman, Samuel Barber, 7.
Larson questions what the young Barber was worrying about. Perhaps he didn’t want to disappoint his parents by not living up to their career expectations, but Michael S. Sherry in his book, *Gay Artists in Modern American Culture*, believes that the young Barber’s real worrying secret is homosexuality, not his career choice. Sherry suggests that his family seemed to support his interests and that “his ambition to compose could not have seemed ‘worrying’”\(^\text{121}\) Rather, Sherry believes that Barber was “signaling” that he’s gay and that his unlikeness to other boys his age would be unacceptable to his family.\(^\text{122}\)

Larson, however, believes his fear isn’t about his musical ambitions or his homosexuality:

> It’s an over-arching fear of telling others *anything* private. This was a core conflict for Barber: He simply had a terrible time being himself—which is moody, withdrawn, unsocial, worried, and gay—especially around others, sometimes even with himself. But as a composer, he discovered that he had no trouble putting his private feelings into music. There, he could express who he was without the pain or anxiety that came with the usual public exposure of the private self.\(^\text{123}\)

In a John Gruen biography of Gian Carlo Menotti, Barber’s partner describes the improprieties of the West Chester community that hid beneath its external charm. Stories of alcoholism, incest, and other terrible things were hidden from public view,\(^\text{124}\) and Thomas Larson suggests this was influential in how Barber dealt with other people:

> From an early age, Barber seemed conflicted about the seemliness of his community and the illicit behaviors that probably were lurking under the surface. And yet it appeared that Barber could never escape its puritanical roots. The West Chester way—a


\(^{122}\) Ibid.

\(^{123}\) Larson, *The Saddest Music Ever Written*, 27.

\(^{124}\) Ibid., 29.
well-oiled public façade protecting private depravity—no doubt taught Barber what to show and what to hide.\textsuperscript{125}

Although outwardly Barber appeared to have everything anyone could ever want—a good education, loving family, successful career, etc.—he was still a tortured soul beneath it all. Larson’s research unearths several important points regarding Barber’s pervasive sadness:

1. In his youth, Barber \textit{managed} his melancholia by keeping it hidden.\textsuperscript{126}

2. His sadness may have much to do with “hiding his homosexuality: he could never quite be himself around others, so he withdrew or was defensive, except in his music.”\textsuperscript{127}

3. Or “perhaps it was not [Barber’s] sexuality per se, but the feelings \textit{generated} by his sexuality that gave him this sense of alienation.”\textsuperscript{128}

4. Barber was estranged from many of the composers of his time and was in many ways homeless in modern music.\textsuperscript{129}

5. “Barber may have repressed his core darkness since it wasn’t easy for him to live up to his own artistic standard, namely, diving into his emotional abyss. Certainly living up to Samuel Barber’s high bar must have, at times, debilitated even Samuel Barber.”\textsuperscript{130}

In the end, Larson agrees with Barber’s long-term friends that his personality was “woe-ridden from birth.”\textsuperscript{131} Larson also thinks that this sadness would grow over time and was alleviated only through composition, that “it took time for him [Barber] to discover just how inalienable the

\textsuperscript{125} Ibid., 29–30.
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid., 35.
\textsuperscript{127} Ibid., 35.
\textsuperscript{128} Daniel Felsenfeld, \textit{Britten and Barber: Their Lives and Their Music} (Amadeus Press, LLC: Pompton Plains, NJ, 2005), 72.
\textsuperscript{129} Larson, \textit{The Saddest Music Ever Written}, 35.
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., 35–6.
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid., 36.
trait of melancholy was in him.” The serious and sombre nature of much of Barber’s music reflects this sensitive and emotional description of the composer. Like Barber himself, his music contains swift changes of mood and a pervading melancholy and loneliness.

2.2 The letters of Sidney Homer

The theme of searching pervades Barber’s life, both musically and spiritually. We see this in the letters between Barber and his Uncle Sidney over the course of their lives, as the relationship between uncle and nephew was powerful and influential. These letters provide unique insight into the young composer’s perspective on the events in his life. Sidney Homer’s philosophies on music affected Barber and shaped both his education and also his musical sensibilities. The letters from Sidney to his nephew are full of philosophical ideals of what he believed music should be: authentic, not pretentious, and an expression of something real even if it is not what the audience necessarily wants to hear. Barber seemed to follow his uncle’s advice, which shaped the young man’s own artistic ideals. In particular, Barber certainly followed his own compositional path in the twentieth century—an antiquated romantic style that added some atonal elements to a highly chromatic tonal language. The following statement by Sidney Homer indicates his beliefs about the emotional connection music makes on composers:

This art of Music certainly makes an appeal to the best in men and arouses feelings that we would, otherwise, hardly know existed. Each day it seems to be more and more to be a modern Religion! With its bible, its power to arouse the noblest aspirations, its complete satisfaction and solace, its endless joy (in a whole lifetime one never tires of its masterpieces), its inexorable demand on humility and service and the purest, most disinterested attitude.

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132 Ibid.
133 Ibid., 35
134 Sidney Homer, letter to Samuel Barber, September 8, 1934.
The two composers, however, were critical of performers who made a public display of what they thought the emotional impact of a composition comprised. To them, the truest performances came from realizing what the composer was attempting to communicate. “The ‘feelings’ of the composer are the first and most important thing in every musical undertaking.”135 Barber disliked performances that were technically accomplished but lacked in honesty and true musical connection. This honest connection is what he thought lifted a performance to a higher level of artistry. The two men described how they felt when they heard such performances, including emotional and visceral reactions rather than academic observations:

We went there to a performance of Otello on New Year’s Day, and I must say I was swept off my feet by the magnificence of the performance and staging, and the power of the music which had never moved me very much before. I confess I wept like a babe quite promptly from the storm scene on. It is a long time since any opera has affected me like that.136

The letters show a mutual appreciation of each other’s talent, an elite level of musical and compositional expectations, and a connection to the creation and performance of music that exceeds mere technical accomplishment. Speaking about the great composers of the past, Homer says that “musical composers were heroes, fighting the battle of musical thought and expression against the selfish hordes of cold and brutal utilitarianism and narrow ignorance and provincialism.”137 Homer passed on his views on the extraordinary value of self-expression and gave reasons why composers do what they do:

The intense desire to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.138

He tries to put into form his real feelings, not feelings he wishes he had.139

135 Sidney Homer, letter to Samuel Barber, September 17, 1936.
136 Samuel Barber, letter to Sidney Homer, January 10, 1951.
137 Sidney Homer, letter to Samuel Barber, September 3, 1925.
138 Sidney Homer, letter to Samuel Barber, July 8, 1926.
139 Ibid.
To write a great work is the summit of human experience, a sublime joy and elevation of which the World is hardly aware and which is worth dying for.\textsuperscript{140}

The letters include no theoretical discussions, just reminders to keep true to the altruistic ideas of creating music. If Barber was true to his “inner voice,” performers and audiences would understand and appreciate what he was trying to convey in his works. Homer also encouraged his nephew to keep writing and not focus much time on conducting, singing, or whatever else creatively competed for his attention. Homer advised that Barber was a composer, and that should always remain his prime focus.

From these letters, one can see that the two men shared a very supportive relationship. Barber often mentioned his admiration for his uncle’s songs. He studied them throughout his lifetime, so much so that the edition of Homer’s complete works that Barber owned needed to be re-bound, and Barber ensured that his uncle’s newer songs were added to the collection. Homer was moved by this and felt a musical kinship with the young composer that seems to be reciprocal in nature: “You are the only one in my narrow life with whom I see eye to eye.”\textsuperscript{141}

Barber was able to express to his uncle some of the anxieties he experienced about composing, and Homer always managed to inspire and encourage him by counselling that these struggles would make him a better composer, just as it had done for all the great composers of the past. Barber seemed to follow much of his mentor’s advice throughout his career:

\begin{quote}
You have the convictions that created your works, and you can only listen to the inner voice that is working with you. Stick by yourself and your convictions and back yourself up, to the limit. That is what every man has had to do who has ever written anything worthwhile.\textsuperscript{142}
\end{quote}

Barber shared each success with his uncle as well. After one unsuccessful performance of \textit{Medea}, the success at the second performance elated the young composer: “But Sat. night’s

\begin{footnotes}
\item[140] Sidney Homer, letter to Samuel Barber, March 4, 1941.
\item[141] Sidney Homer, letter to Samuel Barber, March 4, 1941.
\item[142] Sidney Homer, letter to Samuel Barber, January 31, 1938 (emphasis in original).
\end{footnotes}
audience got it and there was cheering, and I had to come out 3 or 4 times.”

Note that Barber was excited about the audience “getting it,” which suggests that there was some meaning or expression that he intended to communicate to the listener.

Barber’s letters to Sidney describe in remarkable detail the places to which he travelled, his experiences of musical events (of his own compositions as well as others), and his meetings with the artistic elite of Europe and North America, appearing to be honest expressions of Barber’s responses. These letters help conductors know Barber intimately by capturing his turns of phrase and revealing how he looked at the world. Barber had a vivid imagination and a gift for recording these experiences, and his compositions show the same attention to detail in shaping and recreating the musical ideas in his mind. No detail is accidental; each is well-planned and important to the performance. This attention to minutiae is prevalent in all of his compositions. One such example is his account of a trip to Copenhagen, Denmark:

They picked me up that evening, and it was like driving through the night and dark woods into the Seven Gothic Tales which I so love. It was a large country manor house, the host, Alfred Olesen, an old Danish millionaire, welcomed us gravely in the hall before a roaring fire, and rather excessively competent servants whisked away our coats. The house was a strange mixture of beautiful Scandinavian furniture, great chest and high-boys, and dreadful paintings; a large number of huge marble women reclining with Danish babies and a few swans at their breasts, leading the way to the large salon opening out onto a shivering garden and a dark lake.

Although the two World Wars, the Great Depression, and his parents’ religious beliefs did not overtly affect the young composer, each of these events did in some way form Barber’s personality. In his letters to Homer, Barber expressed his opinions on the ravages of World War II, the hypocrisy in the Catholic Church in Rome, the excessiveness of some people’s wealth in Europe, and his participation in UNESCO and ASCAP in getting fair payments for composers. Wittke suggests that Barber was saddened by all these events, and this fed his depression and the

143 Samuel Barber, letter to Sidney Homer, December 21, 1947.
144 Samuel Barber, letter to Sidney Homer, November 20, 1950 (emphasis in original).
melancholy in his music. The following statements about conducting the Berlin Philharmonic show his insight and sensitivity to complex political and spiritual situations:

I am not so naif as not to realize the fact that several years ago these people were my “enemies” and that my personal position in conducting them was, to put it lightly, somewhat precariously “superimposed.” I suddenly recalled while conducting the Second Symphony that this work was composed while I was nominally in that Air Force, which was technically responsible for those square miles of desolation and rubble in the middle of their particular city.

About the war and bureaucracy:

For the whole center of Berlin is simply missing, razed to the ground! . . . Our politicians should ponder over this mental picture occasionally before bragging that we will assume the responsibility of the whole of Europe and Asia. They should also ponder over the enormous new bureaucracy—thousands on thousands—they have built up. It is a horrible new class of “governing” Americans, who must be something like the hated Roman consuls and governors stationed in foreign lands centuries ago. The dogs of economic government. Hateful people, full of cocktails from five P.M. on, and swarming through office after office on floor after floor of the I. G. Farben Building (a sort of Pentagon building taken over by us outside of Frankfurt). Privileged, sleek and fat, often mistreating the Germans while being driven in their government fleets of cars—paid for by our taxes. I had to go through an official cocktail party given for me in Berlin, swarming with them and their provincial wives.

On the Roman Catholic Church:

Closing of the Holy Door, signifying the end of Holy Year in St. Peter’s. This was carried out with the accustomed brilliance and opulence and a general lack of any religious feeling except on the part of the Pope himself, who knelt for a long time on his

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146 Samuel Barber, letter to Sidney Homer, February 23, 1951.
147 Samuel Barber, letter to Sidney Homer, March 1, 1951.
gold cushion before the altar and seemed lost in rapt and dedicated prayer and long silence in the midst of a generally superficial crowd of courtly attendants, who shifted from side to side, kept arranging their robes and looked everywhere, except at His Holiness.\textsuperscript{148}

On real spirituality, (this may have been particularly important as inspiration for the Prayers of Kierkegaard, especially the opening newly composed chant):

\textit{[W]e went with them at midnight to the most moving experience of the Roman week: to a little church, St. Anselmo, on the Avantine, a plain cold little church where a choir of 60 Benedictine monks sang a Gregorian Mass to a few onlookers. The simplicity and sincere style with which they sang this overwhelming music, warmed all the corners of my heart left cold and untouched by the morning’s magnificent pageantry.}\textsuperscript{149}

Barber knew and collaborated with many of the top musicians in the world. Many letters document stories of his experiences with conductors, composers, and the performances of his works. He understood the political climate in the world at large and in his own smaller musical world as well. Barber’s deeply-felt responses to his surroundings and to corresponding events, as evident from these letters, were echoed in his expressive and detailed composition style.

Barber also wrote in this correspondence about his high levels of artistic standards and how his love of poetry and other texts were central to his compositional process. He, like his uncle, had a very learned understanding of literature and was deeply moved by Homer’s words throughout his life. Sidney Homer wrote: “Your work will depend, in a measure, on the men you know, on the taste and perception you encounter, on your own selection of influences. We choose and pay the price.”\textsuperscript{150}

He composed music because it inspired him, never employing a particular style of composition simply because it was the style of the day:

\textsuperscript{148} Samuel Barber, letter to Sidney Homer, January 10, 1951.  
\textsuperscript{149} Samuel Barber, letter to Sidney Homer, January 10, 1951.  
\textsuperscript{150} Sidney Homer, letter to Samuel Barber, January 15, 1934.
I suppose if I’m writing music for words, then I immerse myself in those words, and I let the music flow out of them. When I write an abstract piano sonata or a concerto, I write what I feel. I’m not a self-conscious composer.\textsuperscript{151}

The many dissonances in his music were offensive to some older audience members either because of the subject of the work (e.g., Medea) or because of the violent nature of the music itself.\textsuperscript{152} Yet despite this disapproval, self-expression in art was always paramount to Barber.

Many pilots talked to me of the sensations of flight, the lack of musical climax in flying, the unrelieved tension, the crescendo of descent rather than mounting, and the discovery of a new dimension. How to put this in music, I do not know, but the talks I had with them were wonderful. In some way I shall try to express some of their emotions.\textsuperscript{153}

I enclose the text of a new work, just finished, for lyric soprano and orchestra \textemdash \textit{Knoxville: Summer of 1915}. The text moved me very much. It is by the man who did “Sure on this shining night” - James Agee. It reminded me so much of summer evenings in West Chester, now very far away, and all of you are in it!\textsuperscript{154}

\section*{2.3 Chapter Two conclusion}

The letters Barber exchanged with his uncle give important insight into his compositional ideals and can help performers better understand and present his music. Sidney Homer’s immeasurable philosophical influence affected Barber’s musical and personal ideals throughout his entire life. Uncle and nephew seemed to share similar views on music because the letters indicate no written evidence of disagreements. In reading all the letters between Barber and Homer, one gets a general impression that the musical ideals and philosophies of Sydney Homer might be equally

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\textsuperscript{152} Heyman, \textit{Samuel Barber}, 269. \\
\textsuperscript{153} Samuel Barber, letter to Sidney Homer, September 11, 1943. \\
\textsuperscript{154} Samuel Barber, letter to Sidney Homer, undated.
\end{flushright}
attributed to those of his nephew, especially as Barber followed much, if not all, of his uncle’s advice.

Barber’s detailed written accounts of the events and surroundings on his journeys abroad and in the U.S., illustrate the depth of detailed imagination that permeated his creative output, including a profound sensitivity, particularly to fairness and what is “right” in politics and religion. The written discussions between Barber and Homer on how music moves people in performances shows the performer that emotional impact was important for Barber—that he was trying to express something in his music.

We cannot know for certain what exactly motivated Samuel Barber as he composed. But with this biographical information, the notes sent between Barber and Sidney Homer, and the directions given in the score, the conductor may develop a much “thicker” understanding of the composer and in turn may come closer to realizing the composer’s artistic vision. Along with his immediate circle of relationships and life experiences, the twentieth century affected Barber, as well as other artists and their creations, in important ways, including the complex and difficult life experiences of two world wars and an explosion of compositional styles (atonality, serialism, electronic music, and more). Chapter 3 outlines some of the important events that occurred throughout the world in the late nineteenth until the mid-twentieth centuries.
Chapter 3

Twentieth-Century Musical and Compositional Climate

Every musical era has its own set of issues regarding performance practice and musical ideology. The twentieth century, however, is particularly complex in that the extensive diversity of styles, ideals, and compositional practices changed at a remarkably fast pace compared to prior centuries. The artistic climate of the twentieth century begins with the composers and compositional trends at the end of the nineteenth century in the aftermath of the Industrial Revolution (1760-1840),\(^{155}\) which completely changed how people lived their daily lives due to advances in industry, technology, and science that profoundly altered the use of time and resources. The world started to become a smaller place, with people in one country becoming aware of the artistic and scientific advances made in a country halfway around the world. As it became easier for artists to make connections and gain understandings beyond their own communities, international artistic values began to appear in compositions from every country in the world. Schools of thought transformed quickly and sustained tremendous influence throughout all the arts and their creators. Although primarily Neo-Romantic in style, Barber’s music shows the influence of diverse of twentieth-century music styles. Chapter Three describes the musical-contextual climate, aside from his Uncle Sydney’s influence, that shaped Samuel Barber’s compositional style.

The great composers of the twentieth century were not “giants bestriding the earth,” but rather “fallible human beings reacting to, reflecting, and affecting with symbolic sounds a flux of conditions and events created by other fallible human beings.”\(^{156}\) Many of these composers knew each other—some on friendly terms, and others antagonistic—and their creative output and variety of compositional styles reflects some of these influences. Different styles of composition


occurred simultaneously throughout the twentieth century with frequent debate and constant change in ideologies regarding musical language, tonality versus atonality, and the expressivity of music. Followers of specific schools of thought were passionate in their beliefs and often verbally lashed out at others who disagreed with their way of thinking. This is exemplified by Pierre Boulez, who was one of the loudest of such voices.\textsuperscript{157} Musical fundamentalists attacked one another on matters of theoretical law. Modernists followed new and completely atonal ways of composing and considered those of the “Neo” schools, including neo-classicism and neo-romanticism, old-fashioned. Musical sensibilities and compositions that did not look forward were thought to look backward. Barber received some of the backlash of these new high-modernist views about how music should evolve; his creations, thought to be old-fashioned and cater too much to audience preferences, were therefore not considered true art by many of his contemporaries and critics.\textsuperscript{158}

This war of music consonance versus dissonance that to the average listener may have sounded like noise was often intentional as composers adopted modern trends. Many of these modernist composers held positions of power as the heads of university music programs or donors to such programs.\textsuperscript{159} Having the attention of the “artistic” community, these people were influential in determining which music was considered to be superior and which was deemed as inferior. As a result, two distinct repertoires emerged: the “intellectual” and the “popular.” To the musical elite of the day, there was no overlap between these two types of music; to be deemed popular meant the composition was shallow and unintelligent.\textsuperscript{160} Barber’s music, although highly chromatic and somewhat dissonant, was deemed to be popular and thus shunned by the intellectual and musical elite.\textsuperscript{161}

\textsuperscript{157} Ibid., 392–3.
\textsuperscript{158} Walter Simmons, \textit{Voices in the Wilderness} (Oxford: The Scarecrow Press, Inc.), 243.
\textsuperscript{159} Ibid., 4.
\textsuperscript{160} Ibid., 4-5.
\textsuperscript{161} Simmons, \textit{Voices in the Wilderness}, 248–249.
3.1 An earlier tradition

3.1.1 Strauss and Mahler

Much of the twentieth-century Western art music in Barber’s world grew out of the European traditions of the late-Romantic era. “The first half of the twentieth century witnessed a progressive breakup of the system of music that had prevailed over the preceding two hundred years, roughly from Bach to Richard Strauss.” Although Richard Strauss and Gustav Mahler were both entrenched in the German music tradition, their experimentations began a new era of extreme contrasts. Each in their own way pushed the boundaries of tonal music with their chromatic expansion of the tonal system and influenced Samuel Barber with their music philosophies.

Richard Strauss is best known for his symphonic poems and operas. After composing many instrumental works, Strauss began to use words to supplement the language of music, beginning around the turn of the century. His experimentation with subject matter for his operas scandalized the public of the day, most notably the operas *Elektra* and *Salome*. The latter work shocked many opera enthusiasts at an event in Graz because of its salacious topic; productions in Vienna were banned as a result. Yet Strauss’s music was surprisingly well received by a large number of people even as it blurred the lines of tonality with the use of tritones and bitonality as basic materials of composition. He freely used new and widely varied harmonic ideas, often in opposition to one another; *Salome* ends with eight bars of loud and highly chromatic music, which Alex Ross describes as noise when Salome is sentenced to death. The crowd roared its approval, which was unusual for a work so experimental in its construction. “I was never revolutionary,” Arnold Schoenberg once said. “The only revolutionary in our time was Strauss!”

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163 Ibid., 764-8.
165 Ibid., 6–9.
166 Ibid., 19.
By the time Barber began composition as a young adult, the dissonances employed in *Salome* were much more common. Like Strauss, Barber also used many literary subjects in both his instrumental and vocal compositions. Although most were not as controversial as *Salome*, the texts were chosen for their expressive qualities and were dramatic in nature. Both men shared the gift of dramatic flair in their compositions. In a 2014 article in the New York Times written for Strauss’s 150th birthday, Anthony Tommasini says about Strauss’s final opera, *Capriccio*:

> But the real drama is the aesthetic question of whether words or music are more important when the two are combined. Most of the opera, with a libretto by the composer and Clemens Krauss, unfolds as an argumentative dialogue in music. Yet the score is more complex and experimental than it might seem. Strauss sets the words with music that closely reflects the rhythms and patterns of speech—in a way, a daring approach to opera.167

Strauss and Barber shared similar views of modernism—namely that music was not necessarily an evolving art form in which each innovation, like twelve-tone music, represented the next stage of advancement. The continuous pursuit of modernism for Barber would have felt too agenda driven. In a similar but not identical way, Strauss found a way to remain contemporary while seemingly turning from modernist style.

Another key composer of the era, Gustav Mahler, created compositions that were in some ways less experimental than Strauss; his most significant achievements were in the symphonic format with an ever-expanding harmonic language that obscured the perception of key, the use of “progressive tonality” (ending a work in a different key from the initial one), and larger orchestral forces and instrumental combinations, even using sounds from everyday life (bird calls, bugle signals, etc.).

Mahler also believed in art’s ability to transform society.

In his symphonies he attempted—not always with success—to join sophistication with simplicity, to juxtapose the most lofty, wide-ranging cosmic conceptions and struggles with lyricism, Austrian folksong, nature painting, popular dance rhythms, chorale themes, marches, elements of parody, the spooky, and the grotesque. In his own phrase, each symphony was to be “a world.”

Mahler experienced a great deal of racial tension in his youth, both in the Czech Republic and Germany, which may in part explain his tormented personality. He was an outsider in the Czech Republic since he was Austrian and was ostracized by the Austrians for being Jewish; later in Germany, he would be an outsider for both reasons. Tension between his parents as well as constant childhood illnesses and death among his thirteen siblings exacerbated his difficulties.

All of these circumstances contributed to the “nervous tension, the irony and skepticism, the obsession with death, and the unremitting quest to discover some meaning in life that was to pervade Mahler’s life and music.” Song and symphony were the main vehicles for Mahler’s artistic expression. “In terms of the personal content of his art, it can be said of Mahler, more than of any other composer, that he lived out the spiritual torment of disinheritd modern man in his art, and that the man is the music.”

Many of the attributes heard in the music of Strauss and Mahler, two early twentieth-century giants, can be applied to the music of Samuel Barber, who also tried to express something beyond notes and rhythms in his compositions. Although tonal in overall structure, Barber’s music also uses a dissonant chromaticism for expressive purposes. He also enjoyed the larger selection of orchestral colours of Mahler’s expanded ensembles, even as the modernist movement’s aim was to eliminate all of the excess of the Germanic tradition.

170 Ibid.
171 Ibid.
172 Ibid.
As titans such as Mahler and Strauss continued the Germanic tradition in composition, many other composers experimented with non-traditional harmonies that eventually led to the breakdown of tonality. Although Barber continued his more traditional style of composition, he was open to further exploration of harmonic language. This led to another influence on the young composer: Paris was becoming a mecca for the cultural elite who wanted to explore new ways of composing music and develop their own harmonic idiom.

### 3.1.2 Debussy and Paris

At the start of the twentieth century, Paris became the new centre of experimental music and provided a stark contrast to the staunch Germanic tradition of Vienna; although atonal music had its beginnings even before the experimentation of Strauss and Mahler (e.g., Franz Liszt made use of tritones, augmented chords, and unresolved sevenths, creating harmonies that stretched the boundaries of tonality), atonality was now the central feature of the experimental music in Paris, where Claude Debussy became part of the inception of this new avant-garde movement. Debussy attended the elite Tuesday gatherings of artists and thinkers hosted by symbolist poet, Stéphane Mallarmé, attempting to find in this environment a “truthful musical language” outside of the Germanic tonal tradition. The composer made use of many new and international sources including Asian influences, in particular the Javanese gamelan ensemble. Debussy took simple images that fired his imagination and tried to recreate them in music.

Louis Laloy, Debussy’s first French biographer, revealed in 1909 that “he received his most profitable lessons from poets and painters, not from musicians,” while Debussy himself told Varèse in 1911, “I love pictures almost as much as music.” Tonality was not a necessity for Debussy, as he explored many other scales that bordered on atonality. Whole-tone scales, pentatonic scales, and antique modes replaced the usual major/minor scales. Octaves and fifths in

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173 Ibid., 43.
174 Ibid., 44.
175 Ibid., 44–5.
the bass with narrower intervals in the higher registers resulted in playing the harmonic series against itself. Self-sufficient dominant seventh chords, no Germanic development of thematic materials, alternative scales, and melodies containing awkward intervallic relationships were all part of Debussy’s musical vocabulary. Debussy’s many influences crossed national and political borders. As a composer of the emerging and rapidly changing modern era, he and other musicians and artists were inspired by the creations of the world, and these new ideas contributed to their works. It was no longer possible to create in isolation from other ideas.

Barber also searched for a musical language that was all his own to express his thoughts and feelings. While Debussy, for at least part of his compositional life, created musical imagery to portray his subject matter, Barber also seemed to tell stories with his music, as many of his compositions were based on literary subjects. The drama in the texts Barber chose to set to music was expressed through a harmonic language that, like Debussy, embraced unresolved seventh chords and eliminated the usual resolution of chords within the typical chord progression. Barber chose harmonies for the expressive attributes that helped convey the ideas of the text, both in his instrumental and vocal/choral works.

3.1.3 Atonality—the next step

The cult-like fanaticism in the world of modern art and the politics of fascism both purported to transform the world into a new utopia that promised glory. Similarly, Schoenberg took the compositional technique of atonality to new extremes: he wanted to revolutionize music, and pursued his goals with intense passion and enthusiasm. He wanted music to evolve, and he believed that true art needed to be made in complete isolation, loneliness, and heartlessness. What had begun with Claude Debussy was now taken to extremes by Schoenberg. There were, in

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177 Ibid., 47.
178 Ross. The Rest Is Noise, 48
179 Ibid., 37.
180 Ibid., 38.
effect, two avant-gardes emerging simultaneously: in Paris the music focused on the brightly lit world of daily life, and in Germany, the music pursued the terrible depths of the human soul.\textsuperscript{181}

3.1.4 Schoenberg

Schoenberg began his new style with condensation, which means throwing off the excess baggage of the lush and grandiose orchestrations of the Romantic era. Unrooted triads, ambiguous transitional chords, stark dissonances, and crystalline monadic lines were now part of his compositional language.\textsuperscript{182} Schoenberg endured many emotional difficulties in his life, but he decided to harness his suffering and use these experiences in his music. This new music was less and less about tonalities colliding, but rather about chords dissolving into a matrix of intervals.\textsuperscript{183} In his \textit{Second Quartet} (1908), Schoenberg introduced a soprano in the last two movements in order to manipulate the poet’s pain to expressive ends, and in the process to cleanse himself of the emotional traumas in his own life.\textsuperscript{184}

Schoenberg’s creations that explored this new language were laughed at by audiences, leaving him feeling as if he stood alone against a world of enemies. Schoenberg believed that “art belongs to the \textit{unconscious}!” and that “One must express oneself! Express oneself \textit{directly}! Not one’s taste, or one’s upbringing, or one’s intelligence, knowledge or skill.”\textsuperscript{185} He underscored his artistic beliefs with the statement, “I strive for: complete liberation from all forms, from all symbols of cohesion and of logic.”\textsuperscript{186} He believed that the new music was a logical outcome of an historical process—extreme chromaticism led to this point. Schoenberg merely facilitated the emancipation of the dissonance.\textsuperscript{187}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[181] Ibid., 49.
\item[182] Ibid., 52–3.
\item[183] Ibid., 55.
\item[184] Ibid., 55.
\item[185] Ibid., 62 (italics in original).
\item[186] Ibid., 62.
\item[187] Ibid., 62.
\end{footnotes}
Barber, although differing in compositional style from Schoenberg, also felt alone as he continued to compose with what others deemed an archaic musical language. Barber never abandoned the symbols of cohesion and logic like Schoenberg did. However, the two men shared the same ideal of self-expression at all costs.

3.1.5 Stravinsky

Igor Stravinsky synthesized the arts of music and dance in his ballet collaborations without resorting to the extremes of scale that characterized Wagner’s work. Stravinsky made much of his mark on the musical scene in Paris with the theatrical events arranged by Diaghilev, the impresario of the Ballets Russes. Although Stravinsky denied it, he was heavily influenced by the folk music of his native Russia. He described his homeland as a force of beautiful, healthy barbarism, which could also describe much of his music at this time. Stravinsky’s main musical legacy was in the realm of rhythm. He became famous for Petrushka and Firebird, and the choreography employed in his ballets; a natural flowing movement that mimicked the energy of the modern urban crowd was in opposition to the ideals of academic ballet. His most famous piece, The Rite of Spring, is known for its rhythmic drive, off-beat accents, and the folk materials employed. The melodies were pared down into motivic bits and layered into cubist collages that fused national and modern sounds with moments of tonality within the dissonances. The audience at the notorious premiere of The Rite of Spring in Paris became riotous because of the scandalous music and choreography.

Like Stravinsky, Barber also ventured into the world of ballet music—twice—with his ballet Medea, Op. 23, and Souvenirs, Op. 28. Medea was a collaboration between the young composer and the famous American choreographer, Martha Graham, and employed some of the pulsating rhythms that Stravinsky introduced in many of his compositions to portray Medea’s vengeance. According to Menotti, Martha Graham had a way of giving vivid and detailed descriptions of the

188 Ibid., 97.
189 Ibid., 94.
190 Ibid., 98.
191 Ibid., 81–2.
scenario and mood of the dance she strived to create. “Martha has the extraordinary gift of inspiring her composers by throwing them all sorts of visual images. Often she does this in a rather inarticulate way, but somehow through her great effort to express herself, the ideas become even more expressive.” Barber may have found another like-minded artist in Graham, one who created with the same excitement and fervour as he did. Barber later abridged this work to stand on its own in a shorter one-movement version.

*Souvenirs*, an adaptation of piano duets Barber wrote in 1952, was choreographed by Balanchine.

In 1952, I was writing some duets for one piano to play with a friend, and Lincoln Kirstein suggested I orchestrate them for a ballet. Commissioned by the Ballet Society, the suite consists of a waltz, schottische, pas de deux, two step, hesitation tango, and gallop. One might imagine a divertissement in a setting of the Palm Court of the Hotel Plaza in New York, the year about 1914, epoch of the first tangos; “Souvenirs”—remembered with affection, not in irony or with tongue in cheek, but in amused tenderness.193

This is one of many examples of Barber using his own life experiences in his compositions. Because his mother used to take him to the Plaza in New York City for tea, the Palm Court was therefore sentimentally important to him, and appeared as a backdrop for this new ballet.194

### 3.2 The new music

There was a great deal more musical experimentation in the twentieth century, but much of it had negligible influence on Barber’s compositional style. Many of these new schools of composition were not concerned with the expression of feelings as was Barber: the music was either experimental (electronic music, chance music, strict serialism and the like) or moved into the more straightforward and simplistic compositional genres (jazz and Broadway). But a brief look

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193 Ibid., 328–329.
194 Ibid., 329
at the rest of the musical world helps to situate and understand Samuel Barber’s place among the extremes.

3.2.1 The musical climate: The United States

Three major styles of concert music emerged in 1920s America that captured a large portion of the US musical audience. The first was avant-garde, which was extremely modern in its experimental nature. The second was classical music that employed elements of jazz. And the popular third style emerged from the developing theatre movements of Broadway. Audiences were receptive to these new and unusual sounds created by composers. American art music began as an extension of the European tradition, but this new “adolescence” in its musical development became much more experimental and rambunctious. Edgar Varèse was the leader of this New York City ultra-modern avant-garde. The new music even included the noises of everyday urban life—the sounds of traffic, sirens, and the like. Streams of sensations replaced lyricism; acerbic harmonies and Stravinsky-like rhythms were employed instead of folksongs and popular melodies. This was the beginning of music by composers who did not care whether their compositions were popular or liked. Other prominent composers of this time included Charles Ives, George Antheil, and Virgil Thompson, who used various elements of the modern music, but none in exactly the same way.

The bold experimentation of jazz musicians and composers was not universally well received, but despite artistic criticism, jazz took the United States and other parts of the world by storm. The world was changing in the “Roaring 20s,” and many thought concert music was a thing of the past with nothing new to offer its audiences. The popular artists of jazz and Broadway were now the major artists. Although Samuel Barber did not venture deeply into these musical styles, several sections in his compositions are jazz-influenced, including his ballet Medea, the piano work Excursions, and the one-act opera, A Hand of Bridge. In Prayers of Kierkegaard, Barber also employed the use of real church bells, one onstage and one offstage, before the final chorale.

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195 Ross, The Rest Is Noise, 147.
196 Ibid., 148–9.
197 Wittke, “Samuel Barber: An Improvisatory Portrait,”
Although these are not urban and perhaps not as commonplace as street noises, Barber specifically wanted church bells rather than tubular bells for the performance.¹⁹⁸

3.2.2 The musical climate: Berlin in the 20s

While jazz characterized 1920s America, the musical and political climate in the Weimar Republic can be easily understood by exploring the hectic and melodramatic culture of its capital city, Berlin. Within this political upheaval, were two main streams of music: pop and classical. Jazz rhythms, sounds of industry, and the fast-paced sounds of the 1920s streets were used in popular music. Musical works created during this time were considered Gebräuchsmusik, or “music for use,” aimed toward the broader audience and not just the elite. Paul Hindemith wrote a type of music that reflected his no-nonsense personality. “Beauty of sound is beside the point,”¹⁹⁹ he once stated to an instrumentalist.

Schoenberg considered all popular music degenerate and continued his compositions in the twelve-tone technique. In his lecture, “Composition with Twelve Tones,” he stated that “the term emancipation of the dissonance refers to its [dissonance’s] comprehensibility, which is considered equivalent to the consonance’s comprehensibility. A style based on this premise treats dissonances like consonances and renounces a tonal centre.”²⁰⁰ He used the tone rows very strictly in the original order, but also in inversion, retrograde, and even in a combination of all of these. Audiences did not enjoy this new music, which made Schoenberg very happy. “Art is from the outset naturally not for the people.”²⁰¹

Barber took concepts from both sides of this musical debate, using whatever technique best expressed the ideas and feelings he wanted to convey. For the most part, he was a populist composer, not in his use of the popular new styles of jazz and the like, but rather in his continuation of the Romantic language and expressivity of the previous century. But when needed, as in one section of his first large scale choral-orchestral work, Prayers of Kierkegaard,

¹⁹⁸ Heyman, Samuel Barber, 353–354.
¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 198.
Barber borrowed Schoenberg’s twelve-tone technique, albeit loosely, to convey the struggle of keeping faith and religious fervour. His use of jazz elements was mentioned earlier in the discussion of the American musical climate.

### 3.3 Music, war, and politics

No one was left unaffected by the horrors of the twentieth century’s two world wars, and many composers expressed their reactions in their musical output. Many were also pressured to write music for others’ political agendas or face dire consequences.\(^{202}\) The approach of the Second World War, dictatorships and other controlling political figures, and a new hierarchy of “important” composers all contributed to the choice of subject matter, architectural structure, and musical language of the works composed in the first half of the twentieth century.\(^ {203}\)

Barber’s musical choices were spared the dire consequences of composers in Russia or Germany who were put to death for their failure to conform to the cultural dictates of extremist regimes, but his continued exploration of tonality as a means of expression in a time of musical experimentation put him at odds with the intellectual music community. The political consequences of his choices did not end his life, but his musical reputation was at times greatly compromised because of his adherence to the Romantic era’s expression through tonal means.\(^ {204}\)

#### 3.3.1 Music in pre-World War II America

As Hitler invaded more and more countries, musicians were among the many who decided to escape to the U.S.A. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt welcomed them, trying to create a “middlebrow” vision of America, one that relied on democratic capitalism but still accommodated the high culture of the arts in Europe. Roosevelt wanted to bring classical tastes to the masses, and the US already had a number of very successful composers that included

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\(^{202}\) Ibid., 237–8.

\(^{203}\) Ibid.

\(^{204}\) Simmons, *Voices in the Wilderness*, 243.
Samuel Barber, as well as Aaron Copland and Roy Harris. Radio, recordings, and films brought this music to people of all economic backgrounds.\textsuperscript{205}

The use of sound added to motion pictures at this time created a new need for classical composers. The creation of electronic recordings, the microphone, and radio transmission allowed all people to experience this elite music outside of the concert hall. Toscanini and Stokowski raced to record all the past classics and selected music by a few American composers, including Barber’s, for a mass audience;\textsuperscript{206} however, their efforts to reach the masses with this music was impeded by the widespread popularity of jazz and big band music, which many felt better expressed what the U.S. was going through in the Depression and war.\textsuperscript{207}

Barber thrived, at first, during this resurgence of American music on the world stage. He was the first American composer to have a composition conducted by the great Toscanini. His music became very popular among American concert-goers and lifted the status of American music and its composers to international prominence. International conductors clamoured to conduct and record Barber’s works, and \textit{Adagio for Strings} became his most famous work.

\section*{3.4 Post-World War II}

The avant-garde of the 1950s brought even more change. The Darmstadt Festival was initiated as an American-supported modern music experiment,\textsuperscript{208} but only helped widen the divide between popular and modern classical music. For example, composers such as Pierre Boulez, a major player at the festival, accepted only the most experimental music of Schoenberg or later. The language of modern music was now reinvented almost yearly, accompanied by a variety of revolutions, counterrevolutions, theories, attacks on other composers, alliances, and party splits. Music that was considered insufficiently progressive was shunned and demeaned. Even

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{205} Ross, \textit{The Rest is Noise}, 284–90.
\item \textsuperscript{206} Ibid., 286–7.
\item \textsuperscript{207} Ibid., 286.
\item \textsuperscript{208} Ross, \textit{The Rest Is Noise}, 376–82.
\end{itemize}
Schoenberg was criticized for some of his music that had a semblance of tonality. He stated, “I do not compose principles, but music.”

Through Darmstadt, music entered a state of perpetual revolution. Pierre Schaeffer, Karl Stockhausen, and Milton Babbitt created complex musical compositions that seemed to belong in a physicist’s lab rather than in a concert hall.

The 1960s continued this trend of avant-garde experimentation in classical composition, which seemed to be a response to all the terrible events earlier in the century called “the century of death.” Throughout all of this, Barber never abandoned tonality in any of his American Neo-Romantic compositions, but he did adopt several modern techniques to better express the mood he sought for any given work.

The twentieth century’s compositional kaleidoscope ensured that various musical schools of thought were at odds with each other about the direction music was to take in the future. Ongoing debates about whether atonality, twelve-tone composition, serialism, indeterminacy, micro-tonality, or electronic music would be the musical language to reign over tonality. The composers of the Modernist movement, including Boulez, Stockhausen, and Babbitt, ruled the musical scene as heads of music departments at the largest universities, disparaging anyone who disagreed with their scientific approach to composition. They dismissed as lesser artists the composers who were popular successes, as they believed that the two possibilities could not exist in the same artist. The public, however, embraced none of these new compositional approaches. Audiences seemed to still prefer compositions and composers who remained in the realm of tonality.

In the late 1970s, composers like George Rochberg, Jacob Druckman, and David Del Tredici started to question these modernist attitudes, thinking that perhaps tonality had its place in

209 Ibid., 389.
210 Ibid., 425.
211 Ibid., 426.
212 Ibid., 484.
213 Ibid., 380–3.
modern composition, after all. Neo-Romantic figures, like Samuel Barber, had created an important repertoire of great compositions of which the listening public was deprived because of the modernist, elitist attitude. These composers, born between 1880 and 1930, were more concerned with their own individual expressive ideas than they were in following the latest compositional fad. Many of these composers were concerned with evoking mood, depicting drama, and expression of personal, subjective emotions. Modernist and critical views held that an appeal to the emotions represented a lower form of artistic expression, leading one to question why intellectual appeal is superior to emotional appeal. An appeal to the emotions does not arguably compromise compositional values, but instead can produce an even more intense artistic experience.

The compositional languages adopted by the traditionalists of the twentieth-century allowed for a richer, subtler, more varied range of musical expression than ever before in history. That is, the renunciation of tonality as a functional structural principle—without its being replaced by an arbitrary system like serialism—freed tonality to function within itself as an expressive parameter of the greatest nuance, in conjunction with other parameters like melody, rhythm, tone colour, and so on.

American Neo-Romantics (ANRs) were similar to the European late-Romantics in emotional expression, use of lush instrumentation, and use of a chromatic harmonic language, but the American way of composition differed. ANR music is characterized by:

- a more economical and disciplined use of classical forms and more modest durational proportions;
- a heightened importance of rhythmic drive and more varied use of percussion, which identified the compositions as “American”;
- an expanded potential for dissonant harmonic language that includes more sevenths, ninths, and elevenths; and

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214 Simmons, *Voices in the Wilderness*, 7.
215 Ibid., 9-10.
216 Ibid., 11.
217 Ibid., 8.
• a different approach to tonality in which a tonal centre may not be apparent at any given moment, but tonality functions as a local expressive device, giving a sense of emotional stability or lack thereof, in the work at hand, creating heightened emotional contrasts.\textsuperscript{218}

The compositions of these ANRs were characterized by “an overall seriousness of purpose reflected in works of ambitious scope that attempt[ed] to address the fundamental existential and spiritual concerns of humanity.”\textsuperscript{219} They each had their own unique vision and voice in the compositions.

3.5 Samuel Barber’s music in the twentieth century

“Neo-Romantic” aptly describes Samuel Barber’s music, compositional style, and philosophical ideals. He had a seriousness of purpose in his desire to convey stories derived from great literature. His works were definitely ambitious in scope but used an economy of form; he used rhythmic drive, a varied percussion, and perhaps most importantly, he continued to expand the use of chromaticism within a tonal structure. All of these compositional ideals were definitely influenced by the compositions of Strauss, Mahler, Debussy, and even Schoenberg. Tonality and chromaticism functioned to express whatever emotional ideas the text demanded of the music.

Being ostracized by the musical elite affected Barber. Early in his career he was very popular with audiences and critics, but as modernist ideals took hold the musical elite came to consider his music old-fashioned and without significance for the future of musical art.\textsuperscript{220} The letters between Barber and Homer often discussed the necessity of following an inner voice: composing the music that meant something to \textit{him} rather than following any one modernist movement. Throughout his career, though, Barber seemed to crave appreciation from both audiences and critics. Early in Barber’s compositional career when American composers were just beginning to gain international recognition on the same level as the European composers and after proving

\textsuperscript{218} Ibid., 9–13.
\textsuperscript{219} Ibid., 14.
\textsuperscript{220}
himself worthy of international attention, Barber was now being dismissed as an overly traditional composer. But Barber believed, as did many Neo-Romantic composers, that emotional appeal in music is not a lower form of artistic expression and that such music was as intelligent in its creation as music that appealed primarily to the intellect.\textsuperscript{221}

The influence of earlier twentieth-century composers can readily be found in much of Barber’s compositional output. He employed controversial topics for some of his compositions (the vengeance and jealousy of \textit{Medea}, the sexual nature of \textit{The Lovers}), as did Strauss. His intense use of rhythmic drive and unusual percussion (\textit{Prayers of Kierkegaard}) may be attributed to Stravinsky. Extensive use of sevenths, ninths, and the like in his harmonic language may have been influenced by Debussy. His loose implementation of twelve-tone technique in the \textit{Prayers of Kierkegaard} was inspired by Schoenberg but was used for emotional or artistic impact within the collection of prayers. Nationalism could even be attributed to Barber’s music, particularly the vocal work, \textit{Knoxville: Summer of 1915}, which evoked a clear representation of summers in the south and was considered a classic in the library of American music.

Barber, like most musicians throughout the world, was affected by WWII. He became an instrument for American propaganda by composing music for the Air Force into which he was drafted; the men’s choral piece, \textit{A Stopwatch and an Ordinance Map} (1940), must have been influenced by his war experience. While conducting the Berlin Philharmonic after the war, Barber understood the irony and the awkwardness of the situation, as evidenced in the letter of Sidney Homer quoted in Chapter Two.

\textbf{3.6 Chapter Three conclusion}

The twentieth century brought many changes for people and music around the world. The lasting effects of the Industrial Revolution, the Great Wars, and artistic innovations were felt globally more than ever before. All of these conditions influenced artists who had now more choices than ever in creating artistic works. These choices inspired, excited, and confused artists all at the same time. Samuel Barber’s twentieth century was rather comfortable, both financially and

\textsuperscript{221} Ibid., 11.
politically, compared to other composers throughout the world, but many of these events and situations still affected the young composer. With the information gathered in Chapters 2 and 3, a “thicker” understanding of Samuel Barber and his life becomes apparent. In the context of this understanding, Chapters Four and Five provide a dramaturgical approach to analyses for two of his most famous choral works.
Chapter 4

Reincarnations: A Dramaturgical Analysis

While Chapter 2 outlined significant events in Barber’s life, Chapter 3 explored the political and cultural climate in the United States and throughout the world. These two elements establish the context in which Barber composed. The next step in this dramaturgical approach is to examine details of the specific works in question, which follows a general discussion about the texts. The three works that comprise Barber’s Reincarnations will be examined by thorough musical-theoretical analysis, implications for interpretation, and implications for vocal and choral implementation.

4.1 Introduction to Poetry in Reincarnations

Of the five texts from Stephens’s Reincarnations that Barber had originally chosen to set to music, he completed music for only the three poems found in his op. 16 we have today. The annotation, “After the Irish of Raftery,” appears under the poet’s name, James Stephens, for all of the texts in the set. The Irish poet Anthony Raftery, nearly blind since the age of five, is a legend in Ireland for his brilliant writing and recitation of poetry. Raftery was not like other poets of his day who were educated professionals of means who wrote for pay. He considered himself an “artist” in the idealized sense of the word, not seeking financial success through his work, but merely desiring an existence that would allow him to continue creating and performing his artistic creations. The poet could not even read: his education depended on others reading to him about the gods and goddesses found in the book he carried with him—a Pantheon. Once asked who he was, the poet replied:

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222 Jeffers, Reincarnations, 4.
223 Ibid., 6.
224 Ibid., 6.
I am Raftery the poet,
Full of hope and love,
With eyes that have no light,
With gentleness that has no mercy.

Going west upon my pilgrimage
(Guided) by the light of my heart,
Feeble and tired,
To the end of my road.

Behold me now,
And my back to a wall
A-playing music
Unto empty pockets.\textsuperscript{225}

Among Raftery’s writings are “love songs in praise of beautiful women, religious songs, and historical songs.”\textsuperscript{226} The author’s performance of these songs kept the people, events, and places of his subject matter alive in the hearts and minds of the Irish people. Two of these real historical figures were Mary Hynes and Anthony O’Daly. Raftery wrote these and most of his poems based on real people and places, common events, and uncommon beauties and tragedies from the \textit{Book of the People}. The language employed is heartfelt, simple, and direct, and easily understandable by the people of Ireland.\textsuperscript{227}

Douglas Hyde and Lady Gregory collected and helped revive Raftery’s poetry after he was buried in an unmarked pauper’s grave in Ireland.\textsuperscript{228} Some of the poems were written down, but many were handed down in oral tradition. Hyde went around “Raftery’s Ireland” taking down accounts of the poetry the poet had left behind with the people of Ireland. Hyde was also a great proponent of de-Anglicizing Ireland and teaching modern Irish in the school system—perfectly aligning himself with his love of the poetry of Raftery.\textsuperscript{229} The manuscript of Raftery’s poems that Lady Gregory of Coole obtained from a Kelleenan stonemason became a critical resource for Hyde’s studies. Hyde collected many of Raftery’s poems from singers and storytellers,

\textsuperscript{225} Ibid., 7.
\textsuperscript{226} Ibid., 5.
\textsuperscript{227} Ibid., 5–7.
\textsuperscript{228} Ibid., 9.
\textsuperscript{229} Ibid., 10–11.
“translating them into a kind of Gaelic-English,” with an introduction of stories collected by Lady Gregory from peasants at the Gort Workhouse. A collection of Raftery’s poems was published in 1903.\textsuperscript{230}

James Stephens, the poet associated with the poem used by Samuel Barber in his composition \textit{Reincarnations}, was also involved in the Irish Literary Revival at the turn of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{231} Of these Irish texts that he was helping to re-Gaelicize, he wrote:

The nation that has a mythology is blessed beyond expression. She has but to bathe again in her own fountains to be refreshed from whatever travail, and Ireland is returning to her fountains.\textsuperscript{232}

Stephens’s use of Raftery’s poems in Gaelic and Hyde’s literal Anglo-Irish prose and verse translations collaboratively create new poems based on the old—a reincarnation. A “Note” at the end of the 1918 publication of Stephens’s \textit{Reincarnations} explains:

This book ought to be called Loot or Plunder or Pieces of Eight or Treasure Trove, or some name that would get away from its source, for although everything in it can be referred to the Irish of from one hundred to three hundred years ago the word translation would be a misdescription. . . . Some of the poems owe no more than a phrase, a line, to the Irish, and around these scraps I have blown a bubble of verse and made my poem.\textsuperscript{233}

Stephens was greatly inspired by other writers’ poetry. The emotional connection Stephens felt with these works was akin to Barber’s need for a real connection and honest self-expression. On his first reading of writings by Blake, Stephens expresses his excitement and personal connection to the words. An explosion of writing followed that year, inspired by these deep feelings:

It was as though I had found a father and a mother and a fortune. A phrase from him could set me drunk, and if I did not always understand what he was saying, understand

\textsuperscript{230} Ibid.,11–13.  
\textsuperscript{231} Ibid.,13.  
\textsuperscript{232} Ibid.,13.  
\textsuperscript{233} Ibid.,14.
that is in terms of logic, I knew what he was saying by the sense he had awakened in me, by the emotion which was like a bridge thrown between the dead man and the living one. In truth we understand far more than we can ever talk about or give an intellectual shape to.\textsuperscript{234}

There was also a great affinity between Raftery and Stephens, both loving the beauties and judgement of nature described in much of Rafery’s writing.\textsuperscript{235}

4.2 “Mary Hynes”

4.2.1 Poetry text of “Mary Hynes”

Stevens was particularly inspired by images in nature as he wrote all three poems. “Mary Hynes” has many nature images: she is the “sky of the sun;” her radiance is “as the sun is above the moon;” she is “the Blossom of the Branches,” the “Blossom of Youth,” “jewel-woman,” “flower of Ireland,” “Posy Bright,” and “Star of Light.” Her extreme human beauty is compared over and over again with beautiful images found in nature. Below is the original poem by Raftery, as told by Tommy Hynes, related to Mary Hynes and written down by Douglas Hyde.

\textbf{Mary Hynes, or The Posy Bright}

Going to Mass of me, God was GRACIOUS,
    The day came RAINY and the wind did blow,
And near Kiltartan I met a MAIDEN
    Whose love enslaved me and left me low.
I spoke to her gently, the courteous MAIDEN,
    And gently and GAILY she answered so:
“Come, Raftery, with me, and let me TAKE YOU
    To Ballylee\textsuperscript{236}, where I have to go.”

When I got the offer, I did not put off (its acceptance)
    I laughed, and my heart bounded;

\textsuperscript{234} Ibid.,16.
\textsuperscript{235} Ibid.,17.
\textsuperscript{236} Spelling from the original poem; Stephens and Barber use the spelling “Ballylea.”
We had only to go across the field,
    And we only brought the day to the back of the house.
There was laid for us a table on which was a glass and a quart,
    And the ringletted coolun beside me sitting,
‘Twas what she said, “Raftery be drinking, and a hundred welcomes,
    The cellar is strong in Ballylee.”

It is **lovely and airy** on the side of the mountain
Looking down upon Ballylee,
Walking in the grass, picking nuts and blackberries,
    The warbling of birds there is all as one as fairy music.
What is the good of all that, till you would get a sight
    Of the blossom of the branches who is by its side;
There is no use in denying it, and conceal it from no one,
    She is the sky of the sun and the love of my heart.

I travelled England and France together,
    Spain and Greece and back again,
From the brink of Loch Greine to the Mouth of the Quay,
    And I never saw a faireen at all like her.
If I were wed to the Blossom of Youth,
    Through Loch and Toraic I would follow her,
Harbours and coasts I would walk, and roads,
    After the jewel-woman who is in Ballylee.

It is Mary Hynes the courteous, stately woman,
    Of nicest mien and most lovely appearance;
Two hundred clerks, and put them together,
    One third of her accomplishments they could not write.
She beat Deirdre for fineness, and Venus,
    And if I were to mention Helen by whom Troy was destroyed,
But she is the flower of Ireland on account of all that,
    The Posy Bright who is in Ballylee.

O Star of Light, O Sun of Harvest,
    O Amber Coolun, (my) share of the world,
Would you proceed with me, against Sunday,
    Until we take counsel where shall our sitting be.
I would not think it much for you, music every Sunday night,
    And, O King of Glory, may the road dry,
Until I find the way to Ballylee.238

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237 The underlined text highlights the lines James Stephens used for his poems.
238 Ibid., 15-16.
With the descriptions of Mary Hynes collected by Lady Gregory and Douglas Hyde and the underlined sections of Hyde’s Anglo-Irish translation, Stephens created his own poem:

**Mary Hynes**

She is the sky of the sun,  
   She is the dart  
       Of love,  
   She is the love of my heart,  
She is a rune,  
       She is above  
The women of the race of Eve  
As the sun is above the moon.

Lovely and airy the view from the hill  
   That looks down Ballylea;  
But no good sight is good until  
   By great good luck you see  
The Blossom of the Branches walking towards you  
   Airily.\(^{239}\)

4.2.2 Music analysis of “Mary Hynes”

This section comprises a technical musical analysis of each of the three pieces in the *Reincarnations* set. Based on my analyses, I discuss implications for interpretation and vocal directives. This section completes the collection of information that is part of the dramaturg’s role. The dramaturg-conductor must then choose the most important points for their interpretive decisions.

Samuel Barber composed *Reincarnations: Mary Hynes, Op. 16, No. 1*, based on a poem by James Stephens after the Irish of Raftery, which was published by G. Schirmer, Inc., in 1940. Voiced as an SATB a cappella composition with Soprano (C4 to A5), Alto (G♯5 to E5), Tenor (E3 to A4), and Bass (F2 to D♭4). The analysis is discussed for sections A (mm. 1–18), A\(^1\) (mm. 19–38), and B (mm. 38–66).

\(^{239}\) Ibid., 16.
Table 1. Music Analysis of “Mary Hynes”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Section A, mm. 1–18</th>
<th>Sec. A', mm. 19–38</th>
<th>Sec. B, mm. 38–66</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phrase 1</strong>, mm 1–5</td>
<td>She is the sun!</td>
<td><strong>Phrase 1</strong>, mm 19–24</td>
<td><strong>Phrase 1</strong>, mm 38–51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phrase 2</strong>, mm. 6–10</td>
<td>She is a rune</td>
<td><strong>Phrase 2</strong>, mm. 25–30</td>
<td>Lovely and airy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phrase 3</strong>, mm. 11–16</td>
<td>She is above</td>
<td><strong>Phrase 3</strong>, mm. 31–38</td>
<td><strong>Phrase 2</strong>, mm. 51–57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phrase 4</strong>, mm. 16, beat 3–18</td>
<td>Ah</td>
<td></td>
<td>But no good sight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Phrase 3</strong>, mm. 57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phrase 4</strong>, mm. 16, beat 3–18</td>
<td>Ah</td>
<td></td>
<td>The Blossom of Branches</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Allegro, no metronome marking</th>
<th><strong>allargando</strong> in m. 34; <em>a tempo</em> in m. 35</th>
<th><strong>Più tranquillo</strong>; <em>poco rit</em> in m. 57; <em>a tempo</em> in m. 58; <em>rit</em> in m. 65</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tempo</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Harmony</strong></td>
<td>1. Begins on a B half-diminished seventh chord; diatonic for first three mm., chromaticism follows; fast moving chord changes; ends on a B major chord.</td>
<td>1. same as A</td>
<td>1. Bb major key area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. begins on a G major chord; followed by imitative entrances T-A-B-S</td>
<td>2. same as A</td>
<td>2. chromatic alterations, almost in F major; moves through D major area briefly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. imitative entrances beginning with S-A on unison A; A natural minor mm. 11-13, chromatics at m. 13, all voices end on B</td>
<td>3. fast moving chord changes begins in F major and ends on Bb major</td>
<td>3. downbeat of m. 58 begins same chord progression as A section with minor alterations; ending has abrupt changes of “key centres”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Melody</th>
<th>mostly stepwise and small leaps; Altos have descending minor 6th in m. 2; Basses have ascending P12 in m. 3</th>
<th>mostly stepwise and small leaps; Altos have descending minor 6th in m. 21; Basses have ascending P12 in m. 22</th>
<th>use of P4ths and 5ths in thematic material; otherwise small leaps or stepwise; B line jumps an 8ve in m. 44</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1. use of P4ths and 5ths in thematic material; otherwise small leaps or stepwise; B line jumps an 8ve in m. 44
### Section A, mm. 1–18

**Phrase 1, mm 1–5**  
She is the sun!

**Phrase 2, mm. 6–10**  
She is a rune

**Phrase 3, mm. 11–16**  
She is above

**Phrase 4, mm. 16, beat 3–18**  
Ah

### Sec. A¹, mm. 19–38

**Phrase 1, mm 19–24**  
She is the sun!

**Phrase 2, mm. 25–30**  
She is a rune

**Phrase 3, mm. 31–38**  
She is above

### Sec. B, mm. 38–66

**Phrase 1, mm 38–51**  
Lovely and airy

**Phrase 2, mm. 51–57**  
But no good sight

**Phrase 3, mm. 57**  
The Blossom of Branches

---

| Rhythm | 1. quarter rest begins main motive; 1.5 beats on opening “she”; mainly eighth notes; held notes on “she,” “love” (twice), “heart” | 1. quarter rest before 4.5 beats on opening "she"; otherwise the same as A | 1. longer rhythmic values, mainly quarters and half notes |
|        | 2. 4 beats on the opening “she”; mainly eighth notes; held notes on “rune” and “she”; tenors have longer note values in m. 8–9 | 2. 5 beats on the opening “she”; mainly eighth notes; held notes on “rune” and “she”; tenors have longer note values in m. 27–28 | 2. mostly quarters and half notes |
|        | 3. similar eighth-note rhythms; sopranos and tenors have more longer note values; homophonic rests in mm. 12 and 13 (SAT); SATB held notes at m. 16 | 3. entirely eighth notes SATB until last note on “moon,” held for 10 beats | 3. mainly quarter notes |
|        | 4. entirely eighth notes after initial held note, SATB | | |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dynamics and Expressive Descriptors</th>
<th>1. <em>forte, decrescendo, crescedo</em></th>
<th>1. <em>forte</em> on “she”; <em>decrescendo</em> mm. 20–21; <em>crescendo</em> mm. 22 to end of phrase</th>
<th>1. <em>mp espr TA</em> entrances; Basses enter <em>p</em> until <em>mp espr crescedo</em> beat 3 m. 46; ATB <em>crescendo</em> m. 50</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. <em>sf</em> on “she” immediately <em>decrescendo</em> to <em>p</em>; <em>crescendo</em> to <em>mf</em> in m. 9</td>
<td>2. <em>sf</em> on “she” immediately <em>decrescendo</em> to <em>p</em>; <em>mf</em> at</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. <em>p</em> with <em>crescendo</em> or</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section A, mm. 1–18</td>
<td>Sec. A¹, mm. 19–38</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She is the sun!</td>
<td>She is the sun!</td>
<td>Lovely and airy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phrase 2, mm. 6–10</strong></td>
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<td>She is a rune</td>
<td>She is a rune</td>
<td>But no good sight</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She is above</td>
<td>She is above</td>
<td>The Blossom of Branches</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phrase 4, mm. 16, beat 3–18</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ah</td>
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| decrescendo; f by beat 3 in m. 14 | S entrance the end of m. 28 followed by crescendo to m. 30 p crescendo molto; f at m. 33; crescendo to ff at m. 35; decrescendo to p at m. 38 | 2. all voices mf; ST also have espr; cresc-decresc m. 55-57 |
| 4. continuation of f; all voices crescendo in m. 18 | | 3. begins p grazioso; several crescendi or decrescendi ending pp |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Articulations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <em>staccatos</em> on “sky of the”; accent on “sun” m. 2</td>
<td>1. <em>staccatos</em> on “sky of the”; accent on “sun” m. 21</td>
<td>no articulations marked in all three phrases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <em>staccatos</em> on “is a rune” and then “she is a rune” m. 10</td>
<td>2. <em>staccatos</em> on “is a rune” m. 26-27 and then “she is a rune” in m. 28; SATB <em>tenuto</em> markings on beats 1 and 2 in m. 30</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. <em>tenuto</em> markings in soprano and tenor sections mm. 14-15</td>
<td>3. SATB <em>tenuto</em> markings on each syllable of “above the” in m. 34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. <em>legato</em> on neutral vowel “ah”</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Texture</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. homophonic</td>
<td>1. same as A</td>
<td>1. imitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. begins and ends homophonically with imitative middle</td>
<td>2. same as A</td>
<td>2. some imitation, mostly contrapuntal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. alternating homophonic and polyphonic</td>
<td>3. homophonic</td>
<td>3. homophonic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. imitative; rhythmically homophonic</td>
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Ron Jeffers, in his extensive study of the text and musical analysis in his book, *Reincarnations*, believes “Mary Hynes” to be an AA¹BA² form. Jeffers considers the return of the opening
harmonic progression a return to the A material. In my analysis, I see that passage as a continuation of the B section, as the overall feeling, text, and rhythmic structure are more in line with the B section’s material introduced at m. 38.

Barber uses two main themes:

Figure 1. Mary Hynes Theme 1

Figure 2. Mary Hynes Theme 2

Figure 1 is used in various configurations throughout A and A\(^1\)—although the rhythms and intervals are altered, the syncopation remains in most of the versions. In phrase 3 of section B, this material is used as well, but in a straightforward rhythm of quarter and half notes. The last two mm. of Figure 2 comprise the thematic material for most of the B section.

4.2.3 Implications for interpretation of “Mary Hynes”

This composition of love and excitement comes at a time in Samuel Barber’s own life when he may have been happiest (both professionally and also personally). This happiness may have had its expression in the first song of the *Reincarnations* set. The musical setting of the first poem

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\(^{240}\) Ibid, 31.
beautifully captures the excitement and ecstasy felt by the poets toward the famously beautiful woman, Mary Hynes.

Reading the original poem gives much more information about this woman and the picturesque Ballylea to which she is compared. Stephens’s reincarnated poem truncates the details about Mary Hynes, not even using her proper name; “she” is the only reference made to the young woman. Stephens’s version focuses only on the various descriptions of Mary Hynes from Raftery’s poem. The first two stanzas from Raftery’s original poem are not present in Stephens’s reincarnated version. These missing verses give the history of how the poet met Mary Hynes and his immediate connection to her. Meeting her on the way to Mass he became completely enslaved to her. Raftery continues describing Hynes (the many facets of her beauty and her courteous manner of speech) using comparisons to images in nature. They spoke gently to one another and he was invited to follow her on her journey to Ballylea. This invitation, the ensuing walk, and the description of the beautiful view to Ballylea are not mentioned in Stephens’ version. The focus remains on “she” throughout the shortened poem and Barber’s composition. But the additional details from the original poem may be helpful in making interpretive decisions on Barber’s music.

In Section A, the first decision to be made is the appropriate tempo for Barber’s Allegro instruction. Since Barber provides no exact metronome marking, the conductor must decide what kind of “quick and lively” tempo is appropriate to express the poem. The tempo marking of “Allegro” has a wide range of metronome speeds, anywhere from 120–168 beats per minute, according to personal taste. Using the top end of this spectrum projects more of the frenzied excitement of love. Slower speeds allow the text to be expressed more gently. The speed also affects the way the choir can control the dynamic changes, the articulations, and the clarity of the text. In this context, a slower tempo might represent a contented feeling about Mary Hynes. In Raftery’s original poem, the poet is quite detailed in his description of this woman, and a medium Allegro allows time for the accurate execution of Barber’s musical “details,” in particular the varied articulations and quick dynamic changes. The tempo chosen will then influence the tempo change at m. 38, Più tranquillo. This contrast in tempo reflects the change of mood between Sections A, A¹, and B.
The opening rest is perhaps the most important musical gesture in the work. After this one moment of silence, the music launches forward quickly, hesitating only for key words that Barber wished to emphasize: “sun,” “love,” and “heart.” The intake of air before the first word sets not only the tempo, but the emotional mood of the entire movement. Decisions on the type of excitement to be conveyed (nervous, anxious, joyous, etc.) must be clearly thought through as they will affect how this breath is taken as well as tone colour, which will be explored in more depth below.

The opening B half-diminished seventh chord may give some insight into the mood of the work. Using this traditionally unstable chord to begin the piece may reflect the poet’s feelings of instability and excitement about Mary Hynes. This may also be a reflection of Barber’s own blossoming relationship with Menotti and the fear of his homosexuality being revealed. The time signature changes, irregular rhythmic patterns, and syncopations eliminate the sense of pulse and the strong-weak beat relationships and add to the frenzy of the young man’s excited rambling at meeting this beautiful woman. The pronoun “she” is stressed with a variety of dynamics, accentuations, and rhythmic values throughout this short work. Each one, therefore, seems to have a slightly different affect depending on the text that follows, the harmonization, and the articulations. The opening \textit{f} setting on a B diminished seventh chord on the second beat of the m. is followed by a rocket-like melodic descent to an accent on the word “sun,” the only accent used in this phrase. The dynamics decrescendo and then just as quickly crescendo to a B major chord on the word “heart.” These oscillations may represent the scene in the hills of Ireland and the couple’s walk together, or could perhaps reflect the emotional rollercoaster of the poet’s (or Barber’s) emotions. The major chord at the end of the phrase could suggest happiness or a moment of contentment.

Barber’s use of articulations is specific and intentional. There are three staccato markings on the words “sky of the” landing on the word “sun” with an accent in all four parts. This gives the music a certain playfulness, followed with eighths that are not marked staccato, and therefore must differ in quality and execution; perhaps they are more legato and sincere in expression.

The second phrase begins with a \textit{sf} on the word “she” held for four beats which quickly decrescendos to a contrapuntal \textit{p} section. Throughout the work Barber increases the length of
time “she” is held, perhaps as various reflections on Mary Hynes by the poet. In this phrase she is said to be a “rune”, which is defined as “a symbol with mysterious or magical significance”\textsuperscript{241} Runes were also “employed in casting spells, as to gain a kiss from a sweetheart or to make an enemy's gut burst.”\textsuperscript{242} In casting a spell the writing of the runes was accompanied by a mumbled or chanted prayer or curse, also called a \textit{rune}, to make the magic work.\textsuperscript{243} The mystery of this word is reflected in the hushed and scattered entrances of the choir and staccato markings on every eighth note. This mysterious or magical aura can be interpreted in different ways as well: the poet may be excited about the mystery or he could be fearful or confused. The colour of tone and articulation of the staccatos may differ depending on how one interprets this phrase.

The excitement builds again in phrase three, beginning \textit{p}, to the explosion on the phrase “As the sun is above the moon!”

Figure 3. Mary Hynes: mm. 13-15

\textsuperscript{243} Ibid.
The dynamic marking is \textit{f} and there are tenuto markings on each repeated E in the soprano and tenor parts to the end of the word “above.” These exclamatory parts stand out against the continued eighth note material in the alto and bass parts. Phrase four has no text: it is a wordless outcry on an [a] vowel in contrapuntal eighth-note choral entries which crescendo to the end of the section (Figure 4). This exclamation on a neutral syllable was not in the original poem, but added by Barber, perhaps to further the growing emotional momentum.

Figure 4. Mary Hynes: mm. 16-18

Section A' is very similar to A. The pronoun “she” is now held for five and a half beats, the longest reflection on her beauty and the poet’s love for her so far. The dynamics and articulations are the same as the first appearance, but the time signature does not change: all mm. remain in 4/4 time. This alters the rhythm of the text giving the illusion of time slowing down, which could represent the poet settling down from the excitement of the beginning or taking even more time to reflect on his love. Phrase 2, as in section A, returns similarly, but with “she” held for five beats. Each of these longer note values varies the reflection on Mary Hynes; the choir should have a separate inspiration for each statement of the pronoun. The excitement at the beginning is somehow modified with these longer note values, suggesting perhaps a calmer sense of contentment and happiness. At m. 30 A' diverges from A completely. Tenuto markings occur on
the first two beats of this additional 3/2 bar, emphasizing “she” each time. The last phrase of A\textsuperscript{1} drops dramatically to \textit{p}, quickly \textit{molto crescendos} to \textit{f} in m. 33, and then crescendos further while slowing (\textit{allargando}) to \textit{ff} in m. 35. These quick dynamic and tempo changes return the frenzied expression of love for Mary Hynes. A final ten-beat B\textsubscript{b} major chord ends the section and decrescendos to \textit{p}. The \textit{a tempo} marking at m. 35 may be Barber’s way of ensuring the choir does not over-dramatize the already long note value.

The last Section, B, has a sense of stability remaining in a B\textsubscript{b} major key area as the poet talks about the view to Ballylea. Barber presents this section in a more dream-like fashion using both the slower tempo and more tranquil descriptor (\textit{Più tranquillo}) to reflect the “lovely and airy” text. Each entrance of the choral voices is marked with an \textit{mp espress.} within this calmer framework. When the beautiful view of Ballylea is finally compared to the vision of Mary Hynes walking toward the poet (“By great good luck you see—The Blossom of Branches”), there is even a slight \textit{ritardando} to prepare for the event. The last nine mm., marked \textit{grazioso}, use much of the chord progression from the A section, with a much more relaxed rhythm in line with this tender atmosphere. Barber then sequences the progression down a whole step on the word “airy” as a bit of exotic word painting. The poem of love ends on a pure C major chord at the end, its simplicity implying a comparison to the pure beauty of the subject, or the purity of the love the poet feels for her.

4.2.4 Vocal and choral implementation for “Mary Hynes”

The excitement of love for the beautiful Mary Hynes is the central theme for the first piece in Barber’s \textit{Reincarnations}. Decisions for expression will be the top level of intention according to Randall Dipert’s hierarchy.\textsuperscript{244}

Different emotional contexts facilitate a variety of ways of approaching vocal tone, diction requirements, dynamic levels, and perhaps even the way vibrato is incorporated in the tone. The quarter rest that begins the piece is the musical figure that sets the tone for the entire movement.

\textsuperscript{244} Dipert, “The Composer’s Intentions,” 206, 207.
Coordinating the breath for a clear vocal onset on the word “she” can be challenging for the choral ensemble. The conductor’s gesture is key to a successful start. Too many preparatory beats before the rest can destroy the surprise and excitement for the audience. A strong downbeat will help the choir to take a quick, deep, silent intake of air on that first beat, which will reflect the breathlessness of the text. I recommend only one preparatory beat before the downbeat to give some indication of the desired tempo without losing the spontaneity of the choral entry on the second beat. The first [i] vowel must be shaped with the front part of the tongue, keeping the jaw loose and dropping the jaw vertically to avoid a narrow and nasal “she.” The aim is to achieve a unified vocal onset with good air support, moving quickly from the consonant [ʃ] to a pure vowel. This entrance should not be accented, only $f$ with no release of volume until marked, as it tumbles into the rest of the phrase.

The eighth notes that follow in m. 2 change dynamics and articulations quickly. The first three notes can be connected in a legato style to contrast the following three staccatos and an accent. Quick diaphragmatic pulses on all four of these notes with a bit more air flow for the accent on the word “sun” will accomplish this. Remember to move through the initial [s] of “sun” to accent the vowel and to avoid the effect of hissing. Because there are no other articulations marked to the end of m. 5, a legato line can be again employed for the crescendo swell to the word “heart!”

This entire section thus far could be sung using staggered breathing throughout to create the
frenzied excitement of the text, almost as if it were a run-on sentence exclaimed by an ardent lover. If this is not the interpretation chosen, breaths may be taken at any one of the exclamation marks in the first five mm. but not at all of those points to maintain the sense of phrase.

The first phrase remains homophonic throughout as the first three descriptors of Mary Hynes are presented. The contrary motion in the vocal parts arrive at a G major chord on the word “sun,” an F major chord on the word “love,” and finally a B major chord on the word “heart.”

Figure 6. Mary Hynes: mm. 3-5

Each of these chords seems to invoke the meaning of the word paired with it. Rita Steblin’s translation of Christian Schubart's *Ideen zu einer Aesthetik der Tonkunst* (Appendix 2) says that in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, musicians understood that certain keys have particular characteristics that express specific emotional responses.245 Barber may have been familiar with these ideas and applied their tenets. According to Schubart, G major represents “[e]verything rustic, idyllic and lyrical, every calm and satisfied passion, every tender gratitude for true friendship and faithful love,--in a word every gentle and peaceful emotion of the heart is

correctly expressed by this key,”246 which Barber uses for the word “sun.” On “heart” he uses a B major chord, a key which is “[s]trongly coloured, announcing wild passions, composed from the most glaring colours. Anger, rage, jealousy, fury, despair and every burden of the heart lies in its sphere.”247 On the word “love,” Barber moves to the key of F major, a key which may be considered a calmer key choice according to Schubart’s ideas. Barber’s chromatic chord progression also suits the idea of the unstable emotional situation of the poet. Placement of tone can further aid these descriptive qualities: the first two words may have a more forward placement, or brighter vowel quality, that imitates the brightness of the words. The word “love” may then relax the forward direction, with a very tall [a] vowel to create a richer tone to express the amorous feeling.

Measure 1 has a forte on the first mention of Mary Hynes, but the second phrase, beginning at m. 6 has a sforzando marking followed by a quick decrescendo. The second phrase delves into the idea of “she” as a “rune,” which connotes secrecy and mystery. Differentiating between these two entrances distinguishes the different moods of the text.

In both phrases 1 and 2, Barber employs staccato articulations on many of the words to reflect different moods while maintaining the original excitement of the poem. Care must be taken to execute the staccatos in a crisp fashion, without losing the longer line, on words like “sky of the” in m. 2 and “is a rune” in mm. 7–10. Singers should “bounce” the staccatos from the lower breathing apparatus, rather than allowing the throat muscles to stop the air and create a dull detachment of the notes and words. This diaphragmatic “bouncing” gives the music the desired staccatos indicated by the composer and expresses the words most effectively.

Measures 11–14 have quarter rests inserted after the words “above” and “women,” which may reinforce the idea of breathless excitement for the poet. The three upper voices must not clip the ends of the words that are followed by rests. In m. 12, they all crescendo to the second syllable of “above,” decrescendo on the words “The women,” and finally crescendo to the f at m. 14. The decrescendo at the end of m. 12 actually aids the word placement for these voices. Although

246 Ibid.
247 Ibid.
these ideas complete one sentence, the rests should not be extended to make one long phrase. The singers may be instructed not to breathe at the rests to ensure the correct phrasing to the end of “the race of Eve.” The [i] vowel is present again in the words “she” and “Eve” and these require the same attention to vertical space for their pronunciation. The words “above” and “sun” may be modified slightly from the [ʌ] vowel spoken, which can be narrow in horizontal space, to [a], which is more open. Tenuto markings can slow down the tempo of a section to emphasize the words marked. In this case, the tenutos for the sopranos and tenors are accompanied by the continuation of the eighth note figures in the alto and bass sections. Therefore, these tenuto markings can be accomplished with a slight accent and a separation between these notes for word emphasis.

At m. 16, the bass section begins the wordless bridge to the next section. To keep the momentum going, the basses can breathe on the tied eighth note to create a clear and syncopated entrance. The neutral syllable “ah” is marked legato, but the conductor needs to ensure clarity in the eighth note figures in all four parts by keeping a steady beat and giving clear cues for each part’s entrance. A light gesture from the conductor will serve as a reminder to the singers to keep the tone from getting too heavy and the rhythm moving.

Certain words are emphasized with longer time values, presumably indicating the relative importance of the word within the context of the poem. Three important examples of this occur on longer note values given to the words “she,” “love,” and “heart” throughout the musical setting of this poem. “She” is often given at least a dotted quarter note, and up to five and a half beats of what could be languished thought at mm. 19 and 20. “Love” and “heart” are also given longer time values, although not nearly as much as the object of the author’s affection, “she.” These three words also have consonants that can be expressive if pronounced with some amount of intent behind them. For example, emphasizing the [v] in “love” can give defined emotional impact and clarity in the execution of this word. The [l] can do the same, but this consonant can have an adverse effect on the tongue by blocking the air flow and changing the colour of the sound. It is necessary to spring right back to the vowels with appropriate, yet expressive attention given to these two consonants. Emphasizing the aspirate [h] at the beginning of “heart” offers text clarity and can also continue the feeling of breathlessness as the quarter rests have done throughout the work.
Section A\textsuperscript{1} follows the same dynamics, articulations, harmony, and melody ideas of the A section, but with no time signature changes and a different ending. The words “heart” and “she” are affected by the lack of change in time signature, held longer than their first appearances. The slowing down of the music with longer note values might foreshadow the change in mood in the B section. A warmer, rounder vowel on each of these words creates an appropriate change in vocal colour. At m. 30, however, the excitement ramps up again with the continuation of eighth-note figures on the repeated “she is a rune”. The tenuto markings on the first two larger beats in the new 3/2 time signature of m. 31 are accompanied by a forte dynamic marking. A slight lengthening of the tenuto notes will emphasize the new homophonic texture that continues to the end of the section. The concluding mm. of the A\textsuperscript{1} section begin with a sudden dynamic change to piano with quick changes in time signature that crescendo to ff and allargando to the climax on the word “moon” held for 10 beats. The allargando is accompanied by tenuto markings on the last three eighth notes. These articulations aid in slowing the tempo but should not be accented. A separation between each word or syllable will give the proper amount of accentuation. The conductor must also note that after the allargando, the held note is not kept at the slower pace but brought immediately back to a tempo. Barber’s specificity with the length of this note should be observed to avoid sentimentality. An even decrescendo to piano leads to the B section. The choir needs to feel as if the [u] vowel gets taller as they get softer to ensure even tone and accurate pitch throughout.

The B section offers a complete change in mood from Sections A and A\textsuperscript{1}. Marked piu tranquillo and mp espr, the music has a Bb major tonal centre that reflects the light and airy nature of the text that—according to Schubart— represents “[c]heerful love, clear conscience, hope aspiration for a better world.”\textsuperscript{248} The choral tone must change to reflect this change in mood; the “edge” in the tone that may have been used in A and A\textsuperscript{1} is not necessary here. The vocal placement does not have to be quite as forward, and all the vowels can be rounder and taller for this section. A more legato, connected line is needed, and can be achieved with a deeper breath and steady, even air flow. There are no articulation markings in this whole section, which is another reason to maintain a legato line throughout. Pay particular attention to not accent the words that are placed

\textsuperscript{248} Ibid.
in a higher range. For example, the highest note in the main theme on the word “and” (see Figure 2) occurs on beat 3 in each section. The singer must prepare the space needed for this word at the beginning of the phrase, and the vowel may even be modified toward an [a] rather than the North American [æ].

After a slight ritardando in m. 57, m. 58 returns to the original tranquil tempo and soft dynamic, with an added instruction of grazioso. This last homophonic section must again be perfectly together, led by the steady and clear beat of the conductor. The tuning in this section can be difficult because of the increased chromaticism in the last five mm. Each part needs to practice individually to ensure accurate intervals, and then in rehearsals the conductor should rehearse different combinations of voice parts so the singers can feel and hear the relationship of their line to the others until all the chords are in tune. The melodic ascent of the sopranos on the word “airily” may also require special attention. All four parts decrescendo to a final C major chord marked pp, but the sopranos end on G₅, which can be difficult for the non-professional singer to maintain as it sits in the upper passagio. Singers need to support this high note with a steady air flow, despite the soft dynamic markings. The choir must also be instructed to sing on the vowels in the word “airily,” and be especially quick through the [r] to avoid the sound retreating to the back of the throat. The [r] might even be flipped once for crispness because rolling it would be too heavy and artificial for the text and dynamic of this section.

4.3 “Anthony O’Daly”

4.3.1 Poetry text of “Anthony O’Daly”

Anthony O’Daly was a real person who lived during the poet Raftery’s lifetime. Looking at Hyde’s introductory comments helps us understand the magnitude of the injustice that inspired Raftery’s poetic lament. At the beginning of the 19th century Ireland was troubled: The Law and the People were in constant conflict with each other.²⁴⁹ Raftery always sided with the People and was very vocal about his disdain of the Law. Anthony O’Daly was a carpenter, captain of a gang

²⁴⁹ Hyde, quoted in Jeffers, 17.
called the Whiteboys, a secret local organization that rebelled against the English landlords, and was accused of firing a gun at a man. Although the men had a quarrel, O’Daly was not the one who shot his gun. It is uncertain from the writings of Hyde as to who actually shot the gun, if there was a shooting at all, but it may have been one of the other Whiteboys, as O’Daly didn’t testify against any of them in his trial. O’Daly’s only defense in court was that, despite the fact that he had only one eye, if he’d fired the gun he would have hit the man and he could prove it if the judge wanted him to shoot at a target. The rest of the Whiteboys were afraid that O’Daly would reveal their names, but he never did. He calmly accepted his condemnation and the sentence of death by hanging. O’Daly was forced to sit in the coffin that was made for him as it was taken by cart to Seefin, where a gallows was erected to hang him. Onlookers and even some of the soldiers encouraged him to escape as they looked the other way, but O’Daly made no attempt to do so. He went bravely to his death protecting his comrades. In his poem, Raftery calls on God to pass right judgement on those who betrayed O’Daly which may include the two Shameens (James Daly of Dunsandle and James Burke of St. Clerans) who devised the plan to entrap O’Daly, Cullen (possibly the executioner) and his wife, and the entire village. If no curse occurred in the lifetime of those mentioned, Raftery even cursed their offspring.

This is the original version of Raftery’s poem:

On the eve of Good FRIDAY,
The Gael was LYING, smit by the Gall;
On the same day, Christ DYING,
Rose, BUYING the human race from its fall.
God grant REQUITAL!
In our CRYING there was no use at all;
Cullen and his WIFE THERE
Took the LIFE THERE of Daly. Black their fall!

But, O young woman, while I live
I put death upon the village in which you shall be:

250 Hyde 1903: 263, quoted in Jeffers, 55.
251 Jeffers, Reincarnations, 17–18.
252 Ibid., 18.
253 Ibid., 19.
254 Capital letters are noted as in original.
Disease and death upon it,
And may the flood rise over it.
All that, is no sin at all,
O bright God! This is what I pray, with desire,
Against the man who hanged Daly,
And left his kindred weeping and his children.

Good is the vengeance of God
To him who could wait for its time,
Every sin (misfortune?) which is read of,
Till death may it watch for the lot of them.
It was the two Shameens
Who by a scheme made up the plan,
And as much (of my curse) as shall not watch them
The same, may it watch their children.

Since your limbs were laid out
The air is in corruption over our head,
The stars do not shine,
And the fish, they leap not out on the waves.
There comes no dew on the grass,
And the birds do not sing sweetly,
With grief after you, Daly,
There shall never come fruit upon the trees.

And there is the righteous-one!
Who never humbled himself or bowed to the Galls,
Anthony O’Daly! Oh, Song of God!
Whom we used to have (with us) each time without a lie.
But he has died a good Gael,
And to no man has he inclined his head;
And sure it was the thick oaths of perjury
That have hanged Daly; that and the power of the children of the Gall.

If I were a clerk,
Kindly, light-handed, spirited with a pen,
It is prettily I would write your virtues
In clean Irish on a flag over your head.

One thousand and eight hundred,
And sixteen and four added to it,
From the time the Son of God descended
Until Daly died, at the Castle of Seefin.255

Stephens once again takes small parts of the original poetry (the sections underlined in the above original) and uses these expressive points to create a shorter, reincarnated form of the poem:

**Anthony O’Daly (1918)**

Since your limbs were laid out
   The stars do not shine,
The fish leap not out
   In the waves.
On our meadows the dew
   Does not fall in the morn,
For O’Daly is dead:
   Not a flower can be born,
Not a word can be said,
   Not a tree have a leaf;
Anthony, after you
   There is nothing to do,
   There is nothing but grief.\(^{256}\)

As in “Mary Hynes,” images in nature are used for their expressive power, but this time these describe the agony of the loss of Anthony O’Daly and not the beauty of Mary Hynes. There is an “unnaturalness”\(^{257}\) of these natural events in that the natural world—trees producing leaves, stars shining in the sky are suspended to mourn the loss of O’Daly. In comparing the images of nature employed in the two poems of this set of three, Ron Jeffers notes that “[t]his poem is as black as the Posy is bright, as despairingly dark as the Blossom of the Branches is airy and light.”\(^{258}\) Stephens maintains the emotional range and depth of the original translations of the Raftery poems. The Irish people keenly felt loss at the death of Anthony O’Daly, as evidenced in poem excerpts of Raftery inscribed on a large Gaelic cross on the monument erected to honour O’Daly’s memory.

4.3.2 Music analysis of “Anthony O’Daly”

In his study, Ron Jeffers states that “Anthony O’Daly” has a much more cumulative, dramatic structure than “Mary Hynes,” so he has outlined his analysis in terms of added voices above the

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\(^{256}\) Ibid., 20.

\(^{257}\) Ibid.

\(^{258}\) Ibid.
E pedal in the bass, from one single voice to two and finally three polyphonic lines. I agree with this statement, but I believe the work can also be divided into four main sections based on dynamic distinctions, text repetitions and new melodic materials.

*Reincarnations: Anthony O’Daly, Op. 16, No. 2*, also based on a poem by James Stephens after the Irish of Raftery, was published by G. Schirmer, Inc., in 1940, and voiced as an SATB a cappella composition with Soprano (C4 to A5), Alto (G3 to E5), Tenor (C3 to A4), and Bass (G2, alternative E2, to E4). The tempo, *allegro* throughout, has no metronome marking. The analysis is discussed for sections A (mm. 1–18), B (mm. 18–40), C (mm. 40–74) and D (mm. 74–88).

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259 Ibid, 32.
**Table 2. Music Analysis of “Anthony O’Daly”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section A, mm. 1–18</th>
<th>Section B, mm. 18–40</th>
<th>Section C, mm. 40–74</th>
<th>Sec. D, mm. 74–88</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phrase 1, mm 1–6</strong></td>
<td><strong>Phrase 1, mm 18–24</strong></td>
<td><strong>Phrase 1, mm 41–53</strong></td>
<td><strong>Phrase 1, mm 74–82</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>On our meadows!</td>
<td>On our meadows</td>
<td>Anthony</td>
<td>After you There is nothing</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Phrase 2, mm. 6–12</strong></td>
<td><strong>Phrase 2, mm. 24–32</strong></td>
<td><strong>Phrase 2, mm. 54–63</strong></td>
<td><strong>Phrase 2, mm. 82–88</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For O’Daly is dead</td>
<td>For O’Daly is dead</td>
<td>Anthony</td>
<td>There is nothing but grief!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phrase 3, mm. 13–18</strong></td>
<td><strong>Phrase 3, mm. 33–40</strong></td>
<td><strong>Phrase 3, mm. 64–74</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Not a flow’r</td>
<td>Ah … for O’Daly is dead</td>
<td>Anthony</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Tempo</strong></th>
<th>quarter note = 76</th>
<th><strong>stringendo</strong> m. 58; <strong>stringendo molto</strong> m. 64</th>
<th><strong>a tempo</strong> m. 74; <strong>allargando molto</strong> m. 83</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Harmony</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. E Phrygian or natural minor beginning; B ostinato on E3 with S melody (2 parts)</td>
<td>1. Sopranos enter (4 parts); SAT over B ostinato; the upper 3 parts are a 4th apart; SA–P4, AT – tritone</td>
<td>1. SA ostinato in octaves on E4 or E5; Tenors and Basses with imitative melodic entries with F♯ and C♯ chromatics</td>
<td>1. SATB entries: repeated note (8 times) falling a minor 3rd below (A and B spelled as an aug 2nd); outlines a diminished 7th chord on A♯</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Altos and Tenors continue with the Bass ostinato (3 parts); Altos add more chromatics (F♯C♯)</td>
<td>2. SAT over B ostinato; F♯s and C♯s introduced and cancelled out as needed longer note values for Altos and Tenors create more distinguishable chords m. 33-36; beginning with an augmented chord on C at m. 33 SAT, over the B ostinato</td>
<td>2. first 4 mm. more chordal: C augmented chord begins; SA ostinato; T add G♯s and F♯s; Basses add F♯, C♯ and B♭ (last chord)</td>
<td>2. SA repeated Es to the end; TB repeated G/C♯ (tritone) resolving to E/B (open fifth) on last note</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. 3-part ATB continues; Altos introduce G♯ as well</td>
<td>3. longer note values for Altos and Tenors create more distinguishable chords m. 33-36; beginning with an augmented chord on C at m. 33 SAT, over the B ostinato</td>
<td>3. ST and TB one beat apart on first three notes of opening motive repeated</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Melody</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Sopranos almost exclusively stepwise; two minor thirds; basses on E ostinato; based on E</td>
<td>1. SAT same as in Section A, Phrase 1; SA - a P4th apart; AT - a tritone apart; bass ostinato</td>
<td>1. ostinato now in SA sections an octave apart; TB same as A1 a P4th apart; some chromatic alterations</td>
<td>1. SATB entries: repeated note (8 times) falling a minor 3rd below (A and B spelled as an augmented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section A, mm. 1–18</td>
<td>Section B, mm. 18–40</td>
<td>Section C, mm. 40–74</td>
<td>Sec. D, mm. 74–88</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phrase 1, mm 1–6</strong>&lt;br/&gt;On our meadows!</td>
<td><strong>Phrase 1, mm 18–24</strong>&lt;br/&gt;On our meadows</td>
<td><strong>Phrase 1, mm 41–53</strong>&lt;br/&gt;Anthony</td>
<td><strong>Phrase 1, mm. 74–82</strong>&lt;br/&gt;After you There is nothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phrase 2, mm. 6–12</strong>&lt;br/&gt;For O’ Daly is dead</td>
<td><strong>Phrase 2, mm. 24–32</strong>&lt;br/&gt;For O’ Daly is dead</td>
<td><strong>Phrase 2, mm. 54–63</strong>&lt;br/&gt;Anthony</td>
<td><strong>Phrase 2, mm. 82–88</strong>&lt;br/&gt;There is nothing but grief!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phrase 3, mm. 13–18</strong>&lt;br/&gt;Not a flow’ r</td>
<td><strong>Phrase 3, mm. 33–40</strong>&lt;br/&gt;Ah … for O’ Daly is dead</td>
<td><strong>Phrase 3, mm. 64–74</strong>&lt;br/&gt;Anthony</td>
<td><strong>Phrase 2, mm. 82–88</strong>&lt;br/&gt;There is nothing but grief!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Phrygian scale** with chromatic alterations

2. A and T same as sopranos in Phrase 1 a perfect 5th apart; bass ostinato

3. A same as in #1, above; T longer note values create more chordal section; begins on C augmented triad; bass ostinato

---

**Rhythm**

1. **bass ostinato:** repeated half-quarter-half notes on "Anthony"; S main theme repeats two eighth notes followed by a half note (lilt motive)

2. **bass ostinato continues;** AT same melodic rhythm as S in A1 until end of phrase where there is a finishing rhythmic motive: the half note is divided into a dotted quarter followed by an eighth note and then a quarter

3. SAT use rhythm of A1; bass ostinato continues

2. SAT use the finishing rhythmic motive of Section A, Phrase 2; bass ostinato continues

3. S uses the lilt motive in first 4 mm.; AT longer note values; next 4 mm. SA use finishing motive; T still longer note values; bass ostinato throughout

3. **similar to Section B, Phrase 3; SA ostinato; T begins stepwise, thirds in last six mm.; B longer note values with larger leaps; repeated half note motive from A1 opening; SA and TB entrances 1 beat apart**

3. **repeated half note motive from A1 opening; SA and TB entrances 1 beat apart**

---

2. new rhythmic motive in all parts: mainly in eighths with held notes on “you,” the second syllable of “nothing,” and “do”

2. rhythms slow from eighths to quarters to half notes and longer; 9 beats + fermata on last note
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section A, mm. 1–18</th>
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<th>Section C, mm. 40–74</th>
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<td><strong>Phrase 3, mm. 64–74</strong></td>
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<td>Anthony</td>
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</table>

**Dynamics and Expressive Descriptors**

1. S - *mf espr.*; B - *mf*
2. AT - *mf espr.*
3. continuation of A2

1. *piu f* in all four parts
2. *mf cresc. poco a poco* in all four parts; T begin 2 mm. later
3. *f* in all parts

1. SA - *f*; TB *f espr.*; m. 48 with increasing intensity in all 4 parts
2. continuation of C1
3. *ff* at m. 68 in all four parts

1. *f* desperately for all four entrances
2. *f* then *dim.* in all four parts; T *mf* end of m. 83; *sfp* m. 86; decrescendo to *pp* on last m.

**Articulations**

1. tenuto marking on every first syllable of “Anthony” in B
2. continued B *tenutos*; A *tenuto* markings on beat 2 of every m.
3. continued A *tenuto* markings; B *tenuto* markings stop after the pick-up to m. 13

1. continued A *tenuto* markings; T *tenuto* markings on beat 3 of every m.; SAT accents beginning at m. 23 on “Daly” and “dead”
2. continued accents as in B1 for AT only; B accents on each note of mm. 32-33; m. 32: *S ten.* m. 32, A *tenutos* each note, T *tenutos* last 3 notes
3. continued accents as in B1

1. SA accents on each first syllable of “Anthony”; B *tenutos* on every 2nd beat continued SA accents; accents on “Daly” and “dead” in T starting m. 58, B starting m. 60
2. accents on each first syllable of “Anthony” in all four parts stopping at m. 68

1. accents on each syllable of “After you” and the last syllable of “nothing” in all four parts; *ten.* on the word “do” in all four parts (this marking is in square brackets for the B part in m. 82)
2. accents on the first syllable of "nothing" and “but” all four parts; *sfp* on the word “grief”
<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. 2-part (SB)</td>
<td>SATB; SAT imitative</td>
<td>SA homophonic; TB</td>
<td>imitative entrances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. 3-part (ATB) - AT</td>
<td>entrances</td>
<td>imitative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>imitative entrances</td>
<td>polyphonic, some imitation</td>
<td>first 4 mm. polyphonic; SA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. 3-part polyphony</td>
<td>between SAT</td>
<td>homophonic throughout; TB</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>polyphonic, some imitation</td>
<td>homophonic at m. 60-63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>between SA in second half</td>
<td>SA and TB homophony a</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>beat apart; SATB</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>homophonic at m. 68</td>
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for AT only; B accents on each note of mm. 32–33; m. 32: *ten.* m. 32, A *tenutos* each note, T *tenutos* last 3 notes
The first section of “Anthony O’Daly” gives us most of the musical materials used throughout the piece. This initial statement of the melody begins with an anacrusis of two eighth notes which shows Barber’s desired word emphasis. Subsequent statements of the melody begin on different beats in the measure, and therefore have tenuto markings on the syllables in order to ensure the same desired word stresses. Often the entrances of the subject begin within one beat of each other creating a phase shift among the voices that has a disturbing and angular effect.

It is interesting to point out that the first four notes of the soprano melody use the same four notes of the Gregorian Chant *Dies irae* but in a slightly different order. The first three notes of Barber’s lament are an inversion of the chant, followed by the chant’s original fourth note completing this motive. I found this by accident—it seemed to me to be such a plaintive motive, and when I looked closer, I discovered this relationship. No source mentions this coincidence and Barber may have done this unconsciously. This motive contains both a lamenting quality, and perhaps some of the anger that Raftery felt at the loss of O’Daly.

Figure 7. Anthony O’Daly: opening motive and the “Dies irae” motive

In the B section Barber introduces what I will call the O’Daly motive—it is used multiple times throughout the rest of the piece:

Figure 8. Anthony O’Daly: O’Daly motive

### 4.3.3 Implications for interpretation of “Anthony O’Daly”

James Stephens’s shortened poetic reincarnation retains the dark images of the longer original. These images mirror the negative judgement of nature against the presumably innocent Anthony O’Daly. Jeffers describes it best:
Aberrations of nature—just as black, dark, and desolate as the nature images in “Mary Hynes” are white, bright, and vivacious—now scream silently against human tragedy and injustice.  

These ideas reflect the human tragedy and injustice against O’Daly. The poet uses five unnatural events in nature to express this fact: the stars do not shine, fish do not leap, dew doesn’t fall, flowers do not bloom, trees have no leaves, followed by the final text “no words can be said, O’Daly is dead.”

Different versions of Stephens’ poem use different punctuation markings. The 1918 version is simpler in its use of punctuation: commas and periods only throughout the short reincarnation. But Stephens’ poem takes on quite a different tone when exclamation points replace the more sedate punctuation of the original. This is the version found in a collection of James Stephens’ *Collected Poems*, with the changes he himself made, published in 1926:

**Anthony O’Daly** (1926)

Since your limbs were laid out  
The stars do not shine!  
The fish do not leap  
In the waves!  
On our meadows the dew  
Is not sweet in the morn,  
For O’Daly is dead!  
Not a word can be said!  
Not a flower can be born!  
Not a tree have a leaf!  
Anthony!  
After you  
There is nothing to do!  
There is nothing but grief!

Barber took parts of both versions for his composition:

**Anthony O’Daly** (Samuel Barber’s compilation)

261 Ibid.  
262 Ibid., 37.
Since your limbs were laid out
The stars do not shine!
The fish leap not out
In the waves!
On our meadows the dew
Does not fall in the morn,
For O’Daly is dead!
Not a flower can be born!
Not a word can be said!
Not a tree have a leaf!
Anthony!
After you
There is nothing to do!
There is nothing but grief!  

The phrases in bold are from the 1918 version of the poem; the rest of the poem is the 1926 version. The earlier version of the poem sounds more like a lament for the young man killed for a crime he did not commit. The latter hearkens back to the ire employed by the original poet. Raftery’s poem condemns the men responsible for hanging this innocent man. The poet curses the men who plotted against O’Daly, the “two Shameens” (a disparaging version of the name “James”) who thought up the plot to blame O’Daly for the crime. Even the village in which the event occurred was not spared of his anger:

I put death upon the village in which you shall be:
Disease and death upon it,
And may the flood rise over it.  

This allows for two possible interpretations of the text. Barber uses ideas from both poetic versions to create his own “reincarnation.” All of the musical indications and compositional techniques Barber employs for this text give insight into possible musical and interpretive choices.

In Section A, Barber gives an exact metronome marking for this movement (the quarter note equals 76) and specific dynamic (mf) and musical (espr) indications. The opening tempo is the first indication of the funereal mood, as Anthony O’Daly is brought to the place of his execution. The moderately slow tempo sets the scene for the solemnity of this event, but it must be fast

264 Jeffers, Reincarnations, 19.
enough to help build the intensity to the climactic choral outburst at m. 68. It seems to find the line between sentimentality and antagonism. The combination of the somewhat slower tempo, the expressive dynamic marking, and melancholy melody also seem to point toward a lament, rather than to anger and revenge.

Figure 9. Anthony O’Daly: Soprano melody, mm. 1-7

All the voices that enter with the melody have the same dynamic marking, except the basses that lack the *espr.* directive. Their repetition of the subject’s name over and over can be seen as a lament as well, a disbelief perhaps that their beloved Anthony is gone.

Figure 10. Anthony O’Daly: Bass ostinato, mm. 1-3

If one interprets the opening as a condemnation of or curse on those responsible for O’Daly’s death, the *mf espr* can be interpreted as steely in expression and resolve; a seething anger that is held at bay for the moment, only to grow more and more as the piece moves on. Either interpretation seems plausible and will result in a very different colour of tone, use of articulations and approach to the diction.

The rhythmic interplay of all the parts as they enter from mm. 1–18 depicts the confusion and emotional responses of the people who remember poor Anthony.
The bass with its repeated five-beat statement in 3/4 time creates an unbalanced feeling: only one of every three statements of the word Anthony occurs on the downbeat, once every five measures. The other two statements begin on beats two and three respectively, with a tenuto mark above the first syllable of the name, which alters the feel of the downbeat. Above this rhythmic drone, the sopranos are the first to state the melody that is used throughout the movement. The melody is haunting and moody in the Phrygian mode with added chromaticism. The altered “Dies irae” motive that Barber employs at the start perfectly depicts the sadness and weeping of the people present at the funeral. The asymmetry of the phrase lengths also lends an air of confusion and perhaps disbelief at his passing. The stepwise descent of the melody can be considered word painting: comparable to the lowering of Anthony’s body to his final resting place.

The tenors enter with the same melody overlapping with the end of the sopranos’ statement, with the altos entering a beat later up a perfect fifth.
In Section B where the soprano enters in m. 18, the movement begins its ascent toward the climax with the upper three voice parts in stretto a perfect fourth apart with an increased dynamic level.

The relentless effect is created with the accented notes on every beat, and the chromatic additions to the harmony unhinge the sense of key. A storm is brewing; whether it be an outburst of sadness or anger, there is a building of musical and emotional intensity. The basses are asked to
be louder as well, no longer in the background, but at the same dynamic level as the other voices. Each part has something to express at various points of each measure.

In phrase 2 the chaos and intensity continue to grow even more with the stretto no longer orderly in the upper three voices.

Figure 14. Anthony O’Daly: mm. 24-27

Rhythms are altered and some accents fall at the same time as other parts, as in m. 26 and 27 between the altos and tenors, and then separate just as quickly. The O’Daly motive is repeated at different key levels with different accidentals added, all over the continued drone of the basses. This ostinato is the only grounded event that holds the chaos in check. The section also begins a slow and steady crescendo in all the voices that lead to the emotional outburst at m. 33. The audience may think this is the climax of the piece, but the large outburst is still to come.

There is a sense of release in Phrase 3, with the slower rhythmic values in the alto and tenor parts, and the neutral syllable cry in the soprano section in a high tessitura.
Barber is playing with time, not just in the musical sense, but in an emotional sense as well. Difficult events, such as a horrible death as is the case here, call forth various emotional reactions in different people. Some feel a sense of time slowing down, a disbelief and confusion; some express their emotions rapidly and more aggressively. Throughout the piece thus far, each voice expresses this anguish and/or rage in a different way at different times of the movement. The basses thus far have been a “rock” emotionally; never waveri...ing, perhaps trying to keep their emotions under control. This is about to change.

My decision to distinguish a new third Section C is based on the change of roles between the TB and SA voices. For the first time in the piece, the basses, along with the tenors, now have the melodic material. This seems significant both musically and also dramatically.
The lower voices follow each other, as the upper voices did earlier in the piece, with textual accents on different beats, in stretto a beat apart. The upper voices now take over the ostinato role the basses have left. All voices are marked $f$, but the TB also have an $espr.$ indication. The increased dynamic level and changed vocal roles increases the intensity of emotion. There does seem to be some anger in the way these phrases are expressed. At m. 54, there is again some release in slower note values in the bass line and the use of the neutral [a] in the tenor part, but it is short lived. At m. 58, the tenors begin the final buildup to the real climax. At m. 60 the tenors and basses are now homophonic in texture at the interval of a fourth. All parts are then asked to crescendo molto at the end of bars 60 for the SA and 61 for the TB, based on new reiterations of their respective phrases. At the pickup to m. 64, the upper voices are an octave apart, the lower ones entering a beat later in the same fashion with only the text “Anthony” repeated, and a tempo indication of stringendo molto for all parts occurs on the downbeat of m. 64.
Accents are placed at the beginning of each restatement of the name, building to the climactic \textit{ff} outburst of his name at m. 68 in long note values moving from a C\# minor chord in first inversion on the first syllable, to a C major chord on the last two syllables of the title character.

Figure 18. Anthony O'Daly: C major resolution
This shift in the intensity of emotion, be it sadness or anger, from the minor chord to major only a half-step away, is jarring. The C major chord may represent the innocence of the accused or a release of emotion. The high tessitura of all the voices further heightens the intensity.

The last D section is a coda or epilogue. The text is not about Anthony O’Daly anymore, but focuses on what the remaining loved ones must do now. The tempo returns to the original slower tempo of Section A but keeps the emotional intensity with a \( f \) dynamic marking, a number of accents added to the text, and the marking beside the \( f \) of \textit{desperately} as each voice enters. The outline of a diminished seventh chord built on an A\# through the individual vocal entrances is powerful both dramatically and emotionally. The texture thins out as the individual voices overlap briefly as the new section enters, creating a stark and disturbing effect.

Figure 19. Anthony O’Daly: mm. 75-78

At m. 82, there is some release as the seventh of the chord is eliminated, but the remaining second inversion C\# diminished triad continues the sense of instability. From m. 82 the tempo and dynamics both begin to decrease, but accents on some of the words continue. The final statement of the word “grief” acts as a complete collapse emotionally on a \textit{sfp} that disappears into a \textit{pp} on an open fifth above an E. The whole movement has taken the singers and audience through many of the stages of grief to an acceptance of the reality that O’Daly is gone.
4.3.4 Vocal and choral implementation for “Anthony O’Daly”

The anguish of Anthony O’Daly’s death and the different characterizations of each vocal part are perhaps the two most important issues in this second piece of the Reincarnations. These two elements inform the tempi chosen, articulations, text emphases, and dynamics. Barber’s search for true sentiment is present in each of the characters in this text. The basses may represent some of the male figures in his own life, or how he perceived them, compared to his very sensitive view of the world. A sense of justice, or in this case injustice, is felt in Barber’s setting of this text as well. He expressed his ideas of fairness and justice in some of his letters to Sidney Homer, particularly the effects of World War II. And most importantly, Barber is telling a story—it is important to recreate the gradual release of emotions throughout this second piece of the set.

Decisions about appropriate vocal tone for this composition have three possible directions depending on the choice of interpretation by the conductor. A choice may be made whether the poem is a lament on the death of Anthony O’Daly, an angry outcry and curse against those who falsely murdered him, or a combination of both. The vocal colour, choice of tempi, dynamic levels, and the implementation of the articulations and the diction will all be affected by this important decision.

The conducting gesture that begins this piece is also very important in setting the tone for the movement. Beats 1 and 2 need only be given to indicate the chosen tempo to the choir. The gesture needs to be much gentler than the one used for “Mary Hynes” because of the softer dynamic marking and mood. This piece leads up to the climax gradually, where the first piece of the set has a surprise entrance on $f$. Within the conductor’s gesture he or she must give the interpretational direction chosen: if this is to be a lament, the hand must be kept more relaxed and softer with no pointed edge to the beat; if this is to be angry and vindictive in nature, the gesture may be more stiff and direct, to encourage a steely colour of tone. In both instances, the expression must also come from the conductor’s eyes and facial expression. It should be obvious to the choir which direction this is taking as these two emotions are quite different in expression. Again, the emotion may change during the piece, but this opening gesture represents the start of the journey to O’Daly’s demise.
The sopranos introduce the melody with an upbeat that sets up the rhythmic accentuation of the text to best display the natural inflection of the text. This rhythmic accentuation is natural for the sopranos: the accented syllable always occurs on beat one, so no other markings are needed. When the other voices enter on beats 1 or 2, the whole rhythmic scheme is thrown off and Barber adds tenuto markings at first to indicate the proper textual accentuation. These stresses should not be overdone: they should merely copy the natural inflection of the words established by the sopranos at the outset. This rhythmic shifting of the words gives the piece its unstable state, reflective of the tragedy at hand.

The beginning of this piece allows time for a slow, quiet, deep breath necessary to establish the intensity of emotion required by the text and to set the appropriate vocal tone. If the more lamenting interpretation is chosen, a relaxed, rich tone will be necessary. The opening relaxed breath then moves into a focused onset of the tone with the desired vowels in mind. The [I] vowels in the words ‘Since’ and ‘limbs’ must be vertically tall and open, without any horizontal influence of the colloquial [i] vowel. The tone as always should be forward in direction, but with no edge or push to the sound, at least not at the beginning of the piece. In contrast, if the angry interpretation is chosen, the colour of the vowels may be brighter, formed with a slightly less vertical shape and even more forward placement, so that there is an edge or steely quality to the tone to express the anger felt. In both situations, the palate should not be used to press the tone in the direction desired and a steady and controlled air flow should be maintained. There should be no physical tension in the tone production to create the desired effect.

The [s] and [j] on the first two words of the sopranos, and subsequent vocal entries, must be quick to move onto the vowel, even on the short eighth note figures. These words can easily be tossed aside without the intentional vocal colour and grounded technique. A more legato sound fits both interpretational views: even the angry version should not be separated or sung marcato as Barber would have deliberately indicated this if it were his intent. Other possible difficulties in effective execution of diction are:

- “laid out” — keep a slight separation between these words to avoid “lay doubt”; this applies to all instances where the first word ends in a consonant followed by a word beginning with a vowel
- “dew” — [dju] not [du]
• “Anthony” — choice of colour of each of the three vowels

The use of taller, pure vowels is essential throughout, but the word “Anthony” is of particular importance in vowel colouration. Ideally this should be sung as [æn-ðɔ-ni], taking care to not let the opening vowel get too horizontal and nasal, and the middle vowel to lose all roundness and become [ʌ]. A flipped [r] on certain words may be used, but the flip cannot linger into a rolled [r]; the text would sound pretentious and artificial, something Barber disliked. A roll would also interrupt the legato vowels of the long melodic lines. The [r] should be treated as a vowel in words like “your,” “stars,” “morn,” “for,” and “flow’r.” The word “tree” cannot be handled in this way, but the consonant should be quick with a forward tongue position for clarity. The final word “grief” should employ a quick [gr], with a possible short flip of the “r,” and move to a tall [i] vowel with a short but crisp [f] to finish the piece.

The basses have a unique function in Anthony O’Daly. Their part is not background material, but rather seems to represent another character present at O’Daly’s execution procession. If no emotional or dramatic assignment is given to the basses, this line can simply sound monotonous and have no sense of flow. In both interpretational plans for this piece, the basses have a more reserved, remote quality to their part and in turn, the vocal tone. The name “Anthony” is repeated twenty-four times before the basses are given the melodic material. In my opinion, this has the impression of a masculine character trying not to show outward emotion, despite their inner turmoil. At this time in history, the traditional male role was one of strength and men were to be the strong ones in difficult situations. This strength is reflected in the even tone and rhythm of this motive. As the piece continues, the increasing dynamics and drama of the other three voices builds up the intensity in the basses as well, until they simply cannot contain their true emotions and enter with text at m. 41, f and espr. There must be an interpretational plan laid out for the bass section to get to the point at m. 41, or their line will be lifeless. A possible scenario: the characters are completely in control at the beginning, keeping the march to the execution steady and purposeful through the relentless repetition of the martyr’s name. Slowly their sadness/anger takes over with each statement of his name, or every three-statement grouping of “Anthony.”

The conductor may suggest appropriate places to breathe in various ways for this middle movement. The main directives should be to maintain the long lines that Barber is famous for
and to keep the integrity of the text. For the opening soprano entrance, and possibly all other voices that sing this material, here are three possible places for the singers to breathe:

1. Stagger breathe through the whole melodic statement, mm. 1–7, giving the effect of one continuous line.
   *Since your limbs were laid out The stars do not shine! The fish leap not out In the waves!*

2. Breathe with the punctuation: this gives each voice a break about half-way through the melody.
   *Since your limbs were laid out The stars do not shine — The fish leap not out In the waves!*

3. Breathe three times, following the smaller phrasing within the larger melodic line.
   *Since your limbs were laid out — The stars do not shine! — The fish leap not out In the waves!*

Choice number 3, even though it follows the capitalization and sub-phrasing of the melody, chops up the line. In my opinion, therefore, this is the least desirable of the options. Choice numbers 1 and 2 keep the longer lines intact, but number 2 seems to follow the punctuation as well, and therefore would be my choice. The first two segments of this theme should be sung in one breath as they are a complete sentence. The melodic line spins out and effectively expresses the text; accomplishing two important aspects of Barber’s musical style.

Each voice can be another character present for the walk to the execution of O’Daly, with a different perspective on the situation. As mentioned earlier, the basses represent those present who control their emotional outbursts, at least for the first half of the piece. The sopranos are the first to express themselves in the work above the basses and can be considered the most emotional. The altos and basses enter to support the feelings of the soprano, but both voices are lower in tessitura (the tenors sing the same notes, but an octave lower), therefore behaving somewhat less emotionally at first. Throughout the piece, the characters change in emotional intensity to the climax. In the end, all feel the loss of Anthony O’Daly. These characterizations can be a vital way to engage the singers in telling the story.

Barber plays with time and tempo throughout this piece in various ways. The opening soprano and bass parts enter with a calm and reflective movement, the quarter note equaling 76. Having
the tenor and alto enter a beat apart over the bass drone gives the illusion of time getting faster. When all three upper voices enter a beat apart beginning at the end of m. 18, the tempo seems to accelerate with the complexity of the polyphony over the monotonous bass line. It gets even more agitated when the upper three voices begin entering with fragments of the text in varying orders which finally explodes in the outburst at m. 33. The next four mm. release some of the tempo’s aggression, in order to begin an even more intense build-up to the large climax at m. 68. The accents and tenuto marks are essential in delineating the phase shifts of the text. Care must also be taken to differentiate between the accents and the tenuto markings. The tenuto is most often an emphasis of a syllable or word and can be executed with a slight volume (and air) increase or with a slight lengthening in duration. The accents seem to express more urgency and require a quicker change in dynamics in association with harder attacks of the consonants (ex. O’-Da-ly and dead). For the words that begin with vowels that are accented, care must be taken to avoid heavy glottal attacks. I consider the tenuto markings to require an added depth of tone or emphasis of expression; the accents are more angular and aggressive in nature.

4.4 “The Coolin” (The Fair Haired One)

4.4.1 Poetry text of “The Coolin”

The third poem from Stephen’s Reincarnations is not by Raftery. It is a love poem from Douglas Hyde’s 1893 publication Love Songs of Connacht. It is an anonymous poem with several different versions found in James Hardiman’s Irish Minstrelsy, O’Daly’s The Poetry of Munster, and Hyde’s version from County Clare. Hyde’s introduction defines “coolin” as literally fair-haired cool, i.e. back-hair (Barber gives us a translation of the title as “The Fair Haired One” as a subtitle in brackets below the title). Jeffers adds a better explanation by Stephens, found on Spoken Arts Recording #744: The Poems of James Stephens, Read by the Author:

The word coolin or cooleen refers to a little, very special curl that used to grow exactly in the middle of the back of the neck of a girl. I think that the growing of that curl is
now a lost art. That term ‘little curl’ or ‘cooleen,’ came to mean one’s sweetheart, and practically ousted the word ‘sweetheart.’²⁶⁵

This poem is the most famous in ErinS and is an important one in these Irish collections with various printed versions and various spellings of the subject. Hyde’s first version of the poem is as follows:

**The Cooleen, or Coolun**

A honey mist on a day of frost, in a dark oak wood,
And love for thee in my heart in me, thou bright, white, and good;
Thy slender form, soft and warm, thy red lips apart,
Thou has found me, and hast bound me, and put grief into my heart.

In fair-green and market, men mark thee, bright, young, and merry,
Though thou hurt them like foes with the rose of thy blush of the berry;
Her cheeks are a poppy, her eye it is Cupid’s helper,
But each foolish man dreams that its beams for himself are.

Whoe’er saw the Cooleen in a cool dewy meadow
On a morning in summer in sunshine in shadow;
All the young men go wild for her, my children, my treasure,
But now let them go mope, they’ve no hope to possess her.

Let us roam²⁶⁶, O my darling, afar through the mountains,
Drink milk of the goat, wine and bulcaun in fountains;
With music and play every day from my lyre,
And leave to come rest on my breast when you tire.

Hyde notes that “This translation is nearly in the metre [sic] of the original.” Jeffers suggests that this is possibly why “these images seem less charged and why fewer phrases survive verbatim in Stephens’ poem.”²⁶⁷

**The Coolun**

Come with me, under my coat,
And we will drink our fill
Of the milk of the white goat,

---

²⁶⁶ The underlined text highlights the lines James Stephens used for his poems.
Or wine if it be thy will;

And we will talk until
Talk is a trouble, too,
Out on the side of the hill,
And nothing is left to do,
But an eye to look into an eye
And a hand in a hand to slip,
And a sigh to answer a sigh,
And a lip to find out a lip:

What if the night be black
And the air of the mountain chill,
Where the goat lies down in her track
And all but the fern is still!
Stay with me, under my coat,
And we will drink our fill
Of the milk of the white goat
Out on the side of the hill.

4.4.2 Music analysis of “The Coolin”

Reincarnations: The Coolin (The Fair Haired One), Op. 16, No. 3, also based on a poem by James Stephens after the Irish of Raftery, was published by G. Schirmer, Inc., in 1940. Voiced as an SATB a cappella composition with Soprano (D4 to A5), Alto (G3 to E♭5), Tenor (E3 to G♭4), and Bass (F2 to E♭4). The tempo, allegro throughout, has no metronome marking. The analysis is discussed for sections A (mm. 1–18), B (mm. 19–38), C (mm. 26–31) and A¹ (mm. 38–66).
Table 3. Music Analysis of “The Coolin”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section A, mm. 1–6</th>
<th>Section B, mm. 7–25</th>
<th>Section C, mm. 26–31</th>
<th>Section A¹, mm. 32–38</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>Phrase 1, mm 7–10</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Phrase 1, mm 32–34</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td>Stay with me … coat!</td>
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<td><strong>Phrase 2, mm. 2–6</strong></td>
<td><strong>Phrase 2, mm. 10–13</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Phrase 2, mm. 34–38</strong></td>
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<td>And we will drink</td>
<td>And nothing is left but an eye</td>
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</table>

**Tempo**

- *Andante con moto*, dotted quarter note = 50–54
- *rall. at end of m. 31*
- *a tempo m. 33; rall. end of m. 36*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Harmony</th>
<th>Section A, mm. 1–6</th>
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<th>Section C, mm.26–31</th>
<th>Section A¹, mm. 32–38</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. F major key signature; opening chord is A minor which resolves to F major on the second beat; almost a dominant function chord at the end of m. 1, which leads to a vi chord in F major with illusion of a deceptive cadence</td>
<td>Phrase 1, mm 1–2 Come with me Phrases 2, mm. 2–6 And we will drink</td>
<td>Phrase 1, mm 7–10 And we will talk</td>
<td>Phrase 1, mm 26–29 What if the night be black?</td>
<td>Phrase 1, mm 32–34 Stay with me … coat!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Each voice outlines a chord in mm. 3–4: S on F major 7th, A on F major triad, T on F major 7th, B on D minor 7th; D major chord m. 5 leading chromatically to F major in m. 6</td>
<td></td>
<td>Phrase 2, mm. 10–13 And nothing is left but an eye</td>
<td>Phrase 2, mm. 30–31 And we will drink</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. m. 14 starts on a C minor 7th chord with added notes; switches to Eb minor 7th at b. 3, m. 15; back to first chord b. 3, m. 16; m. 17 undulates around Ab major; m. 18 Gb major 7th</td>
<td></td>
<td>Phrase 3, mm. 14–18 And a hand…And a sigh</td>
<td>Phrase 2, mm. 34–38 And we will drink</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. lands on a half-diminished 7th chord on G natural m. 19; D natural last alto note m. 20 leading to C pedal in bass line m. 21;</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. mm. 22–23 uses every note of the diatonic F major scale above a C pedal in bass; m. 24 undulating between an A minor triad and a Bb major 9th chord; m. 25 ends on a C major chord in 2nd inversion</td>
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**Melody**

1. repeated notes and leaps of thirds and fourths in all parts; B has more traditional harmonic function
2. SA vs. TB in contrary motion; stepwise and thirds until m. 5 when all parts leap to D major chord; SAB leap away, then SATB by step; mm. 3–4 all parts outline chords (see harmonic analysis Section A¹)

1. melodic material similar to Section A¹
2. SATB similar to mm. 3–4 of Section A with imitative entrances using dotted rhythms
3. chromatically altered materials from Section A, Phrase 2 in all parts; see changes in rhythm, below
4. less melodic motion in all parts; some use of Section A, Phrase 2 materials in S-A-T
5. mm. 22–23: SA used Section A, Phrase 2 material alternating with less melodic motion, TB have a new melodic fragment of two sixteenth notes followed by a dotted quarter with larger leaps-T ascend, B descends; m. 24: AT undulating 2nds in dotted quarter notes, B uses Section A Phrase 2 material

1. SATB mm. 26–27 mostly stepwise using the double 16th note rhythm from Section B, Phrase 5; similar in mm. 28–29 after a larger leap by S from m. 27; contrary motion between S and ATB
2. ST use melodic material from Section A, Phrase 2; Alto and Bass little melodic movement
3. ST use melodic material from Section A, Phrase 2; AB little melodic movement

1. mm. 35–36 same as mm. 3–4; mm. 37–38: SA used material from Section B, Phrase 5, TB more harmonic movement

**Rhythm**

1. 12/8 time signature; lilting quarter-eighth-dotted half note rhythm followed by dotted eighth-sixteenth-eighth-dotted half notes
2. use of 9/8 and 12/8 time
3. same as Section A, Phrase 2
4. mostly dotted 8th/16th/8th rhythms used imitatively in all four parts
5. longer note values against rhythms as in Section B, Phrase 2; use of duplets in m. 15 in SA; use of straight 8th notes on beat
6. more abrupt rhythmically with the use of quarter and double 16th notes
7. dotted figures return in ST parts in mm.
8. same as A¹
9. same as A²
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signatures; similar rhythms to Section A¹ with some used of double 16th pickup notes

3 of mm. 17 and 18
4. more long held note values in SAB; dotted figures as in Section B, Phrase 2 in SAT.
5. varied rhythmic patterns against one another; SA dotted figures and straight 8th-note figures against longer note values; TB use double 16th-note figures; AT longer note values in mm. 25–26 while basses use Section B, Phrase 2 rhythms

30–31, longer note values in Alto and Bass
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**Dynamics and Expressive Descriptors**

1. SATB - *mf* tenderly  
2. m. 5 *p*

1. *pp* TB; crescendo-decrescendo in m. 7  
2. ST enter *mp* with melodic material; AB are *p* until they enter *mp* with the melodic material  
3. *p* entrances in all parts (note dynamic marking in Bass part is in square brackets); crescendo to *mf* in mm. 15–16 in each part around the word “sigh”; cresc-decresc also used around “slip” and “sigh” again  
4. all four voices marked *pp*; but T also has *espr.* modifier; cresc-decresc throughout; AT have a cresc-decresc at the end of m. 21 that leads up to *mf* then dies away  
5. S *mf* espr., A *espr.*, TB *pp*; cresc-decresc throughout; ends *pp*  

1. *f* in all four parts  
2. ST *mf* espr.; Alto and Bass *p*; all *dim* in m. 30 down to *p* in m. 31  

1. *sf* and then decrescendo in all four parts; TB do this twice in m. 32; *p* at m. 33  
2. cresc/decresc throughout mm. 35–36; *pp* 1. *sf* and then decrescendo in all four parts; TB do this twice in m. 32; *p* at mm. 33 and 37

**Articulations**

1. none  
2. none  

1. none  
2. none  

1. none  
2. none  

1. none  
2. none

1. *sf* on each “stay” in m. 32 SATB  
2. none

1. mm. 13–14: basses have *tenuto* markings on each of “And a hand”  
2. mm. 18–19: tenutos on “And a” ST, “A” for altos, and SATB on downbeat of m. 19 (even Basses, who don’t say “lip”)  
3. mm. 22–23 *staccato* markings on each set
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of double 16th notes in TB; m. 25 ten.
marking in ATB

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Texture</th>
<th>1. homophonic</th>
<th>1. TBB; homophonic m. 7, then polyphonic mm. 8–10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. homophonic</td>
<td>2. imitation between Sopranos and Tenors; longer note values for Altos and Bass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. homophonic</td>
<td>2. mostly homophonic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4.3 Implications for interpretation of “The Coolin”

Perhaps the most important factor of this piece is the nature of the relationship between the poet and the fair-haired one. The nature of this invitation, “Come with me, under my coat” can be interpreted several different ways. The text used by Stephens and Barber takes very little from the original poem. Much of it is original material written by Stephens and carries with it the undercurrent of longing and desire. The longing does not seem to be sexual, but rather innocently romantic. Whether this longing is also happy, excited, desperate, needy, content, or flirtatious will affect the musical decisions to be made.

From the original poem, it is apparent that the poet has been infatuated with the Coolin for some time. He goes into great detail as he describes the young woman’s attributes and his attraction to her. Wherever she goes, men seem to fall over themselves trying to connect with her, and they all think her glances are meant for them. The poet then goes on to say that these glances are not for them, and they are destined to be disappointed as they “have no hope to possess her.” He then invites his darling to come with him, so he may serenade her and comfort her in his arms. There is no confirmation that the young lady feels the same toward the poet: he may be one of those foolish young men who believe her glances are for him alone. It may be a very vivid depiction of “what if?” for the poet.

Section A opens in F major and is a calm introduction to more tumultuous emotions that are to come in the next two sections. Although not a traditional one, the opening harmonic progression hovers between an F major and a D minor chord, except for the opening chord of A minor. There may be false hope here for the poet and Barber captures the undecidedness with the delay of the F major chord. The uncertainty resolves quickly in the second measure, but this wavering of key might be a reflection of waverering confidence; this may be reflected in the tone colour chosen or use of vibrato (to be discussed further in the next section).

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268 Jeffers, Reincarnations, 22.
The rest of the opening is an invitation for the beautiful young woman to come away with him for an unspecified amount of time. He offers her milk of the white goat, or wine, if she prefers: this latter offering is accompanied by a D major chord, which jumps out in this otherwise diatonic setting. This altered VI chord may represent the flirtation of the poet, leading the young woman to the more romantic of beverages available. A G minor ninth chord takes the phrase back to the stability of F major.

The tempo is indicated as *Andante con moto*, with the dotted quarter at mm. 50–54. The use of *andante* here may reflect the strolling of the couple to the hillside paradise destination. The modifier *con moto* conveys a sense of intention and keeps the music and the story moving. Barber disliked sentimentality in music and mentions it several times to his Uncle Sidney in his descriptions of some of the performances he had attended while in Europe.\(^{269}\) *Andante con moto* clearly sets the mood of this piece: calmness, perhaps contentment, but with a slight sense of urgency. It may be appropriate to go to the higher metronome marking to achieve this.

The indication of *tenderly* beside the opening dynamic in each vocal line adds even more detail to the scenario. This additional modifier suggests the speaker’s honourable intentions, hoping

\(^{269}\) Samuel Barber, letter to Sidney Homer, date.
that the Coolin might accompany him, and perhaps in the longer term, even come to fall in love with him. He asks her to come with him under his coat, a chivalrous and protective act, an act he hopes will charm her. He might understand that he is not truly worthy of her attention but has hope that she will at least accompany him for the afternoon, and he can enjoy her beautiful presence, if only for the day. There is a simplicity and charm to this scene that is reflected in the chord progressions and requires an equally simple or sweet vocal quality. The 12/8 time signature lends itself to the calmness of the scene, and gives the melody a lilting quality that adds to the tenderness indicated by the opening modifier. Even the choice of F major as the key can be interpreted as complacency or calmness. The con moto tempo marking may indicate the excitement of this extended invitation, and the hope that it will be accepted.

The first phrase in the B section has the men alone in three parts (bass divisi). This begins the suggested discourse between the poet and the Coolin. “And we will talk, until Talk is a trouble, too” is marked pp, with a slight swell leading up to the second mention of “Talk.” Perhaps this is the poet’s way of coaxing the young lady with a gentleness of voice to assure her of his innocent intentions. At first the texture is homophonic with all three men’s parts together, but by m. 8, the tenors and basses split, echoing sections of text, perhaps like a nervous, young suitor, unsure of himself, trailing off in half sentences (see Figure 32). The gentle rhythmic lilt remains, slowing down in both parts from the use of sixteenth notes, to eighth and quarter notes. A written out ritardando by Barber, again mimicking the shyness of the suitor trailing his words into nothing. This must be reflected in the colour and balance in tenor/bass ensemble.

Phrase 2 is imitative in nature, four voices independently darting in and out with the lilting subject of the A section.

\[ \text{Schubart, Ideen zu einer Aesthetik der Tonkunst (1806).} \]
The sopranos are followed by the tenors and the altos by the basses as if in conversation with one another signifying the male/female relationship. Measures 11 and 12 have a wandering quality on the text “And nothing is left to do,” as all four voices weave around one another, until the next bit of text: “But an eye to look into an eye.” Clarity of text on each entry as well as dynamic balance keeps this conversation going. But care must be taken to not lose the gentleness and legato feeling in the line. All four parts come together homophonically with the SA voices in contrary motion to the TB voices, undulating inward and then back outward again.
The contrary motion between the upper and lower voices may reflect the possible sexual tension between the individuals in the poem; following the swells in the dynamic markings can help bring this out. Through this homophonic texture, the tenor line has started its statement a beat earlier than all of the rest, leaving even this section unsettled and a bit nervous. The eagerness of the tenors disrupts the textual homophony as well. The \( mp \) dynamic marking aids in the exploratory quality of this section. It’s as if the lovers are exchanging glances at each other nervously until finally their eyes meet with dynamic swells to the word “eye” twice in m. 13. The soprano is actually the one who glances first at the young man at the end of m. 11 and seems to hold this glance for the majority of m. 12 until she is met with his look in return.

Phrase 3 of Section B continues the flirtation started in Phrase 2. The basses begin the bold gesture of trying to take her hand: “And a hand in a hand to slip” (see the second m. of Figure 22). The sopranos previously led with the first glance, but now the basses first extend their hand on a long-held note in m. 14, perhaps waiting for a response. The two tenuto markings on “And a” in the bass line express the importance of this entrance. The other voices enter in turn pairing similarly to m. 13 with similar dynamic swells on “And a sigh to answer a sigh.” Measure 17 brings the lovers’ hands together for three of four beats in that measure. The basses hold a whole note Gb on the word “sigh,” and the dotted figure begins to change in m. 18. Each voice must
perform their rhythm accurately to achieve the softening of the rhythm that leads to the next section.

Phrase 4 again dovetails with the previous section on the text “And a lip to find out a lip.” This is perhaps the most intense and exciting moment of the B section: the kiss! Barber marks it with the dynamic pp, an incredibly gentle gesture for this moment. It is also interesting to note that only in the tenor line does Barber also add the modifier “espr” beside the dynamic marking. This moment is perhaps much more special, intense for the poet than it is for the young lady, as he has been smitten with her for a long time. At the end of m. 18 where the top three voices begin the section, Barber has also marked each pickup note with a tenuto marking—a bit of a written out ritardando and emphasis on the words, which continues with all four voices marked with the tenuto on the downbeat of m. 19. The half diminished seventh chord on the downbeat creates an incredibly exciting and tenuous moment in the story.

Figure 23. The Coolin: Half-diminished seventh chord m. 19

The bass emphasizes this change with a chromatic lift from Gb to G natural—a very positive lift. For almost two whole beats the couple lingers on the kiss. Perhaps because of the espr marking, the tenors are the first ones to continue on to complete the text fragment. The basses revel in the kiss, maintaining a drone like G natural for two mm. which then drops to a C for three measures. The soprano responds to the tenors’ suggestion at the end of m. 19, and the couple unites in a
possible kiss in m. 21 with a duet between the alto and tenor on the same text which finishes this subsection. The individual shaping or each line is of prime importance in this section.

Phrase 5 can be seen as each person’s reaction to this climatic event.

Figure 24. The Coolin: Section B climax

In mm. 22 and 23, the SA voices have no words, but undulate on the main theme of the piece, on a neutral “ah” marked \(mf\). The second basses continue their drone on the C, still focused on her lips, while the tenors and first basses exchange short staccato motives in contrary motion reliving the lead-up to the kiss: “and an eye, and a hand, and a sigh, and a lip”, marked \(pp\)—almost a giddy schoolboy reaction. The basses finally break free of the drone at the end of m. 23 while altos and tenors have increased note values. Measure 24 brings a moment of rest after this exciting first kiss; the performance should feel as if this might be the end of the story with the dynamic level decaying to \(pp\). This makes the sudden change in the next section more dramatic.

Section C is a complete and sharp change from the rest of the piece entirely. What can only be called an outburst by the young man is marked \(f\) and remains so for all three mm. of this subsection.
Perhaps after the incredible moment he has just described to her, the poet decides that regardless of how dark or cold it gets on the mountain, they should remain together (this idea is completed in the return of a modified A section to follow). A sudden shift to a g minor chord in 1st inversion jolts the couple out of their kiss, as the young man makes his case for the young woman to stay. “What if the night is black! And the air on the mountain chill!” The section is completely homophonic in a declamatory style, made up entirely of chords in inversions and with several added sevenths and even an added 11th on the word “air.” The men and the women partner up again and generally move in contrary motion inward in mm. 26–27, and 28–29, with an outward explosion from the end of 27 to the beginning of 28.

Then, as if realizing how inappropriate this outburst was, the dynamic changes to *mf espr.* for the sopranos and tenors, and *p* for the altos and basses; all four voices then diminuendo to *p* in m. 31.
The sopranos and tenors have an altered return of the opening thematic material. The change in melodic shape, which includes the leap of a tritone and some repeated notes, creates a more angular and tense melody. The section ends on a tight Eb major seventh chord in 2\textsuperscript{nd} inversion on the word “still,” mimicking the shimmering of the romantic tension between the couple. There is a slight sense of desperation on the poet’s part here: there are no root position chords for stability, sevenths in each chord without much resolution. The tenors’ and basses’ repeat of the final “is still” after the sopranos’ and altos’ statement makes this an uncomfortable scene. Bringing out all these details will ensure the proper contrast in mood from the other sections.

Section A returns with some modifications to bring the vignette to a close. The Eb major seventh chord that ends the previous section resolves to an unlikely A major chord in root position on the word “stay.”
The A minor chord at the beginning of the work gives a tenuous feeling, but now the modification to A major gives a more hopeful and entreating feeling. The gentleman suitor is now requesting the young maiden to stay even longer, as they have shared this wonderful afternoon together, and he can take care of her, under his coat. The character of the $sf$ on each iteration of the word “stay” must be infused with the poet’s feeling, whether it be desperation, pleading or the like. The tenuto marking on the final eighth note on the word “with” then gives pause before the return to the gentleness of the opening. This first m. is a quick and effective transition from the sudden outburst in section C returning to the calm and serenity of the opening invitation to the young maiden. Although the word “me” is elongated by one beat, the effect is a further calming down from the previous section.

A subtle change Barber makes to section $A^1$, phrase 2 seems to indicate the shyness returning to our poet: there are more dynamic swells over these two mm. than in the original A section (see Figure 46). The last two mm. are marked $pp$ with three of the four chords in root position. Barber employs a traditional IV-V-I progression, with some extra elements including a seventh on the IV chord, and a return to an A minor chord in first inversion with an added fourth, representing a bit of angst before the final resolution to F major.
4.4.4 Vocal and choral implementation for “The Coolin”

This final piece in the set expresses another completely different feeling from the other two works. The tenderness of the poet throughout most of the poem should be the highest priority for interpretation. Deciding how to create this tender quality is the first task for the conductor to complete. The gentler dynamics, the lack of aggressive articulations, and expressive markings in the score aid in creating this gentleness. The decisions on vocal tone and execution in “The Coolin” require some decisions about the poet’s intentions and the nature of the relationship between the poet and the young maiden:

1. How anxious is the young man to meet with the woman?
2. Is the suitor confident? Or shy?
3. Does the piece fantasize about what could happen, or is this a narrative?

The laidback quality of F major, the Andante tempo marking, the mf dynamic marking, all lead to a relaxed feeling of a simple invitation and honest intentions. The tenderly modifier and the hesitant establishment of F major in the first m. also suggest some insecurity in the asking of this question. The con moto gives a sense of intention, perhaps with the suitor finally getting up enough courage to ask the young maiden to spend some time with him. The opening may be a reflection of the anxious happiness of the composer himself. Barber was confident as a composer, but needed reassurance of his abilities from conductors, audiences, critics and most importantly his Uncle Sidney. His life was full of romance and intrigue at this point of his career: the relationship with Menotti, the European travels, but in his letters, there was always a bit of hesitation in accepting this as lasting in his life. All of this hesitation and slight insecurity mixed with confidence seem to show themselves in this music. Present as always are hints of melancholy in an otherwise happy vignette, a sense of drama, specific characterization and storytelling. Much of Barber’s instrumental music was influenced by literature, so the actual presence of text cannot help but create a story. His sense of drama in his operas can be seen here as well. Each of the three pieces is like a short opera with a complete storyline in a short period of time. Precise characterizations are apparent in all three pieces and play an important role in the musical choices made.
Assuming that this poet has honourable intentions and is tender hearted, the vocal tone will be the most delicate of the three works, at least at the beginning of the piece, with a round, relaxed, and supported tone that focuses on the vowels with lighter consonants. The opening statement jumps right into the heart and soul of this work—an earnest entreaty to the young woman—a confident leap of faith by the poet.

Figure 28. The Coolin: Opening melodic statement

The opening consonant on the word “come” must be explosive enough to be understood, but at the same time not overdone to properly characterize the innocence of the request and the requester. Immediately following this important consonant, the air flow must be even and continuous to adequately execute the lyricism in the melodic content. There should be no breath after the dotted half note on the word “me,” but rather a continued thought to “under my coat.” The lilting quality of the 12/8 time signature seems to keep the phrase moving through the longer note, despite the comma between the two ideas. Barber also puts a rest after the word “coat,” which further suggests that the opening two mm. should be thought of as one idea, because of the absence of a rest. The singers must place a very small space between the words “me” and “under” to avoid an added [j] sound between the words. The consonants in general can be more muted than in the first two pieces of the set, in order to keep the serenity of the vignette. Sustained vowels with clear but not explosive consonants are needed to ensure the lyricism.

The following mm. introduce the lilting melodic material that continues throughout the piece. The dotted eighth-sixteenth note figures should not be double-dotted, and the two sixteenth notes at the end of m. 3 and in the middle of m. 5 should not be emphasized, as this would destroy the sense of line required to keep the serene mood. The crescendo into m. 3 helps in establishing the gentle rhythm of the melodic line, like a boat pushed away from shore. Continued attention to separation of words that begin with consonants must be paid between “drink-our,” “fill-of,” “milk-of,” and “wine-if-it.” Clarity of words is necessary, but not at the cost of disturbing the
legato line. At m. 5, this $p$ marking is more effective as a sudden dynamic change, combined with the open [a] vowel needed for the beginning of the word “wine”, together creating a surprised effect, as if this is a naughty idea.

The tender vocal colour required for much of this piece needs to be carefully considered. The tone must be projected toward the audience, but without any hint of nasality or edge to the sound. A round tone that incorporates a free, open laryngeal space comprises this sound. Directed and supported air will help to make the lines seamless. A controlled vibrato may be present to keep the tone warm and rich.

Now that the scene has been set, the drama begins with the tenors and basses at m. 7 in even more hushed tones ($pp$—see Figure 32). All the dynamic swells indicated must be subtle; in m. 7, the dynamic markings merely emphasize the noun form of the word “Talk” in the phrase. Immediately after that, the voices begin their separation into the next section. Clear definition of the differences in rhythms between the tenors and basses must be established.

The pickup to m. 11 begins the fugue-like entrances of the lilt motif (see Figure 42). A slight crescendo into the downbeat of the motive on the word “nothing” in each part will give rhythmic clarity to the section and emphasize a new entrance of the material by a new section. Barber specifically marks these swells leading into the word “eye” in mm. 12 and 13. With each new idea introduced, the drama becomes more intense: “hand,” “sigh,” and finally “lip.” Special attention must be made to the tenuto markings on the basses’ introduction of the phrase “and a hand.” This can be seen as a slight change in tempo or added stresses on the notes. Either way, this again needs to be subtle, but Barber is making this an important moment, as the other entries of this text do not have the same markings. The dynamics increase slowly as each voice enters, and each m. starts to bring voices together homophonically. At the end of measure the lower voices unite on “And a sigh” with the treble voices following suit in m. 16. All four voices come together in m. 17 both in texture and text. Barber also changes certain dotted figures to straight eighth notes on the words now at the end of each text phrase (see Figure 42): “slip” and the second “sigh” of the phrase, perhaps suggesting a giving in. A clear distinction in rhythm and ultra-legato performance is necessary here.
The pick-up to m. 19 on the text “And a lip” has tenuto markings again, with an even softer dynamic marking (pp) than at m. 14 (p). The tenors also have an added modifier of espr. suggesting the male going in for the kiss. The basses have long drone-like notes on the word “sigh” beginning at m. 18. The singers must be instructed to maintain the initial [a] vowel of the diphthong in this word that is held for 17 beats by the second basses. At m. 22, the TB and SA voices are paired off with different articulations. The upper voices, especially the sopranos who have this material first, are marked espr. on the melodic material that borders on ecstasy with the undulating dotted rhythms alternating with eighth-note groupings that swell up and down dynamically as well. The tenors and basses express their bliss with staccato sixteenth notes that then make large intervallic jumps up for the tenors and down for the basses, all of this marked pp. All of the different expressive outbursts must be rhythmically precise, but distinct as different personalities as well. All of this bliss eventually dies down to pp again in the lower three voices with one more tenuto marking on the last note of each part creating somewhat of a pause before the next surprise.

Measure 26 must come off as a surprise to the audience, as it certainly must have to the young woman in the poem (see Figure 46). The legato quality of the previous sections must be replaced by a more declamatory style of performance. The tone colour may vary here as well: a more pointed, forward tone directed with more force through the mask should be used here. This will ensure an earnest and more forceful statement by the poet and give the dynamic increased power. The opening consonant must be quick to an open [a], and the aspirate “Wh” may be employed here for added impact. The consonants can have more bite here with a bit more emphasis than before. The effect should be an outcry, perhaps out of desperation, perhaps out of love. The sixteenth note couplets may also be more precise and crisp in execution than before. The mood calms down somewhat with the pickup to m. 30 with the return of the lilting figure, although the melody is more angular (including a tritone jump) than before with the inclusion of repeated notes that disturb the legato feel (see Figure 47). The mood again returns to melancholy, perhaps because the poet realizes his time with her is coming to an end. The rallentando at the end of m. 31 brings things to a quiet conclusion of the section. A non-vibrato tone on the word “still” may be effective word-painting as well.
The *sf* marking and a somewhat explosive attack of the consonants on the word “Stay” will set the hopeful and entreating tone of the next section (see Figure 48). The repetition of the word by the tenors and basses may also be a bit more forceful than the first, but with no breath between, so as to not disturb the line. Each proclamation of the word must die away quickly as indicated but keep the vowel open on the [E] of the diphthong on the word “stay” for as long as possible. Keep the tone supported with air flow despite the dying away of the dynamic level. The relaxed and earnest mood returns with a tender and gentle vocal tone at m. 33, a repeat of the opening entreaty. Again, mm. 32–34 should be in one breath to maintain the legato line. The *rallentando* at m. 36 aids in pointing out the extra notes at the end of the m. in the lower three voices that change the chord’s inversion from first to root position. It should not be accented, but well-placed and together rhythmically. The final two mm. must use the softest and gentlest tone quality of the entire piece to express the contentment of the poet to spend the afternoon with the maiden. A legato line with no accented notes will also finish the piece appropriately. Some emphasis may be put on the slight dissonance between the altos and tenors before the final resolution to F major, for dramatic effect.

### 4.5 Reincarnations Summary

These powerful texts inspired Barber to compose an equally powerful set of pieces that continue to challenge advanced choral ensembles. The technical difficulties of the music are driven, as are all of the composer’s decisions, by the affective impact of the text. Barber’s thoughtful study of the original poems and his reflective approach to composition resulted in these masterful a cappella works. One can see from the preceding discussion how vital it is that the conductor fully delve into the implications of the text and the resulting musical decisions that Barber made in order to fully understand the music and make appropriate decisions about its performance. Going beyond the score itself, no matter how detailed Barber’s markings, brings a level of deep comprehension to the conductor’s process.

Chapter 5 applies this same dramaturgical approach to a larger work of Barber’s, his *Prayers of Kierkegaard*. 
Although not an outwardly religious man, Samuel Barber wrote a considerable amount of sacred music for solo voice or chorus, with and without accompaniment. Prior to *Prayers of Kierkegaard*, Barber had spent an extensive amount of time crafting *Hermit Songs*, Op. 29, for voice and piano based on texts written by monks and hermits. He appreciated the poems these religious men wrote on manuscripts they were explaining or copying. “I find them very direct, unspoiled and often curiously contemporaneous in feeling.” Composed mid-career, this set of songs shows a more deliberate method of composition compared to his earlier, more spontaneous song settings. Barbara Heyman explains:

> His extensive notes on these texts offer still another example of his meticulous care in shaping texts, where attention to details led him to cross-check sources, use texts from more than one translation, or rework passages from a single source in order to produce a refined composite that would offer the fullest opportunity for musical expressivity.

Leontyne Price, accompanied by Barber, premiered *Hermit Songs* while on tour together throughout the U.S. and Europe in 1954. This was one of many premiers and collaborations between the composer-pianist and the young soprano.

Samuel Barber wrote *Prayers of Kierkegaard* as a commission from the Koussevitzky Foundation in 1954 and dedicated it to the memory of Serge and Natalie Koussevitzky. Barber received the original commission in 1942, but composition did not begin until 1953, with completion in January of 1954. Barber kept himself quite busy during the time between the commission and composition of the work. He composed his Op 17–29 during this time, which

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272 Ibid., 339.
included his *Symphony No. 2* (“Flight Symphony”), *Cello Concerto*, *Medea* (ballet and orchestral suite), *Knoxville: Summer of 1812*, and was working on a string quartet that was never completed. He was also drafted into the army in September of 1942, but did not participate on the front lines; rather he composed several works for the armed forces.\(^{274}\) The inspiration that moved the composer to begin work on these texts may be attributed to his attending the small church in St. Anselmo in 1951 (see quote on page 57 in Chapter Two). He vividly remembered this event and was even more impressed when he revisited the church several years later:

> Only a few nuns were there, one of whom showed me the text to follow, but there must have been 80 monks in the chorus and the Gregorian sounded better than ever. For me it is the only religious music possible, and it was well sung, I think; only I wish they wouldn’t use organ at all.\(^ {275}\)

Heyman concludes that this Gregorian experience, which included a deep interest in monastic solitude, along with the nearing death of his uncle and, perhaps a questioning of his own faith, were on Barber’s mind as he began this large-scale work.\(^ {276}\)

As in the previous chapter, the next sections will explore the text Barber created out of the prayers by Soren Kierkegaard and a detailed musical analysis, which lead to decisions about interpretation and vocal and choral performance directives.

### 5.1 Text for Prayers of Kierkegaard

The text of the work is taken from Danish theologian, philosopher, and writer Soren Kierkegaard’s body of work. Kierkegaard was born on May 5, 1813, and lived in Copenhagen most of his life. He was born into a wealthy family, which enabled him to spend his life in university studies, serious authorship, and polemical writing. After breaking off his engagement to marry Regine Olsen in 1841, he wrote many aesthetic, philosophical, religious, and

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\(^{274}\) Heyman, *Samuel Barber*, 211–3.

\(^{275}\) Ibid., 348.

\(^{276}\) Ibid., 349.
controversial works until his death in 1855, many under a pseudonym.\textsuperscript{277} He was equally well-known amongst the common people as well as in intellectual and religious circles. As a young man, he was known for his brilliance and wit, but later became controversial because of his “prophetic attack on the mediocrity and pretension of the bourgeois Christianity of his time.”\textsuperscript{278}

Perry D. LeFevre in his book, \textit{The Prayers of Kierkegaard}, gives an interpretation of the philosopher’s life and thought after outlining the biographical events of his life:

\begin{quote}
This simple story of the events of his outward life is deceptive; it veils the interminable complexity and depth of his inwardness. The real story of Kierkegaard’s life is the history of the inner movement of mind and spirit.\textsuperscript{279}
\end{quote}

Although to many he kept an outward appearance of happiness as a young man, Kierkegaard revealed a tragically lonely and melancholy side through his writings, somewhat similar to the life Samuel Barber lived. Kierkegaard explains:

\begin{quote}
From a child I was in the power of a monstrously brooding temperament, the depth of which found its only true expression in the equally monstrous dexterity given to me, of concealing it under an outward appearance of joviality and vivacity. My sole joy, from practically as far back as I can remember, was that no one could possibly discover how unhappy I was.\textsuperscript{280}
\end{quote}

Much of this unhappiness can be attributed to Kierkegaard’s difficult relationship with his father and the strict Christian education he received throughout childhood. Much has been written about Kierkegaard as a poet, philosopher, and even a prophet, but perhaps most importantly he was a “religious man struggling for his own soul.”\textsuperscript{281}

\textsuperscript{277} Perry D. LeFevre, \textit{The Prayers of Kierkegaard}, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1956), 125.
\textsuperscript{278} Ibid., 125.
\textsuperscript{279} Ibid., 126.
\textsuperscript{280} Soren Kierkegaard, \textit{Point of View}, 76, quoted in LeFevre, \textit{The Prayers of Kierkegaard}, 126.
\textsuperscript{281} LeFevre, \textit{The Prayers of Kierkegaard}, 128.
He is seeking to know himself, for “one must know one’s self before knowing anything else” . . . and knowing himself comes to mean finding himself and being himself. These in turn come to mean finally being found by God.282

Several religious experiences increased Kierkegaard’s self-knowledge, including the realization that his marriage engagement was a mistake. All of these experiences drew him closer to God, but also tortured him further because of the shame he felt about his sinful youth.283 His views on Christianity and how the church had veered from the teachings in the New Testament were impassioned and controversial, and because of these and his polemical writings, he was both revered and also ridiculed by many people. Pierre LeFevre believes:

The persistent theme of all Kierkegaard’s productive work is the meaning of personal existence—the problem of becoming a Christian. For him personal existence is essentially self-realization, but self-realization in its deepest and most profound sense.284

Kierkegaard’s inner turmoil and search for self-understanding seemed to resonate with Barber, perhaps in both artistic and also religious ways.

Barber chose four passages from the writings of Kierkegaard for his large-scale cantata: prayers that were interspersed among the writings, as well as other writing by the theologian. Barber used these texts in reverse chronological order in his Prayers of Kierkegaard composition. Kierkegaard never titled these poems, but LeFevre assigned titles for his book by using either a phrase from the prayer itself or by what he thought represented a central theme.

The text for Movement I is based on a prayer in Kierkegaard’s last sermon in 1855, “The Unchangeableness of God found in For Self-Examination.285 The text for Movement II is based

282 Ibid.
283 Ibid., 137.
284 Ibid., 149.
on a prayer found in “Journals, 1030” from 1850. The text in Movement III is based on a prayer found in Christian Discourses from 1848. And the text in Movement IV is based on a prayer found in “Journals, 692” from 1847 also in The Journals of Soren Kierkegaard.

5.1.1 Basis for Text in Movement 1, Thou Art Unchangeable

O Thou who are unchangeable, who nothing changes! Thou who art unchangeable in love, precisely for our welfare not submitting to any change: may we too will our welfare, submitting ourselves to the discipline of Thy unchangeableness, so that we may in unconditional obedience find our rest and remain at rest in Thy unchangeableness.

Not art Thou like man; if he is to preserve only some degree of constancy he must not permit himself too much to be moved, nor by too many things. Thou on the contrary art moved, and moved in infinite love, by all things. Even that which we human beings call an insignificant trifle, and pass by unmoved, the need of a sparrow, even this moves Thee; and what we so often scarcely notice, a human sigh, this moves Thee, O Infinite Love! But nothing changes Thee, O Thou who art unchangeable! O Thou who in infinite love dost submit to be moved, may this our prayer also move Thee to add Thy blessing, in order that there may be wrought such a change in him who prays as to bring him into conformity with Thy unchangeable will, Thou who are unchangeable!

5.1.2 Basis for text in Movement 2, A Whole Life Long

Lord Jesus Christ! A whole life long didst Thou suffer that I too might be saved; and yet Thy suffering is not an end; but this too wilt Thou endure, saving and redeeming me, this patient suffering of having to do with me, I who so often go astray from the right path, or even when I remained on the straight path stumbled along it or crept so slowly

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289 David F. Swenson, For Self-Examination, 227.
along the right path. Infinite patience, suffering of infinite patience. How many times have I not been impatient, wished to give up and forsake everything, wished to take the terribly easy way out, despair; but Thou didst not lose patience. Oh, I cannot say what Thy chosen servant says: that he made up what was lacking in the afflictions of Christ in his flesh; no, I can only say that I increased Thy sufferings, added new ones to those which Thou didst once suffer in order to save me.

5.1.3 Basis for text in Movement 3, At the Lord’s Table

Father in Heaven, well we know that it is Thou that givest both to will and to do, that also longing when it leads us to renew the fellowship with our Saviour and Redeemer is from Thee. But when longing lays hold of us, oh, that we might lay hold of the longing; when it would carry us away, that we might give ourselves up; when Thou art near to summon us, that we also might keep near to Thee in supplication; when Thou in the longing dost offer us the highest good, that we might buy the opportune moment, might hold it fast, sanctify it in a quiet hour with serious thoughts, with pious resolutions, so that it might become the strong but also well-tested longing which is required of them that would worthily partake of the Holy Communion! Father in Heaven, longing is Thy gift; no one can bestow it upon himself, when it is not given no one can buy it though he were willing to see all—but when Thou givest it, then one can sell all to buy it. So we pray from them that are assembled here, that with hearty longing they may today approach the Lord’s Table, and that when they go hence they may go with increased longing for Him, our Saviour and Redeemer.

5.1.4 Basis for text in Movement 4, Hold Not Our Sins

Father in Heaven! Hold not our sins up against us but hold us up against our sins, so that the thought of Thee when it wakens in our soul, and each time it wakens, should not

290 Asterisk refers to the biblical verse Col. 1:24.
292 Walter Lowrie, “At the Lord’s Table,” Christian Discourses, 259.
remind us of what we have committed but of what Thou didst forgive, not of how we went astray but of how Thou didst save us.²⁹³

5.1.5 Barber’s text

Barber used Kierkegaard’s source texts in the reverse chronological order, also taking other liberties that include reordering the sequence of lines, deleting phrases, and substituting his own translation for specific words. Barber’s final version of the text reads, as follows:

I.

O Thou Who art unchangeable, Whom nothing changes,
May we find our rest
and remain at rest
in Thee unchanging.
Thou art moved
and moved in infinite love by all things:
the need of a sparrow, even this moves Thee;
and what we scarcely see,
a human sigh,
this moves Thee, O infinite Love!
But nothing changes Thee, O Thou unchanging!

II.

Lord Jesus Christ
Who suffered all life long
that I, too, might be saved,
and Whose suffering still knows no end,
This, too, wilt Thou endure:
saving and redeeming me,
this patient suffering of me
with whom Thou hast to do –
I, who so often go astray.

III.

Father in Heaven,
well we know that it is Thou
that giveth both to will and to do,
that also longing,
when it leads us to renew

the fellowship with our Saviour and Redeemer,
is from Thee.
Father in Heaven, longing is Thy gift.
But when longing lays hold of us,
Oh, that we might lay hold of the longing!
when it would carry us away,
that we also might give ourselves up!
when Thou art near to summon us,
that we also in prayer might stay near Thee!
When Thou in the longing
dost offer us the highest good,
oh, that we might hold it fast!

IV.
Father in Heaven!
Hold not our sins up against us
But hold us up against our sins,
So that the thought of Thee should not remind us
Of what we have committed,
But of what Thou didst forgive;
Not how we went astray,
But how Thou didst save us!294

5.2 Music analysis of Prayers of Kierkegaard

The whole cantata is twenty minutes long and divided into four contrasting yet musically continuous sections that can be called movements. Although neo-Romantic in its expression and perspective, the work combines elements of the twentieth century, Baroque, and medieval practice. The choral texture often makes use of double choir formation, alternating blocks of sound with rich contrapuntal writing, and also a combination of the two textures.295 Barber employs a modal harmonic language, some primitivism in the very loud and aggressive parts of the work, twelve-tone compositional technique in one of the movements, substantial use of newly composed chant throughout the entire piece, and a closing hymn reminiscent of his Presbyterian upbringing as well as of the music of Bach. The use of all of these varied styles

295 Heyman. Samuel Barber, 351.
creates not only the very personal expression of faith that Kierkegaard’s words elicit, but also may reflect Barber’s own search for Christian faith and artistic authenticity. The interval of the major second both above and below is integral to the melodic material throughout the work. Barber seems to thread the purity and expressiveness of chant in each section. I will not go into great length into any discussion of the orchestral accompaniment, only to mention orchestral events that affect the choral writing and how it may affect the choral performance.

I will consider the subtle changes that Barber makes to achieve his artistic vision. Rather than address every detail, however, I will focus on the most important points, in my opinion, which will clarify the major issues at hand.
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**Tempo**

- Movement I: Grave and remote, quarter note = 56; poco allargando pick-up to m. 16; m. 17 Moderato, quarter = 56
- Movement II: Andante, con moto tranquillo, quarter note = 60; several sostenutos, allargando end of m. 80 returning a tempo m. 82
- Movement III: 1. Un poco mosso, quarter note = 60<br>2. Mysterious, gradually increasing in intensity; m. 134, beat 3 Più animato, quarter = 88<br>3. Lo stesso tempo; m. 149 quarter = 88; m. 150 moving ahead; m. 160 Broadly, quarter note = 84; m. 164 stringendo molto; m. 166 Più mosso, quarter note = 126; m. 168 Stretto, quarter note = 160; allarg. ad just before next section
- Movement IV: 1. Allegro molto, dotted quarter note = 126<br>2. Frenzied; m. 221 calmando e allarg. poco a poco<br>3. Quietly, quarter note = 69; allargando molto m. 238<br>4. Broad and straightforward, quarter note = 60; m. 253 allargando

**Harmony**

- Movement I: 1. newly composed chant mostly in D Dorian mode; mm. 8–14 moves away from the D tonal centre and almost feels major; one chromatic alteration in m. 14 - Bb on “human”; return
- Movement II: mm. 62–63 transitional from D Dorian to B natural minor area; m. 64 in B minor: iv’–i–VI–III–v–i but all of these chords have many non-chord tones making the progression
- Movement IV: mm. 171–181 modally on E; mm. 181–182 transitional; mm. 183–187 C# key area; mm. 188–189 transitional; mm. 190–195 switching centres almost every measure; mm. 196–
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almost feels major; one chromatic alteration in m. 14 - Bb on “human”; return to D tonal centre by m. 19.

2. F♯ natural minor key area until the end of m. 23; mm. 24–25 have no accidentals except for one Bb, chords in 4th and 5th; m. 26 is very chromatic, perhaps bitonal or an F♯ major chord with added 7th, 9th, 11th, 13th, and a lowered 3rd; m. 27 D minor chord; D Dorian area m. 27–30 in choir, chromatic chords built on 4th in orchestra - dissonant clashes; m. 31–33 D major choir, D minor orchestra.

3. D Dorian key area imitative polyphony; B♭s introduced by B in m. 40 and S in m. 41; Es introduced by TB and B♭s in SAB in m. 42; ends on G minor chord in all of these chords have many non-chord tones making the progression more ambiguous; very rich chords

2. same chord progression in B minor as above, with a B major chord at m. 74 (rather than minor); switches back to minor in the next measure

3. B minor: VII7-III7-I7-IV7-IV-VI-IV-V7-i-V7-iv7-i; very chromatic and many non-chord tones

4. B natural minor fragments from Section 1 of this movement; B major chord in m. 95; B minor chord m. 96

IV-VII-iii-I-vi-V-I-II-VII-I; non-traditional progressions; chromatic

2. loose application of 12-tone technique: tone row 1 [C G D A E B F♯ C♯ G♯ B♭ E ♭ A ♭ F] used as an eighth-note ostinato in harp, piano, and xylophone mm. 97–127, fragments used throughout orchestra; tone row 1 is used and then immediately in retrograde form in xylophone; tone row 2 [F♯ D♯ D F B G♯ A B♭ G E C D♭] occurs simultaneously (as tone row 1) in T solo and T section; SA soloists also use this row when they enter; notes in rows repeated sometimes before moving on; m. 127 ATB sections begin on a C-transitional; mm. 190–195 switching centres almost every measure; mm. 196–197 transitional; mm. 198–203 E natural minor or modal, D pedal beginning m. 199, beat 3

2. Modal with E centre; lots of open 5ths; timpani begins E-G-D ostinato in eighths, other instruments join for different lengths of time; m. 211 only two notes in ostinato E-D until m. 228

3. m. 229 continues modally around E with only one accidental; G♯, m. 230 in orchestra (similar to m. 172)

4. E major chorale; seven non-traditional “cadences”; very chromatic; last four chords: D major, G major 7th with B in the bass (beneath a D major chord in higher
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m. 43
4. E♭s returned to natural in mm. 43–44; SA hover around a G minor chord; TB then move to an A minor chord; polyphonic orchestral parts mm. 43–50; E minor chord ATB mm. 49–50; G minor to D minor chords in m. 51 both SATB and orchestra; chromatic voice leading to D major chord for chorus and orchestra m. 54 on “love”; immediate change to D minor m. 55 with chromatic orch chords; dissonance and chromaticism resolve to D major chord m. 61 chorus and orchestra, but orch then adds a D minor chord against the choir on beat 2

major chord: I♭♭–VII–A♭D♭Gb–I progression similar to mm. 111–113; m. 132 B on G & D, m. 132 beat 3 A on C♯ and A, melodic fragment as in m. 111; m. 132 new partial tone row 3 introduced in S: [G♯ D♯ G A F♯ C♯ E D♯]

3. partial tone row 3 continues in orchestra, choir chanting in open fifths; open intervals interspersed with chords in each of the two choirs, e.g., (G♯D♯ interval)-(AE interval)-(G♯D♯ interval)-IV-(G♯D♯ interval)-i-(C♯F♯G♯ chord); key signatures change: m. 140 B major or G♯ minor, m. 149 C major or A minor, m. 160 D major or B minor – with chromatic alterations

instruments), D major 7th with C# in the bass, E major
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<td>instruments, only the first three measures and then shorter fragments</td>
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<td>27–33 with extended ending</td>
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<td>3. Fragments of opening chant throughout in three choirs; rhythms altered (dotted versions, augmentation)</td>
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<td>4. straightforward chorale with mostly stepwise movement and small leaps; higher tessitura in last three measures</td>
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**Rhythm**

1. mainly quarter and eighth notes with some dotted eighth-sixteenth note figures; chant-like with many time signature changes (almost every measure); syncopation in m. 13 on “scarcely”
2. orchestra in eighth and quarter notes; chorus similar but with a dotted
3. faster rhythms in S solo in m. 80 on second syllable of

1. alternating triplet-duplet repeated figure throughout against longer note values in solo oboe line; oboe uses triplet-duplet figure in m. 69
2. same as above, but with the S solo using the triplet-duplet figure in m. 75
3. same frenzied rhythms as the previous section, but only for first three mm. except for the timpani ostinato; sweeping longer

1. eighth and quarter notes; chant-like; eighth-note interspersions by orchestra
2. eighth-note ostinato rhythm in piano, harp, and xylophone; mostly quarter notes and longer note values in soloists and choral parts; eighth-note chant-like fragments interspersed mm. 127–134
3. frenzied driving eighth notes in 12/8 time; lots of syncopation; some longer note values in cantus firmus-like melodies in lower orchestral parts
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**Movement I, mm. 1–61**
- Eighth-sixteenth note figure m. 27 and longer note values from beat 3 of m. 27 to end of 33
- Quarter and eighth notes with dotted figure on “infinite”; longer note values for B mm. 40–42, T m. 41
- Dotted eighth-sixteenth note figure in SA and TB mm. 44–45; change in the metric pulse: 3+3+2 eighth notes in m. 44 and 3+2 in m. 45 syncopation in mm. 49–50 on “scarcely” from opening chant; slower rhythmic values mm. 52-54; dotted eighth-sixteenth note figure from m. 27; longer note values m. 55, beat 3 section end

**Movement II, mm. 62–97**
- “redeeming”; eighth and quarter notes mm. 82–84, longer note values mm. 86–88 in S solo
- Triplet-duplet repeated figure with longer note values in solo lines

**Movement III, mm. 97–171**
- SATB chant-like rhythm in both choirs interspersed with partial tone row 3 rhythm m. 150 to end of section

**Movement IV, mm. 171–254**
- Note values in melodic material in orchestra; rhythmic values increase in length to the end of the section (slowing down effect)
- Mostly quarter notes; some choral sections have longer note values, some get shorter with dotted figures
- Straightforward chorale mostly in quarter notes; some syncopations for word emphasis: m. 244 “Thee” and mm. 247–249 “But of what Thou didst forgive”

### Dynamics and Expressive

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<th>1. <em>pp legatissimo</em> opening marking; remains quiet</th>
<th>1. <em>f decresc to pp</em> on first two mm. cellos and basses; <em>mp</em></th>
<th>1. <em>m. 97 pp</em> with some small <em>cresc-decresc</em> to <em>p</em> and</th>
<th>1. <em>ff; sf</em> on measure 181 downbeat and m. 187, beat</th>
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Descriptors

throughout: loudest dynamic is mp; cresc-decresc at mm. 9–10, 13–14, 15–17; asterisk before TB staff with note saying, “Plastic, in plainsong style.”

2. orchestra begins pp builds to ff m. 26; crescendo mm. 30–31; dim. m. 32–33 to p; m. 26 marcatissimo in 1st trumpet and 1st trombone

3. p espr. marking and crescendo for each imitative entry B/T/A/S; cresc-decresc on each “all things”

4. SA and TB p with a cresc to tenuto-marked syllables; TB then decresc mm. 45–46; mm. 49–54 mostly p and pp; one mf on “moves” m. 52 then immediately back to p on “Thee”; sudden ff on second half of

oboe solo with cresc-decresc that move with melodic shape; sostenuto oboe m. 69

dynamics same as oboe solo except no cresc marking at m. 75 (comparable to the oboe m. 69); instead, very sustained and unhurried marking in brackets with an a tempo marking m. 76 on “end”

mf’S solo m. 78; mf espr for 1st clarinet and solo viola m. 79; viola crescendo to m. 80; S solo cresc m. 80; sudden p m. 82; espr and cresc marking for orch in m. 85, S cresc mm. 85–86 to f, decresc at end of m. 87; espr markings for solo clarinet, solo bass clarinet, and solo horn mm. 85–87; marcato solo horn m. 88

back; large crescendo to ff+ mm. 106–110; p subito m. 111

2. ppp in orchestra, mp espressivo T solo, pp whispered for T section, mp espr viola solo; mp espr for A entrance m. 18; S solo entrance mf espr. m. 122; large cresc to m. 125 S solo; varied dynamics in various parts until m. 134; f emerging TB end of m. 134

3. pp subito at pickup to m. 140; gradual cresc mm. 140–148, then decresc to m. 149; p subito choir 1, p dolce choir 2 m. 149; gradual cresc again to ff m. 108; mf espr markings for partial tone row 3 m. 152, 154; m. 170 cresc

3; each transition brings the dynamic back to f (first one also marc) then crescendo back to ff for the next section (mm. 183, 190, 198, and 204)

2. ff’ both choir and orchestra; m. 208 the choir: (fading gradually to a hum); orchestra does not dim, even at m. 221 senza dim, until mm. 225–228 decrescendo and dim poco a poco

3. pp sotto voce, whispering throughout; onstage bells marked mp, offstage bells marked pp; m. 232 chorus III enters p sotto voce; several small cresc-decresc in various parts; mm. 236–238 final entrances marked espr and ppp for the final B entrance; pickup to m. 238
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<td><strong>Section 1, mm. 97–114</strong>&lt;br&gt;Father in Heaven</td>
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**Articulations**

1. only two markings in the whole chant: m. 2 accent on first syllable of “nothing”, and m. 15 *tenuto* on “moves”
2. accents on each half note in m. 29
3. *tenuto* markings on first syllable of “intimate” for B m. 36, “love” for TB m. 37, “at” and “rest” for B m. 39,
4. *mf espr* solo oboe m. 90; *mf espr* solo viola m. 91; ten S solo m. 95; *mf espr* 1st horn m. 95

1. *tenuto* markings for the oboe in m. 69 on second two notes of triplet
2. *tenuto* markings in mm. 75–76 on “and Whose suff’ring” and “end”
3. no articulations
4. no articulations

1. few articulations; mm. 111–112 *tenuto* on first syllable of “Heaven,” first syllable of “longing,” and “Thy”
2. *tenutos*: T section “hold” m. 117, “car-ry us” T section m. 120, A m. 124 *tenutos* and *marcato* or *marcatissimo*; m. 125 B *tenuto* “long-”; m. 127
1. various markings in the orchestral parts including *sul talone* (at the frog) for the strings and many *marcatos*
2. m. 206 accent on syncopated first syllable of “Heaven”; accents for brass mm. 207-208 on their rhythmically augmented 5-note motive
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4. *tenuto* SA m. 44 on first syllable of “sparrow”, TB on “moves” m. 52, ATB on first syllable of “intimate” m. 53

3. *tenutos* S section “hold,” AB first syllable of “Heaven”; *tenuto* and *marc A* “car-ry us” m. 130, T second syllable of “also” and “might” m. 131; *tenutos* on first syllable of “Heaven” all parts mm. 130–134, also first syllable “Father” T m. 133; *teno* m. 136, beat 1 T, beat 2 B; *tenutos* m. 137 “we,” m. 138 “pray’r”

3. *tenutos* m. 140 “us,” mm. 140–147 first syllable “longing,” m. 145 first syllable of “highest,” m. 155 “good,” mm. 157–158 on almost every word; accents on both syllables of “offer” m. 161

3. *tenuto* markings on almost all first syllables of “Heaven”; some *tenutos* on the first syllable of “Father,” most often when entering in syncopation; one accent on first syllable of “Father” in 2nd basses m. 237

4. *tenutos* m. 248 SATB “Thou,” m. 252 tenors “But how Thou” sff m. 253 SATB “save”
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<th>Texture</th>
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<th>1. solo oboe over orchestral accompaniment</th>
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<td>2. imitative polyphony in orchestra mm. 19–25; homophonic chorus with orchestral interspersions mm. 27–33</td>
<td>2. solo S over orchestral accompaniment; solo viola m. 74</td>
<td>2. polyphonic</td>
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<td>3. imitative polyphony in chorus and orchestra; orchestra doubles choral parts;</td>
<td>3. solo S over orchestral accompaniment; solos for clarinet, bass clarinet, horn, and viola</td>
<td>3. homophonic in each choir; antiphonal between choirs</td>
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<td>4. homophonic pairings of SA vs. TB mm. 43–48; m. 49 homophonic ATB then SATB polyphony in mm. 50–51 returning to homophony in mm. 52–54; homophonic SATB mm. 55–61</td>
<td>4. imitative entries between oboe and S solo; 1st horn solo mm. 95–96 based on solo melodic material</td>
<td>4. homophonic</td>
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1. imitative throughout orchestra
2. homophonic chorus
3. antiphonal between choirs 1 and 2; imitative between T2 and B2 in choir 3
4. homophonic
5.2.1 Thematic material, Movement I

Figure 29. Newly composed opening chant

5.2.2 Thematic material, Movement II

Figure 30. Soprano soloist main theme
5.2.3 Thematic material, Movement III

Figure 31. Choral chanting theme
Figure 32. Tone Row 1 (xylophone) and Tone Row 2 (Tenor Solo)

Mysterious, gradually increasing in intensity

Tenor Solo  \( \text{mp expressivo} \)

But when longing lags hold of us, O that
Hält Ver-lan-gen die Hand auf uns, hiel-ten

Tenor Tutti  \( \text{pp whispered} \)

But when longing
Hält Ver-lan-gen

Xyl.

Five Alto Soli

(Tenor Solo)

\( \text{mp espr.} \)

But when longing lags hold of us,
Hält Ver-lan-gen die Hand auf uns,

we might lay hold of the longing,
when it would
wir dann nur fest am Ver-lan-gen,
Trug es uns

lays hold of us,
Hand auf uns,
5.2.4 Thematic material, Movement IV

Figure 34. Thematic material in the orchestral interlude

5.3 Implications for interpretation of *Prayers of Kierkegaard*

To best understand Barber’s setting of *Prayers of Kierkegaard*, the conductor must look to Søren Kierkegaard’s philosophies and how these may have influenced the composer. Kierkegaard, although a devout Christian, is also considered to be the father of existentialism. His philosophical ideas can be applied both to secular philosophy and also to the eternal search for God through his Son, Jesus Christ. The texts taken from Kierkegaard’s prayers are set well to music by Barber, but perhaps not with the same religious intentions. Barber’s search was more likely for acceptance in society rather than a search for eternal life. What is clear is that Barber was searching for something—acceptance, love, and understanding—of his music and perhaps his sexuality as well. Barber may have been attracted to some of the other tenets of existentialism: the significance placed on emotions or feelings and the notion of authenticity as it is connected to individualism, especially celebrating and maintaining one’s difference and

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independence from others.\textsuperscript{297} Both men also shared an inner melancholy that they tried their best to hide from the outside world.\textsuperscript{298}

Paul Wittke has stated that \textit{Prayers of Kierkegaard} is evidence that Barber maintained his faith beyond his childhood days.\textsuperscript{299} But rather than a statement of faith, this composition may be more of a search for truth, love, and acceptance. The text does not show the desperate and obsessive nature of Kierkegaard’s need for closeness to God that he struggled with his whole life. And Barber edited the prayers to focus on some of the aspects of the Church he wanted to emphasize. He was raised in the strictness of the Presbyterian church and their rules, but in the final chorale Barber seems to focus on Christ’s sacrifice to have our sins forgiven rather than on the negativity of pointing out one’s sins. The work is a struggle to find faith, and the writer is sometimes angry at God for being unchangeable, this both being a virtue and also a possible weakness. Looking at the score in Barber’s melancholic way, we see both a statement of what he believes and also his ongoing struggle of faith. The music moves between surety and aimlessness, alternating between traditional Catholic chant and angry outbursts.

Søren Kierkegaard’s words strongly resonated with Samuel Barber. While Kierkegaard was a devout Christian for most of his life, Barber may not have been. Rather, the inner struggle to find truth and fulfillment is what may have moved Barber to set these texts. His uncle Sidney Homer was now nearing death, and often people look to faith at such challenging times. Barber may have still had issues about accepting his sexuality and unresolved issues with his own faith with respect to this topic. With words of longing and struggle that pervade this cantata, Barber searches musically and perhaps spiritually in a very dramatic way. The struggle in \textit{Prayers of Kierkegaard} is both spiritual and also human.

Barber’s experience at the small church in St. Anselmo where he heard Gregorian chant performed had a profound impact on him. He appreciated the simple and honest presentation without the pomp and circumstance that he had witnessed earlier in the day at the Closing of the Doors ceremony at the Vatican; this simplicity resonates with Kierkegaard’s condemnation of

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{297} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{298} LeFevre, \textit{The Prayers of Kierkegaard}, 126–7.
\textsuperscript{299} Wittke, “An Improvisatory Portrait.”
\end{flushleft}
empty church ritual. The spectacle made out of the Vatican event felt too empty and bombastic to be of any spiritual worth. The Gregorian presentation and the sound of the bells were inspirational to Barber at the time and he included bells in his setting of Kierkegaard’s texts.

### 5.3.1 Interpreting Movement I

The newly composed chant in Section 1, performed a cappella by the tenors and basses of the choir, was inspired by the simplicity with which the monks at St. Anselmo, Italy, expressed their spiritual devotion. This new chant imitates Gregorian chant style and captures a purity of expression that the original chanting had inspired in him on his Italian journeys. Set in the Dorian mode, the melody has the intrinsic melancholy that so much of Barber’s music seems to evoke. The change of mode in mm. 8–14 may reflect optimism as the text moves from the unchangeable quality of God to a discussion of God’s love for all things great and small. The alteration on the word “human” in m. 14 is also significant, perhaps representing God’s gentleness towards us.

The sparse use of articulations demonstrates what words and ideas were most important to Barber in the text. Although the accent on the first syllable of “nothing” in m. 2 highlights the syncopation, it also may be a comment on how God (and religion) never changes. In my opinion, this belief is central to much of the composition: denunciation of Barber’s sexuality and rigidity within the Church must have been frightening and frustrating, and this musical expression may be his commentary. Anger appears in the sections that follow. He contrasts this anger with what should be the central tenet of religion—love. The two tenuto markings in m. 12 and m. 15 on “moves” are less aggressive but still emphasize the word and bring the focus back to God’s love and how love motivates God.

The tempo marking “Grave and remote” communicates two pieces of information beyond slow speed alone; Barber’s metronome marking takes care of the speed. “Grave” indicates the seriousness of purpose of the subject matter, and “remote” may be a stage direction, trying to recreate the procession of the monks he heard on his Italian voyages. The pp marking also suggests this physical distance and reverent atmosphere. The dynamics increase as the text refers to God’s and almost reach at the mf in m. 13, but a sudden pp on “a human sigh” conveys a tender feeling. The special attention Barber gives to this phrase may reflect God’s tenderness, the smallness of humanity in comparison to God, or possibly represents Barber’s unanswered
prayers to God regarding his homosexuality. The chant has both a universal and very personal appeal.

The orchestra enters at Section 2 with the same gentleness but also with a sense of longing, which turns much more aggressive as it builds to the climax in m. 26. The dissonances, heavy *marcato* markings, and *ff* dynamic lead to a choral outburst at m. 27. The amount of dissonance created in the orchestra suggests anger and frustration—perhaps a gradual release of held-back emotion. The choir’s entry is the vocal response to the orchestral build-up. The choral D-minor chord against the dissonant and violent orchestral interspersions creates a violent intensity. Barber employs two different key signatures—three sharps for the orchestra and nothing for the choir—to further depict the clash of tonalities. In context of Barber’s own situation as a gay man, I interpret this section as suggesting a lashing out against God rather than an expression of spiritual fervour. This lashing out continues with the accents on each choral syllable in m. 29 that lead to a final D major chord in the choir in m. 31. However, part of the orchestra then enters with repeated first inversion D minor chords that diminuendo into the next section. The major and the minor version of the same chord simultaneously is a clear depiction of the conflict in Barber’s, and perhaps Kierkegaard’s, life.

After each violent outburst, Section 3 returns in a calmer manner until the next outburst. This fugal section begins calmly with the tenors and basses starting on the same pitch imitatively. Barber modifies the *p* dynamic with *espr.* on the gentler portion of the text that focuses on God’s love. As the altos and sopranos enter on different pitches the texture becomes more complicated. The tonal centre is ambiguous but doesn’t stray too far away chromatically with only B♭s and E♭s added to the harmonies. A wandering quality to the material here implies a search for rest through the love of God. God’s love is the central interpretive idea of this section, as evidenced by tenutos that emphasize the first mention of “infinite” by the basses and then every instance of the word “love” in each fugal entrance (BTAS).

The gentleness of Section 3 continues in Section 4 with descriptions of how God is moved by even the smallest things: the need of a sparrow and even a subtle human sigh. Again “a human sigh” is set in a distinct manner: the quick return to *pp*, the varied rhythms in all the voices (perhaps representing the sighs of each individual). The return to homophony and the *mf* marking on “moves” in m. 52, with an immediate drop to *p* on the next note, emphasize God’s empathy
for us. “O infinite Love” is set on longer note values with a tenuto marking on the first syllable of “infinite” in m. 53, which grows softer to pp on the final word “Love” on a D major chord. These specific markings are a musical depiction of how unique God’s love is for us.

This gentleness is short-lived: the orchestra quickly brings the dynamic to ff with a crescendo in mm. 54–55. The wrath experienced in mm. 27–33 returns in the chorus with an extended ending that is higher in range, remains ff, and is bitonal between the chorus and orchestra parts: the choir is using sharps and the orchestra is using flats. The result is quite dissonant and jarring. It all concludes on a D-major chord in m. 61, beat one with the orchestra adding a D-minor chord on the second beat to avoid a proper resolution and to keep the conflict alive.

5.3.2 Interpreting Movement II

The first two mm. of Movement II act as a transition to calm the mood in preparation for this moving prayer addressed to Jesus Christ. Written specifically for Leontyne Price, this soprano solo constitutes a more personal expression. Whereas in Movement I the text refers to saving and redeeming “us” or humankind, here in Movement II the text refers to saving “me.”

Barber introduces a new melody that is performed first by the oboist in Section 1 and then again immediately by the soprano soloist entering in Section 2. Beneath the melody, the violins begin a lamenting ostinato that is echoed throughout the orchestra. The repeated triple-duple rhythm has a restless, melancholic feeling, with the triplets often conflicting against the melody’s rhythm. Although the second movement is the shortest, it is perhaps the most expressive of the whole work.

Barber seems sympathetic to the sufferings of Christ and grateful for His sacrifice. The leap of a perfect fifth up to the first syllable of “Jesus” in mm. 8–9 depicts the longing and searching for Him. The entire statement of “Lord Jesus Christ” outlines a B minor seventh chord supported by an orchestral accompaniment that further enriches the harmony with non-chord tones. It seems particularly gentle and is a complete contrast to the previous clashing bitonal events in Movement I. The phrases throughout this movement are long and expressive. The emphasis on “and Whose suf-f’ring” and “end” with tenuto markings, and the indication of very sustained and unhurried in brackets above is specific, making the statement quite personal in nature. The most recognizable segment of this melody is the five notes on the text “Lord Jesus Christ.”
Barber reiterates this expressive segment several times, played by various instruments below the solo soprano.

The higher register and key change in Section 3 give more urgency to the text, climaxing on the highest note of the section on “saving” and a six-note flourish on the middle syllable of “redeeming” with an *allarg.* The emphasis on these specific words again reveals how Barber may feel about his own relationship with Jesus in this section: a sense of gratitude. Range, intervallic relationships, melodic shaping, and articulations all play a part in Barber’s self-expression, which can be very powerful in evoking a response from the audience. The mood changes at m. 82 when we hear how Jesus suffers patiently as we humans often go astray. The *mf* dynamic at m. 78 does not change until the *p* marking in m. 82, giving it a *subito* feel. Beginning on G major, mm. 82–85 more gently reflects on Jesus’s patient suffering for us, and perhaps our not being worthy of it. The B major chord on the downbeat of m. 85 seems to represent the joy, happiness, gratitude, or hope of this sacrifice. The dynamic quickly rises to *f* in m. 86 and Barber sets the words “I, who so often go astray” with large leaps, a clear representation of the anguish and shame in Kierkegaard’s words on our path to salvation. The leaps can literally suggest going “astray” from a central point, i.e., from the life Christ wants us to live or simply straying from Him, which displays classic text painting.

The restatement of the main segment of the opening melody in Section 4 brings back the melancholy feeling, but Barber goes even one step further. The soprano repeats the phrase *pp* in m. 94 with one adornment: an *échappée* after the F# on the first syllable of “Jesus” to further heighten the expressivity. The *tenuto* marking the word “Christ!” on the last note of the soprano solo gives the word even more gravitas. The French horn repetition of these fragments in different keys muddies the final key from B major to B minor, representing a continued clash of gratitude and anger towards God.
5.3.3 Interpreting Movement III

The third movement is the largest and perhaps the most dramatically volatile of the work. Section 1 begins in B major with the pp chant-like choral recitation establishing a prayerful atmosphere while the orchestral interspersions act as an “Amen” after each phrase of this Credo-like text. The words embody an important tenet of Kierkegaard’s belief, that everything we are given comes from God, and our longing to be close to Him is a gift. Kierkegaard’s faith bordered on obsession as he struggled to get closer and closer to Him. Barber expresses this by quick and remote changes in key areas: B major, F# major, C# minor, F major, D major, C major. This harmonic progression isn’t just a gradual build to a climax; the lack of a straight line is still infused with the conflict of Barber’s views as well. The final C major chords in the choir with the orchestra pulsing beneath should be conclusive in affirming its religious fervour. The crescendo in m. 110 for all parts that starts from ff seems obsessive or angry in feeling. The p subito final statement of “Father in Heaven, longing is Thy gift” is another sudden and drastic dynamic change that adds to the volatility of the text’s emotional state.

Barber’s use of twelve-tone technique in Section 2, beginning at the end of m. 114, creates an other-worldly atmosphere to the text that discusses the nature of longing for God and how it can take hold of us. The ppp B major chord in the orchestra at m. 114 is a moment of rest before the next step in the journey. The twelve-tone rows that follow in their various versions create a mysterious atmosphere as the “longing lays hold of us.” Many layers of faith and feeling find expression throughout this section.

Now consider everything that is going on simultaneously here in Section 2: the xylophone introduces Row 1 (immediately followed by its retrograde version), the tenor soloist (doubled by a cello) performs the original version of Row 2, and the choral tenors (doubled by the first trumpet) augment the note values of the Row 2. Each soloist’s entry is marked espr. and the choral tenors have a marking of pp whispered. The result is haunting, almost like the voices a mentally disturbed person might hear, or reminiscent of an expressionistic Webern opera. The dynamics and intensity continue to build slowly, and at m. 127 another “voice” enters the conversation. The altos and basses enter softly in four parts on a C major chord on the text “Father in Heaven, Longing is Thy gift,” which could represent the voice of God or finding hope in the darkness. At m. 131 the sopranos introduce another new partial tone row at an increased
dynamic level. Barber’s indication *with increasing motion and rapture* at m. 130 is confusing to me, particularly the word “rapture,” which often connotes joy or pleasure, but Barber’s setting doesn’t reflect this idea due to the angularity of the melodic material, highly dissonant harmonies, quick triple or duple rhythms in the orchestra parts, as well as another new angular partial tone row (Row 3) introduced in m. 131. Rather, I believe the proper definition to be employed here is “a state or experience of being carried away by overwhelming emotion.”

The angular lines and dissonance may also be Barber’s way of sarcastically mocking how overwhelmed some people can get in their longing for salvation. This partial row becomes even more aggressive as the tenors and basses “emerge” (Barber’s own direction) from the polyphony at the end of m. 134, both louder and *Più animato*. This again feels aggressive or angry, but the emotion diminishes just before the next section.

The antiphonal choral chanting that begins Section 3 renews the unsettled atmosphere. Each statement of the text, “When Thou in the longing dost offer us the highest good,” has a tenuto marking that emphasizes the first syllable of the word “longing,” which becomes hypnotic after a while. The repetition of this one phrase in full, altered, and segmented forms throughout Section 3 is insistently unnerving. The growing dynamics, changes of tessitura of the chant material, varied key signatures, and return of partial Row 3 in the chorus (the orchestra has already been using this material from the beginning of the choral chanting) all contribute to the obsessive whirling together of these ideas. Complete chaos continues until m. 160, where the voices come together to repeat the text one more time homophonically as one choir. The intensity grows even further with a *stringendo molto* in m. 164, which gets faster until the end of the section on the text “that we might hold it fast!” Only a slight *allargando* at the end of m. 171 leads to an even more explosive section.

### 5.3.4 Interpreting Movement IV

The orchestral interlude that begins Section 1 of Movement IV at m. 171 is another form of emotional outburst on a new five-note motive derived from the opening chant (see Figure 6). The driving rhythm and consistent eighth-note rhythm in 12/8 time is reminiscent of Stravinsky’s

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style in its violent nature. The thirty-three mm. of full orchestral aggression set up the equally frenzied (Barber’s tempo marking in m. 204) choral re-entry at m. 204, first on the first beat and then offset by one eighth note on two motivic segments, seems to me to be the real climax of the entire work. The timpani pounds out a driving ostinato below and Barber brings back the main melodic segment of Movement II (“Lord Jesus Christ”) that seems symbolic as it takes over from this movement’s frenzied motive. This musical representation of the love of Jesus returns in augmented note values over the last accented statement of the frenzied motive in m. 207 of Section 2. This beginning of the denouement of the work appears as both the Movement II motive and the timpani’s ostinato gradually lengthen their note values, which provides a calming that leads to the next choral section.

Section 3 begins with the chorus divided into three choirs, the third of which might represent the monks at St. Anselmo as in the opening movement. Reverence and calm returns as two chant-like segments from mm. 204–206. The antiphonal repetition of motives and text is reminiscent of Movement III, Section 3, but much slower. The longer note values in Choir III are resemble a cantus firmus. The ringing bells, both on stage and off, completes the scene of the church in Italy that Barber experienced so many years ago.

Like a Bach cantata, Section 4 is the finale chorale of this large work that provides the moral or lesson for the audience and where Barber’s spiritual fervour is displayed most directly. Remind us “Not how we went astray, But how Thou didst save us!” is set in E major. Here I believe we see what is truly important to Samuel Barber, the focus of love rather than judgement. According to Christian Schubart’s chart of key characteristics, “joy, laughing pleasure and not yet complete, full delight lies in E Major.” The harmonization of the aforementioned text leading up to the word “save” pronounces a glorious explosion of love and religious fervour. But even after the overwhelming joy on a D-major chord in m. 253, the orchestra muddies the harmony again. Barber ultimately resolves to a final E-major chord: perhaps there is salvation after all.

301 Schubart, Ideen zu einer Aesthetik der Tonkunst (1806).
5.4 Vocal and Choral Implementation for *Prayers of Kierkegaard*

As a result of my research, I propose that decisions about vocal tone and choral execution all stem from conflict between religious fervour and anger towards God which permeates the work. Both artistic and also personal conflicts in Barber’s life find their voice in this impassioned work based on the texts of another conflicted man, Søren Kierkegaard. Distinct vocal colour is essential in delineating each movement and their different sections. Identifying and respecting Barber’s musical markings further ensures that the emotional character of the music is clearly expressed in performance.

5.4.1 Movement I

5.4.1.1 Section I

Barber has given the performer a number of directions before Section 1 of the piece even begins. “Grave and remote,” a specific metronome marking, *ppp legatissimo*, and an asterisk with a note from Barber indicating “Plastic, in plainsong style” all give specific indications for performance. They imply more than technical details in that they influence the tone colour and mood to be established as well.

The vocal colour in this newly-composed chant sets the tone for the rest of the work. The conductor must try to imagine the scene in the little church in St. Anselmo, Italy, in 1951. Tenors and basses must achieve a purity of tone and straightforward expression. Gregorian chant’s main purpose is to communicate the text, and this may imply the use of minimal vibrato for textual clarity. Barber’s classical vocal training, however, most likely instilled the idea that vibrato is a natural occurrence in the voice and should not be eliminated to avoid vocal strain. Vibrato can also add warmth to the otherwise unadorned sound of straight-tone singing. My recommendation is somewhere between these two extremes: a minimal amount of vibrato employed to ensure a purity of tone, but not so much as to obstruct pitch and textual clarity. This treatment respects both style and also vocal health, the latter by not eliciting physical tension.

Proper breath management is vital to maintain the legato line, flexible chant-like rhythm, and clarity of diction all at a *pp* dynamic level. A few articulation markings could disturb the legato: two tenuto markings each on the word “moves” and an accent on the first syllable of the word “nothing.” Here the singer should not stop the air flow to emphasize words, but rather use quick
consonants that return to the vowel with slightly more flow. Singing with pure vowel sounds and avoiding elongated diphthongs and colloquial North American pronunciation are necessary to keep an even and homogeneous sound. For example, on the word “Thou,” it is important to keep the [a] vowel open with a quick completion of the diphthong just before the next word begins. Another example is the [u] vowel on the word “moves:” it must maintain height in the sound, especially in conjunction with the tenuto markings to avoid sounding forced. The accent on the first syllable of “nothing” in m. 2 should have a bit more air flow through it without leaving the soft dynamic level. This emphasis on “nothing” is crucial, in my opinion, as it is the first sign of frustration that Barber may have with God’s, and perhaps the Church’s, unchangeable quality. This frustration grows as the movement progresses.

Breaths should be planned to avoid interruptions in textual phrases in some of the longer phrases in this opening chant. The tenors and basses may breathe at the eighth rests that Barber provides at m. 3, 5, and 15. The remainder of the chant doesn’t give such breaks, so the conductor may ask the choristers to put in eighth rests to shorten the note values on “things” in m. 10, “sparrow” in m. 11, “Thee” in m. 12, “see” in m. 13, and “sigh” in m. 14. This allows time for breaths that coincide with punctuation in the text. The singers must also respect the dynamic swells throughout the chant as these aid in proper text inflection.

The dotted rhythm figures and syncopations in the opening chant must be clear but should not disturb the legato line and sacred mood. The pickup to m. 14, with a sudden return to pp, is another subtle detail that requires a delicate approach. This gentleness is the other contrasting emotion in this work, expressing gratitude for God’s love for humanity. The poco allarg. in measure 16 allows even more time to express the infinite quality of this love. A small space is necessary between “O” and “infinite” to avoid the [w] sound that occurs when vowels are elided. This separation of vowel sounds occurs often throughout the entire work (“Who/art” and “Thou/art”), and the space between “Thee” and “unchanging” avoids the unwanted [j] between these words. The space between these vowels is small to ensure the chant maintains the smoothness required. To enhance that legato, singers should avoid a glottal attack on the second onset. The [a] vowel on the final “Love!” must be held as long as possible with a short but clear [v] on the second half of beat 3 in m. 19.
Barber often adds a tied eighth note at the ends of phrases to keep the sound going into the next beat. Cut-offs on the beat will most likely be cleaner than following the exact length of these notes. But as mentioned often, because Barber was very specific in his compositions, these indications should be followed as much as possible. The conductor must prioritize decisions about which of these details (clarity of ensemble or composer intent) according to specific situations. For example, the acoustics of the performance space might affect decisions; if the sound is reverberant, singers might need to sing with slightly more separation than otherwise.

5.4.1.2 Section 2

The gentle ending of Section 1 must be taken up by the orchestra in the pickup to m. 19. As the crescendo begins in m. 21, however, each orchestral entrance escalates the intensity to the choral eruption at m. 27. The eighth notes for the brass in m. 26, indicated marcato, should be separate and quite aggressive. The choral entrance at m. 27, marked ff, should be performed slightly marcato because the legato of the opening chant is inappropriate for this outburst. Placing the vocal tone forward with slightly brighter vowels will provide the edge needed for this level of intensity. Clear, explosive consonants will be effective here, especially the [t] at the end of “But,” which could easily get lost in the excitement. Each accented half note in m. 29 should have a slight diaphragmatic pulse and be slightly separated, particularly between the words “Thou” and “unchanging.” Care must be taken on the diminuendo in mm. 32–33 that the colour of the [I] vowel remains tall and uniform throughout this long held note to keep the tone consistent. The end of “unchanging” should be placed on the downbeat of m. 34 so the basses’ fugal entry will be heard clearly.

5.4.1.3 Section 3

Section 3 returns to the gentle expressiveness of the opening chant, and therefore could be sung legato as well, although Barber did not specify. This legato smoothness will also reflect the gentleness of the text and p espr. marking. Following the crescendo/decrescendo markings and the tenuto markings on “infinite” and “love” will facilitate the espressivo style that Barber requests. Each choral entry in this polyphonic section could be somewhat emphasized, while the other voices back away slightly. Consonants must remain quick and clear to keep the rhythm crisp in this section. A slight separation is again needed before words that begin with vowels—“and,” “at,” “art,” “in,” “infinite,” and “all”—while the “O” in the next phrase begins the next
section of text, where there is already a break for a breath. This section remains soft throughout, with all crescendi within the overall $p$ dynamic. Measure 43 is an example where the basses could place the consonant on beat 3 so that the soprano/alto entrance is heard clearly.

Figure 36. Movement I, mm. 42 and 43

5.4.1.4 Section 4

The *tenuto* markings in mm. 44 and 45 assure proper text accentuation but slightly alter the pulse. The conductor must keep a clear pattern in this section that switches from 3/4 to 4/4 to 5/8 and back to 4/4 time. The cutoff for the tenors and basses in m. 47 can be on or off the beat as there is no consonant to compromise clarity. In m. 49, the syncopation from the opening chant returns in the alto, tenor, and bass sections; a slight accent on the first syllable of “scarcely” emphasizes the word and ensures the correct rhythm (the tenors should do the same thing in m. 50). All four parts have different rhythmic patterns in m. 51: the basses maintain the proper pulse in 3/2 time, but the sopranos, altos, and tenors blur the pulse with some triplet-like figures. Additionally, this m. will require attention in order to be performed cleanly within the *pp* dynamic as in the original chant. The varied rhythms may represent each person’s individuality and God’s love for them all, and thus must be clearly articulated. The *mf* in m. 52 acts almost like an accent due to its quick change back to *p* on the next word. These dynamic markings and
the tenuto in m. 53 all emphasize the important words of the text. Correct execution of these details helps to better tell the story; it is text painting of great importance.

An outburst similar to the one at m. 27 returns to end this section, which should be performed in the same manner as the previous outburst but with a few changes. The dynamic level increases to the end of the section rather than diminishes, and the orchestra begins a dramatic stringendo with complicated rhythms that requires the conductor’s attention in mm. 58–60. All four voices of the choir are now in a higher range in mm. 58–61, thus the [E] vowel and [I] vowel on the second and third syllables of “unchanging” may need to be modified to [a], especially for the sopranos and altos. Barber asks for the intensity in dynamic and emotional intensity to continue to the very last beat with a tenuto on beat 1 and an accent on the cutoff on beat 2 in m. 61. Barber marks the “ng” of “unchanging” in brackets on the accented tied eighth note to indicate where the final consonant is to be placed. The “ng” has no explosive quality, so a neutral syllable [ʌ] may be added to give the accented effect.

5.4.2 Movement II

5.4.2.1 Sections 1–4

Choosing the soprano soloist was of great concern to Barber. He had many of the best sopranos of the day available but was uncertain who he should choose. Because of the musical and expressive demands of the score, an operatic soprano is necessary for this piece, but the decision lies between a larger, more dramatic voice or a lighter, more lyric soprano. Because the orchestration is lighter in this movement, either voice type can be effective. I prefer the lighter quality because the dynamic level throughout the movement doesn’t get louder than mf, so a lighter voice would balance the instrumentation; I also think the honesty and purity of expression that Barber seems to be searching is better served by a lighter voice with limited vibrato. In the end, Barber chose legendary soprano Leontyne Price who, although she had a very large instrument, still maintained the lyric quality Barber sought.

This movement provides another drastic change in mood from the end of the Movement I. The first two mm. should begin almost as loudly as the previous section, but then the mood quickly changes with the slower tempo and quick decrescendo to pp. The triple/duple ostinato in the orchestra should be softer than the melody in both the oboe and soprano but needs to be loud
enough to give that melancholy feel Barber wanted to convey. The tenuto markings in the oboe and soprano parts are there for expressive purposes. It is important to give both soloists time to fully express the melancholy of the text. Although Barber wrote out many of the tempo changes he wanted for this section, the orchestration and espr marking in m. 79 suggest a slight accelerando into m. 80, which will also help the soprano sustain the long note. The end of m. 80 then brings the tempo down again (allarg). Measure 82 resumes the original tempo, but the soprano may need extra time for the large leaps in m. 86. Ideally, the soprano should only use one breath to complete mm. 86–8 to convey the text phrase.

Throughout this section, various instruments use the first five notes of the melody in different keys, which should be brought out each time it occurs to create a wailing effect that repeats the cry to Jesus over and over. This is particularly true in mm. 90–6, where a solo viola plays the segment in mm. 91 and 93, the soprano sings it in between the two viola segments in m. 92, and the French horn plays the segment twice in a row in different keys in mm. 95–6.
5.4.3 Movement III

5.4.3.1 Section I

Movement III, with some of the most dramatic changes in the entire work, incorporates several compositional techniques. It begins with homophonic choral chanting of the text. The quick harmonic rhythm employing non-traditional chord progressions can pose tuning issues, especially as much of this section is a cappella with brief orchestral interspersions. The orchestra helps to solidify the key changes but only after the choir has arrived there first. Rehearsing this section staccato on neutral syllables will ensure crisp harmonic changes and rhythmic clarity in the chanting.

Section 1 maintains the quarter note as the main rhythmic pulse; however, there are two groupings of three eighth notes that blur the regularity of the beat. These groupings, used in mm. 97 and 99 on the first syllable of “Heaven” and “Thou,” are used to emphasize and ornament these words. If the choir were performing this as a completely cappella work, the conductor
might choose to restructure his or her beat pattern to accommodate this change in pulse. The orchestra in this case, however, does not have these triple figures, and changing the conducting pattern will confuse the players. The choir must practice this within the quarter-note pulse while feeling these two changes internally. The crescendi-decrescendi Barber indicates help the singer shape these phrases appropriately.

In m. 103 Barber has a decrescendo leading to the word “fellowship” that gently emphasizes this word and reflects its importance to him. The [f] must still be clear here and the dotted rhythm crisp despite the soft dynamic level. The dynamic level increases in m. 106 on the last syllable of “Redeemer” and then escalates to ff by m. 108. Attention to vowel colour is important as the volume increases; the last syllable of “Redeemer” must remain open on [ə] with no hint of the [r] at the end of the word; the vowels on “is” and “Thee” in m. 107 must remain tall and placed forward but should not eliminate the space needed for the volume and intensity of the tone. At m. 110 the choir is asked to crescendo again, placing the tone even more forward into the mask (front of the face around the eyes, nose, and cheekbone area) to achieve more volume with less push. For the sake of ensemble clarity, the cutoff here should coincide with the sixteenth note in the orchestra on the second half of beat four.

The sudden return to p in m. 111 can be difficult to achieve, both vocally and also dramatically. The conductor might slightly elongate the eighth rest at the end of m. 110 to allow for a clear homophonic entry. In m. 111 the conductor may decide to restructure the pulse to align with the text emphasis on “Heaven” (tenuto) as the choir is completely a cappella here. Instead of 5/4, the conductor might choose 10/8 time divided up as 3+3+2+2 eighth notes in a large four pattern. The quarter note pulse will resume in m. 112 despite the 3/2 time signature to aid in solidifying the syncopation in the middle of the measure. The cutoff in m. 113 should occur on the second half of beat 4 as Barber has indicated. The sixteenth rest here might also be elongated to ensure a gentle onset of the strings in m. 114.

5.4.3.2 Section 2

In the many musical layers in the second section of Movement III, Barber guides our decisions on what matters most in the texture. The tenor soloist has the loudest dynamic marking, doubled by a solo cellist, and both have espr. indications, which establishes Row 2 as the main thematic material in the first part of this section. The tenors also sing this row, but in increased note
values, similar to a cantus firmus from the Renaissance Era, perhaps to imitate the monks’ style of singing from the opening of the cantata. Barber asks the tenor section to whisper their part, but as a trained singer, he would not likely have appreciated a breathy tone. I believe the *pp whispered* indication is to ensure the softest possible sound from the tenor section. Clarity of tone is still vital here, and proper breath control will prevent the dynamic from increasing. Row 1 begins the section in the instrumental parts, but it is marked softer than the soloist; the real importance of this material is the eight-note ostinato that pulsates beneath the vocal lines, using the original row and its retrograde form.

Diction in this section is crucial because of the multiple layers of vocal and orchestral lines. These words that discuss the longing for God become more obsessive with each repetition. “But” and “when” need to have a small break between them to be understood; and the ending consonants in this section often require attention: e.g., the [t]s at the end of “But,” “that,” and “might,” the [d] at the end of “hold,” “longing,” and the [v] at the end of “of.” The clarity of the text in the section is vital for comprehension, with the consonants coming in at different times among the voices, emphasizing the sense of “other world-ness” and confusion in this section.

The choir enters softly below the soloists’ endings. Although the soprano section is marked *espr.*, the rhythm and harmonization (C major chord) of the choral chant in the altos and tenors is significant symbolically and should cut through the texture. In m. 130 the tempo and excitement begin to increase, new thematic material (partial Tone Row 3) is introduced by the sopranos in m. 131, and the rhythmic chanting returns in mm. 132–133 starting with basses, altos, and then the tenors. All these musical ideas are important for different reasons, and the conductor must find the right balance among them. At the end of m. 134 the tenors and basses present Tone Row 3 with the indication *f emerging*. This dynamic marking and the increase in tempo (*Più animato*, quarter note = 88) suggests an increase in dramatic energy. At m. 136 both parts have *ten.* above their respective long-held notes. The marking is not placed above the word “us” but rather a whole beat later while still on the original word.
I believe that these tenutos and the crescendo in the following measure indicate that the two voice parts must keep the energy going into the next phrase without a breath, as well as allowing for a slight lingering on the long notes.

5.4.3.3 Section 3

The choral chanting in section 3 is even more intense than in the first section because of the antiphonal double-choir formation and continuous eighth-note rhythm of the melodic material.
Although Barber puts a *tenuto* on each first syllable of the word “longing,” he also places an asterisk beside the first occurrence with a note at the bottom to indicate the same emphasis for each repetition of the word. A crescendo builds in m. 141 up to the word and then backs away after the first syllable; this is probably the most effective way to achieve the proper word stress. The repetition of this word in both choirs antiphonally creates an eerie or obsessive effect. Barber lays out a plan for the increase in the dynamics from mm. 139–147: *pp, p, mp, mf, f*. This plan ensures an even growth until the decrescendo in m. 148 that brings the dynamic back to start the process again. It is important for the choir to pace this crescendo carefully so that the dramatic climax occurs at the appropriate time. The second planned crescendo from mm. 149-160 is also marked with increasing tempo indications. At m. 160, however, Barber brings the tempo back to the quarter note = 84 for another accelerando. The choir should be quite legato over the repetitive orchestral chords marked *ff*. In mm. 160–171 the choir is in unison except for the first few bars where the basses hold an A3 for seven and a half beats, most likely because of the extreme range of the melodic material. This unison section can easily turn into over-singing if proper vocal technique is not encouraged. More volume can be achieved with forward placement, bright vowels, the use of more air, and explosive consonants, rather than by pressing on the sound. The increasing tempi helps reduce the amount of time the high notes need to be held, particularly the high B♭ for the sopranos and tenors at the end of the section.

### 5.4.4 Movement IV

#### 5.4.4.1 Section 1

In this choral work, the orchestral interlude at the beginning of Movement IV can be seen as the climax of the piece. The main melodic motive (Figure 6) is used imitatively throughout the orchestration, creating the effect of constant eighth notes in this 12/8 time signature. The *Allegro molto* tempo must be strictly maintained to give the proper violent and frenzied effect. The three transitional sections bring the dynamic down to *f* from *ff* but then increase it again for the next section. The lower brass and winds have long-held notes throughout this section that contrast the driving rhythm in the rest of the orchestra. The melodic material combines the main motive of this section with material from the opening chant. The piano doubles the entrance of this material in m. 173 but does not continue throughout the section. The conductor must maintain a clear gesture that maintains the tempo to keep the ensemble rhythmically tight.
5.4.4.2 Section 2

The frenzy continues with the ff choral entrance in m. 204. The singers must adhere to the strict tempo established by the orchestra, employing the same melodic material used by the orchestra in the previous section and must keep the notes detached. The off-beat choral entrance in m. 206 can be challenging because of the speed. The singers must anticipate this, perhaps breathing earlier than the downbeat of the m. to ensure a clean entry. The strong timpani provides a rhythmic underpinning that can help the choir in these entries; the conductor must make singers aware of this aid here. Although the timpani can be quite violent at this point in this section the choir won’t be overpowered because it is the only instrument playing at each of these choral entrances.

While the choir sustains their last notes for seven mm., Barber reiterates the same melodic motive in the horns but in longer note values. He also re-introduces the melody from Movement II in the strings at the end of m. 207. The gentler tone quality of the strings takes the prominence away from the accented horn parts within two mm., perhaps symbolizing how Christ’s love calms all negative feelings. It is important to note that the tempo should not slow down until m. 221, and the ff dynamic does not change until m. 225. The conductor can continue large four-pattern for most of this section, but at mm. 227–228 the pattern should change to accentuate each quarter note to establish the new tempo for Section 3.

5.4.4.3 Section 3

This section returns to choral chanting, but very slowly like the opening chant in Movement I. The melodic material, identical to the previous section, should be sung as legato as possible to reflect the drastic change in mood. Again, I believe the choir is asked to whisper throughout this section to ensure the pp dynamic, but should not use a breathy or unfocused tone. Despite the slow tempo, the singers need to keep up the rhythmic energy to the end of the section. In m. 233 the melodic material changes rhythmically, adding dotted figures and fragmenting the melody with rests. All of these changes should be followed precisely while preserving the desired phrasing of the text. The tenuto markings on the word “heaven” help with the phrasing, but care must also be taken for proper text stress on the word “Father.” The second syllable should not be accented due to the syncopated rhythms introduced.
Barber splits the choir into three choruses for this section: Chorus I (SAT), Chorus II (SAB), and Chorus III (TB). The third chorus might represent the chanting monks from the beginning of the work. Barber gives them a slightly louder dynamic ($p$) and longer note values; the vocal colour should be the same as the cantata’s opening. As the voices and the dynamics slowly fade away, the piano and lower pizzicato strings return at the end of m. 237 very slowly and softly. The tenors and basses continue to sing to the very end of the section but should probably cut off on the last beat of the bar so that they can breathe for the final chorale. The *Allargando molto* indication allows a bit of time to be taken before the downbeat to the next section.

**5.4.4.4 Section 4**

Barber gives the metronome marking of quarter note = 60, which indicates that this chorale should be conducted with a quarter-note pulse. Barber places $3/2$ in brackets above the m. 241 so that the choir feels three larger beats. The conductor will need to subdivide these large three beats in order to keep the quarter note pulse consistent. If the half note were considered to be the pulse, the metronome marking would be 30 and the gesture would be too slow to show the pulse effectively.

The tenuto marking on the last syllable of the word “committed” in m. 247 should be applied to the length of the note rather than emphasis to ensure correct word stress. The dotted rhythms and syncopations throughout this chorale should be followed but should not interrupt the musical line. The *rinforzando* in m. 250 indicates the buildup to the final textual moral of this work; Barber’s dramatic crescendo in m. 251 indicates how important the last phrase is to him. The tenuto markings in the orchestra on the last three quarter notes of m. 251 suggest some stretching of tempo leading to m. 252. Time should be taken on each of the orchestral chords in m. 254 to allow for the dynamic swells that Barber indicated. A short break before the last chord should allow for the necessary separation of “save” and “us” in the choral parts. The last chord should be held for a substantial amount of time, keeping the volume at *pp* throughout.

In summary, Barber has created a symphonic choral work that expresses the struggle he, and others, may have with God and the Church’s inflexibility. This struggle must be clearly conveyed through performance: the rigidity of the church vs. the love of Christ and God for all humanity. While Paul Wittke says this struggle is a true statement of faith, in my opinion this faith is not blind, but rather questions and seeks fairness. Barber’s characteristic expressivity is
present throughout the work, sometimes subtly and sometimes more overt. Barber is specific with the articulations, dynamic markings, and tempi indications, but there is still room for the performer to take part in this journey of faith. The struggle is evident in the dramatic changes that continue throughout the work, from the purity of the opening chant and the earnest soprano solo in Movement II to the violent choral and orchestral statements in movements I, III, and IV. But perhaps the most revealing statement of what Barber believes occurs in the final chorale, that we need to remember God’s love rather than the sins we have committed against Him.

5.5 Conclusions and Suggestions for Further Study

Utilizing a dramaturgical approach to analyze Barber’s *Reincarnations* and *Prayers of Kierkegaard* has provided me a deep understanding of the compositions and led me to informed decisions on interpretation and performance. The contextual information collected also gives a clear picture of Samuel Barber and his place in the twentieth-century world of composition. Without the lens provided by a dramaturgical approach, I think my musical understanding would lack depth.

Although a great deal of information was used to make informed interpretive decisions for these two works, there is still more research that might prove enlightening for the conductor of these pieces. For example, listening to some recordings of Samuel Barber conducting his own compositions, although most of these are of his instrumental works, might give valuable insights into how he interpreted his own music, which can be applied to his choral compositions. An archival recording of Barber conducting *Reincarnations* with the Madrigal Chorus at the Curtis Institute of Music was broadcast over CBS radio; these recordings are held in the Library of Congress.\(^{302}\) Barber worked closely with Charles Münch, who conducted the premier performance and an historic commercial recording of *Prayers of Kierkegaard* with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Although Barber isn’t conducting, this recording may be informative as well.

Recordings also exist of Barber singing his solo vocal compositions:

\(^{302}\) Heyman, *Samuel Barber*, 180.
Barber’s lovely lyric baritone voice is resonant and expressive; he is very sensitive to the text and will even change the “color” of his voice for expressive purposes on certain special occasions. He has a fine sense of line and musicality and is capable of a wide and dramatic range of dynamics—a perfect match for much of his music.\textsuperscript{303}

Jeffers believes that the recordings of Barber singing his own music and of other composers are helpful because “you can hear him making music.”\textsuperscript{304}

Dramaturgical analysis can also be used for Barber’s other choral and instrumental works. So many of his instrumental compositions had literary inspiration and, although not programmatic, these works do contain some characterization of the original literary material.

A dramaturgical-analytical approach applied to the compositions of other composers may be most effective for works of twentieth-century composers due to the abundance of personal information at our disposal. The further back in history one goes, the less detailed personal information is available for the dramaturg to explore. Looking more closely at methods used in theatre and opera houses, we can apply their dramaturgical and research methods to enhance the field of choral music. Choral conductors may not consider choral literature as drama, but choral music certainly has dramatic elements. I propose that the dramatic influence of opera and theatre would benefit the performance of choral literature. The application of this dramaturgical approach to choral music generally can also inform specific conducting gestures and help the conductor more effectively communicate affective elements of the music to the members of the chorus. In addition, this approach is informative in terms of dictating vocal colour.

The dramaturgical process has given me a more detailed understanding of Barber as a person. This in turn has made me appreciate all of the detail he put into each composition. As a conductor, I have always tried to respect all instructions contained in

\textsuperscript{303} Jeffers, \textit{Reincarnations}, 42.
\textsuperscript{304} Ibid.
a score, but with a strong grasp of contextual information I bring deep understanding to the meaning and purpose of these indications. Each detail helps me decide the overall emotional scenario to project to the choir and the audience, thus informing the performance. All of the information collected about the twentieth century, particularly the political climate and state of human rights during this time, will be helpful in performing the music of Barber’s contemporaries as well.

This dramaturgical approach affects the way I will approach future performance events. Given a stronger connection with Samuel Barber and these works, I hope that my excitement and understanding will be expressed clearly to the musicians in my care. This approach has the potential to improve vocal-technical aspects of choral singing because of the clarity it brings to the composer’s intent regarding articulations, dynamics, tempi, and other important musical aspects. Having a clearer vision of what is to be expressed will be beneficial to conductors in inspiring others in rehearsal and performance settings.

Teachers of conducting should also note the value of this kind of dramaturgical research and communicate the importance of knowing contextual information in making musical decisions. Music education theorist Bennett Reimer believes that music education is the “education of human feeling through the development of responsiveness to the aesthetic qualities of sound.” In my opinion, the kind of dramaturgical analysis outlined in this thesis aids in deciding what feelings are to be conveyed and how that might be accomplished.

I have always had a great appreciation for Samuel Barber’s compositions, especially his vocal and choral music, and have felt a connection to the composer on an emotional level; I “got” what he was trying to say in his music and was moved by his way of expressing it. Researching his life and world has increased my insight into Barber as composer and person. He and I have similarities in the way we experience music on an emotional level, a sense of respect and obligation to maintain a high standard of

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performance, and the struggle to find our own way of self-expression. All of these insights have been magnified through the lens of the dramaturg and makes me appreciate the process of laying out all possible interpretations and meanings of a particular musical work to inform decisions on which path is true for me. While ultimately there may be no one “right” way of performing a musical composition, as long as one makes informed decisions based on deep investigation into the context of the musical work, the performance outcome is more likely to approach the level of “thick” understanding that Clifford Geertz describes. As conductors, we are conduits between the score and the audience, involving the musicians in deep exploration of the music. We can accomplish this responsibility only by serving the composer’s intentions as best we can discover them, and that happens only through an intense process of discovery.
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Appendices
Appendix A: The Choral Works of Samuel Barber

**Original Compositions:**

Twelve Rounds (1927)
- A Lament (words by Percy Bysshe Shelley)
- To Electra (words by Robert Herrick)
- Farewell (words anonymous)
- Dirge (author of words unknown)
- Not I (words by Robert Louis Stevenson)
- Of a Rose Is Al Myn Song (words anonymous)
- Sunset (words by Robert Louis Stevenson)
- The Moon (words by Percy Bysshe Shelley)
- Sun of the sleepless (words by Lord Byron)
- The Throstle (words by Alfred, Lord Tennyson)
- Late, Late, So Late (words by Alfred, Lord Tennyson)
- When day is gone (words by Robert Burns)

The Moon (words by Percy Bysshe Shelley)
  With added piano accompaniment

Motetto on Words from the Book of Job (1930)
- Job 3:17-19
- Job 5:1, 11:7-8, 5:7-8
- Job 9:16-17

The Virgin Martyrs (1935)
Op. 8, No. 1

Let Down the Bars, O Death (1936)
Op. 8, No. 2

God’s Grandeur (1938)

A Stopwatch and An Ordinance Map (1940)
Op. 15

Reincarnations (1940)
Op. 16

Ad bibinem cum me rogaret ad cenam (1943)

Two Choruses (1968)
Op. 42
- Twelfth Night (words by Laurie Lee)
- To Be Sung on the Water (words by Louise Bogan)
Choral Transcriptions and Arrangements by Barber:

Ave Maria (Josquin de Prez)  
(1521; Barber’s edition created c. 1940)

Under the Willow Tree  
(from the 1958 opera Vanessa; choral setting 1961)

Heaven-Haven (A Nun Takes the Veil) – SATB, SSAA, TTBB versions  
(1937 art song; choral setting 1961)

Sure on this shining night  
(1938 art song; choral setting 1961)

Easter Chorale  
(1964 Chorale for Ascension Day for Brass and Timpani; arrangement for chorus and brass choir 1964)

The Monk and His Cat  
(1953 art song; choral setting 1967)

Agnus Dei  
(1936 Adagio from string quartet; choral setting 1967)

Lamb of God  
(English translation of the Agnus Dei 1967)

Two Choruses from Antony and Cleopatra  
(from the 1966 opera; choral adaptation 1968)  
  On the Death of Antony  
  On the Death of Cleopatra

To Be Sung on the Water  
(SSAA version 1969)
Appendix B: Affective Musical Key Characteristics


**C major** – Completely pure. Its character is: innocence, simplicity, naivety, children’s talk.

**C minor** – Declaration of love and at the same time the lament of unhappy love. All languishing, longing sighing of the love-sick soul lies in this key.

**Db major** – A leering key, degenerating into grief and rapture. It cannot laugh, but it can smile; it cannot howl, but it can at least grimace its crying.—Consequently only unusual characters and feelings can be brought out in this key.

**C# minor** – Penitential lamentation, intimate conversation with God, the friend and help-meet of life; sighs of disappointed friendship and love lie in its radius.

**D major** – The key of triumph, of Hallelujahs, of war-cries, of victory-rejoicing. Thus, the inviting symphonies, the marches, holiday songs and heaven-rejoicing choruses are set in this key.

**D minor** – Melancholy womanliness, the spleen and humours brood.

**Eb major** – The key of love, of devotion, of intimate conversation with God.

**D# minor** – Feelings of the anxiety of the soul’s deepest distress, of brooding despair, of blackest depression, of the most gloomy condition of the soul. Every fear, every hesitation of the shuddering heart, breathes out of horrible D# minor. If ghosts could speak, their speech would approximate this key.

**E major** – Noisy shouts of joy, laughing pleasure and not yet complete, full delight lies in D major.

**E minor** – Naïve, womanly innocent declaration of love, lament without grumbling; sighs accompanied by few tears; this key speaks of the imminent hope of resolving in the pure happiness of C major.

**F major** – Complaisance & calm.

**F minor** – Deep depression, funereal lament, groans of misery and longing for the grave.

**F# major** – Triumph over difficulty, free sigh of relief uttered when hurdles are surmounted; echo of a soul which has fiercely struggled and finally conquered lies in all uses of this key.
**F♯ minor** – A gloomy key: it tugs at passion as a dog biting a dress. Resentment and discontent are its language.

**G major** – Everything rustic, idyllic and lyrical, every calm and satisfied passion, every tender gratitude for true friendship and faithful love,--in a word every gentle and peaceful emotion of the heart is correctly expressed by this key.

**G minor** – Discontent, uneasiness, worry about a failed scheme; bad-tempered gnashing of teeth; in a word; resentment and dislike.

**A♭ major** – Key of the grave. Death, grave, putrefaction, judgment, eternity lie in its radius.

**A♭ minor** – Grumbler, heart squeezed until it suffocates; wailing lament, difficult struggle; in a word, the color of this key is everything struggling with difficulty.

**A major** – This key includes declarations of innocent love, satisfaction with one’s state of affairs; hope of seeing one’s beloved again when parting; youthful cheerfulness and trust in God.

**A minor** – Pious womanliness and tenderness of character.

**B♭ major** – Cheerful love, clear conscience, hope, aspiration for a better world.

**B♭ minor** – A quaint creature, often dressed in the garment of night. it is somewhat surly and very seldom takes on a pleasant countenance. Mocking God and the world; discontented with itself and with everything; preparation for suicide sounds in this key.

**B major** – Strongly coloured, announcing wild passions, composed from the most glaring colours. Anger, rage, jealousy, fury, despair and every burden of the heart lies in its sphere.

**B minor** – This is as it were the key of patience, of calm awaiting one’s fate and of submission to divine dispensation.

[https://www.wmich.edu/mus-theo/courses/keys.html](https://www.wmich.edu/mus-theo/courses/keys.html)
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September 5, 2019

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