

CHORAL MUSIC BY SAMUEL BARBER: GENRE AND STYLE ASPECTS

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SUMMARY. The article is devoted to the research of choral music by Samuel Barber who was a 20th-century American composer. The research is carried out in terms of its genre and style diversity. It represents the historical stages of turning to choral art. The compositions are differentiated by voice composition into a cappella choirs and choirs with instrumental accompaniment. The orchestral scores are analyzed through the interaction of the poetic text and musical intonation taken into consideration. The figurative and semantic shades of religious and secular origin poems are discovered, the relationship between the music and ancient genres is revealed: Gregorian monodies, antiphons, plain chants, motets, madrigals, Easter hymns. The substantive music aspects are researched as projected on the historical genesis and synthesis of stylistic phenomena of different nature. It is researched how much the elements of medieval, renaissance, baroque, romantic and modern musical vocabulary influence the integral system of choral composition artistic means.

Keywords: choral music, Samuel Barber, genre traditions, style aspects, chants, motets, madrigals.

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1. Introduction

A modern listener is familiar with the works composed by Samuel Barber (1910-1981) being a twentieth-century American composer due to the opera performances, ballets, symphonies, instrumental concertos, cycles, plays, chamber vocal works and part songs. Modern music science includes epistolary studies, catalogs, monographs by American and European authors, as well as several articles on individual works or composition realms. Choral opuses are repertory, but they are not properly studied as a result creating a musicological interest. This article is aimed at exposing Samuel Barber's choral works through their genre and style sight. The published musical texts, transcriptions, performance versions, and poetic sources are used as a framework of empiric analysis.

Choral music is one of the most poetic, eloquent chapters of Samuel Barber's compositions. It is played with instrumental accompaniment or a cappella in the concert halls worldwide. Many scores were published during the author's lifetime, some texts are archived as manuscripts. Barbara Heyman⁶ being a competent researcher of his compositions listed 12 published and 8 unpublished (one unfinished) part songs in the composer's choral chant catalog. The published ones include as follows: *The Virgin Martyrs* for female a cappella choir, op. 8, No. 1, 1935; *Let down the bars, O Death* for mixed a cappella choir, op. 8, No. 2, 1936; *Reincarnations* for mixed a cappella choir, op. 16 (*Mary Hynes*, 1937, *Anthony O'Daly*, 1940, *The Coolin*, 1940); *God's Grandeur* for double mixed a cappella choir, 1938; *A Stopwatch and an Ordnance Map* for male choir, brass bands and timpani, op.15, 1940; *Under the Willow Tree* for mixed choir and piano, op. 32, 1957; *Heaven-Haven*, 1961 (choral adaptation of *A Nun Takes the Veil* from *Four Songs*, op. 13, No. 1, 1938); *Sure on This Shining Night* for mixed choir and piano, 1961 (from *Four Songs*, op. 13, No. 3, 1938); *Ad bibinum cum me rogaret ad cenam* for mixed a cappella choir, 1943; *The Monk and His Cat*, 1967 (choral adaptation of *Hermit songs*, op. 29, 1953); *Prayers of Kierkegaard* being choral, soprano and orchestra, op. 30, 1954; *Easter Chorale* for mixed choir, brass instruments, timpani and organ, op. 40, 1964; *Agnus Dei* for choir and organ/piano ad libitum, 1967 (adaptation of *Adagio for Strings*, op. 11, 1936); *Twelfth Night* for mixed a cappella choir, op. 42, No. 1, 1968; *To Be Sung on the Water* for mixed a cappella choir, op. 42, No. 2, 1968; *The Lovers* for choir, baritone and orchestra, op. 43, 1971. The data of modern catalogs are added to the list stated above⁷.

⁶ Heyman, Barbara B. *Samuel Barber: The Composer and His Music*. Oxford University Press, 1994.

⁷ Wentzel, Wayne C. *Samuel Barber: A Research and Information Guide*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2010.

2. Choral a cappella music

B. Heyman writes that Barber created most of his unaccompanied choral works between 1930-1941, and most of them were religious. It is difficult to research the problem because not all of these compositions have been published. Thus, for example, *Motetto on words from the Book of Job* was created using the biblical texts from the Book of Job for four and eight voices choir a cappella, 1930, is still reproduced only as manuscript. *Mary Ruance* and *Peggy Mitchell*, 1936, representing the choral scores, to James Stephens's words, as well as *God's grandeur*, 1938 to the English poet and Catholic priest Gerard Manley Hopkins's words have not been published, thanks to the latter Barber's music deepened into the religious meaning beyond the liturgical text. It was semiotic that the composer had been leading the student choir *Madrigal Chorus* composed of 25 members at the *Curtis Institute of Music* for three years (1939-1941). He performed many of his own choral compositions together with them, namely, *The Virgin Martyrs*, *Reincarnations*, *A Stopwatch and an Ordnance Map* in addition to the others taken from the sacred genre realms of the past, for example, *Ave Maria* by Josquin des Prez in his own musical version. Due to these circumstances, stylistic influences of distant eras, spiritual genre traditions, and, in exceptional cases, cult prayer texts are felt in the composer's musical language environment. A new stage of creative attention to choral sound became shorter for Samuel Barber (1967-1968). The author had a desire being his initial impulse to return to his own previously written vocal or chamber and instrumental compositions and create new choral versions based on them, including those with the added verbal text.

Samuel Barber was inspired to write choral music by poetry with deep philosophical connotations, reflections on life and death, deep thoughts on moral laws, suffering, peace, and forgiveness. It is notable that the composer chose translated Latin poems written by the medieval Belgian historian and monk Sigebert of Gembloux as the verbal basis for one of his first published choirs – *The Virgin Martyrs*. The music author favored the American poetess Emily Dickinson's poems about the expectation of death, fatigue of wandering, the proximity of a quiet eternal sleep as a poetic basis for the next choral work *Let down the bars, O Death*. Talking about the mournful atmosphere of the choir voices, Barber wrote to his parents that this music could have been performed at someone's funeral: eventually, the choir was performed at a memorial event commemorated to the composer's funeral (1981).

The author composed the first of his published a cappella choir scores *The Virgin Martyrs* for female voices singing elegiac praises to virgin martyrs who have deserved to be close to the Lord. Siegbert of Gembloux's Latin

text of the poetry translated into English by Helen Waddell forms the paired lines reflected in the choral score by the female voices reechoed in the opening bars. The melodic replicas of the sopranos and altos create tertian thickenings of syncopated figures, canonical imitations, sequence, as if interrupting each other's voices creating a picture of crowded virgins "whose souls were not crippled". When the words "souls are crippled" are sung, the Mixolydian "G" diatonic changes to "es-moll" representing a chromatically distant zone, culminating in a growing wave of strettas in various choral voices.

*Therefore come they, the crowding maidens,
Gertrude, Agnes, Prisca, Cecily,
Lucy, Thekla, Juliana, Barbara,
Agatha, Petronel, and other maids
Whose names I have read not and now record not,
But their souls and their faith were maimed not.
Worthy now of God's company.
Wand'ring through the fresh fields go they,
Gath'ring flowers to make them a nosegay
Gath'ring roses red for the Passion,
Lilies and violets for love.*

The death image with gloomy coloring represented as a fellow traveler in numerous Barber's music plots is recreated in the second a cappella choir from the same opus composed a year later. It is stated in the very title ***Let down the bars, O Death***, 1936. The music language is filled with the features of modal thinking, frequent support changes, ancient modes coloring, contrapuntal techniques, imitative development of structure, strettas, dissonances of a polyphonic nature, major and minor fluctuations as well as rhetorical exclamatio figures: wide intonation moves in the light of a sharply dissonant vertical with "Oh death" words saddening the overall picture all together. The chant is sung with psalmody and recitations. The texture is homophonic, monorhythmic, with metrical changes and a thematic declamatory genre basis. The polarized modal moods of the stringing amplify the contradictions between the feeling of fear and the desire for death.

*Let down the bars, O Death!
The tired flocks come in,
Whose bleating ceases to repeat,
Whose wandering is done.*

*Thine is the stillest night,
Thine the securest fold;
Too near thou art for seeking thee,
Too tender to be told.*

The original concept of the next choral opus **God's Grandeur** for double mixed a cappella choir, 1938, set to the lines by the English poet Gerard Manley Hopkins was planned as the continued unpublished early texts of *Motetto on words from the Book of Job*, 1930. Afterwards, the composer's plans changed: as pointed out by Heyman the composition was written alongside with the final part of the String Quartet and was timed to coincide with the upcoming Westminster Choir School's Festival of Contemporary American Music in the spring of 1938. The composer divided the choir into two ensembles engaged into an antiphonal dialogue. The music shows the features of baroque jubilations inspired by the Bach traditions honored by Barber.

*The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.
And for all this, nature is never spent;
There he lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs--
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.*

Reincarnations for mixed choir a cappella is an album of modern madrigals based on verses taken from *James Stephens's* eponymous poetry collection that includes the translations ("reincarnations") of the following Irish authors' poetry: *David O'Bruadair*, *Egan O'Rahilly* and *Anthony Raftery* who glorify their lyrical love poetry of feminine beauty. Barber chose only three poetic sources from a variety of them and combined the original poems by *Anthony Raftery* with the choirs created in different years: *Mary Hynes*, 1937; *Anthony O'Daly*, 1940; *The Coolin*, 1940. Barber composed two last stated compositions in Austria for his future conductor's work with the

Madrigal choir. When it comes to the artistic reading of poetry in Barber's music B. Heyman points to the "distinct and happy influence of Monteverdi's madrigals freedom"⁸.

There's a reason why the composer turned to the old vocal genre tradition of secular aristocratic music-making, namely a polyphonic singing with or without instrumental accompaniment. First of all, his active work as a conductor favored to it; secondly, the choir's repertoire stylistic orientation to Claudio Monteverdi's and Gesualdo di Venosa's music encouraged him to study the choral technique based on the preceding great masters' scores; thirdly, the Renaissance "reading" through the sound language of every word detail, their meanings, plot twists, and most importantly, the movement of love feelings, was very appealing to Barber, inviting to subtle expressiveness of intonations. The composer was attracted by the poetic pastoral beauty of the surrounding landscapes and strong love experiences. As we remember, the core of the Renaissance choral singing madrigal art consisted of the sensory perception of the world. It was back then when the Italian madrigalists' music established "**the movement of feeling** as the main reference point for the XVI-century composers and poets forming a new musical genre called madrigal"⁹. The word and musical intonation balance are personified by sense experience expressed through eloquent "madrigalisms", motifs of sighs, tears as well as other acoustic means, in particular, such as: "spatial effects of the reproduced word meaning (for example, the high register is used when talking about heaven, angels; using the low register when referring to hell, the devil, sorrow, death)"¹⁰. Barber was attracted by the atmosphere of "refined sensuality" and he was looking for colorful sound reserves to capture it in his choral writing.

Mary Hynes, tuns into reality the state of exciting love delights in front of female beauty according to the musical semantics of ancient madrigals.

*She is the sky of the sun!
She is the dart of love!
She is the love of my heart!
She is a rune!*

The image of Mary (Mary Hines, in honor of the beautiful 19th-century Irish woman) being beautiful as the sky, the sun, love and the secret of the heart has been voiced by means of choral texture using fast

⁸ Heyman, Barbara B., *op. cit.*, p.183.

⁹ Zharkova, Valeriya. *Ten views on the history of Western European music. Secrets and Desires of Homo Musicus*, in 2 volumes. Vol. 1, ArtHuss, 2018, p. 298.

¹⁰ Zharkova, Valeriya, *op. cit.*, p. 320.

undulating recessions and instant melodic line upsurges to culminate peaks accompanied by the words “she is the love of my heart, she is the secret”. The opening stanzas music is full of jubilation, mobile, playful grace. The melody is directed down either quickly or easily, then rapidly reaches a new peak (bars 1-5) when cadencing in the H–dur key far from the main C–dur accompanied by the words “of my heart”. It’s possible to hear frequent and unexpected modal shifts of fret supports, ecstatic slowdowns in the second stanza accompanied by the words “lovely and airily” embracing the semantic contour of each sounding word in the choral texture.

The imitated female parts are added to the male solo ones, the density of the choral array increases due to the polyphonic layering of new lines. The choral recitation includes the elements of polyphonic technique accompanied by the words “She is a rune” (bars 6-10). If the harmony colorful play did not exceed the Renaissance powers, the listener could lose stylistic guidelines for a long time and confuse the allusion of the old Renaissance and Baroque polyphony with the historical reality. However, this is a stylized sound reality created by the composer who took into consideration the long-standing genre tradition. The author works out the creation chronology of this madrigal in the 20th century just using the flow of harmonic processes that inherit late Romantic achievements.

The next “reincarnation page” namely *Anthony O’Daly* tells the story of the Irish rebel organization leader’s martyrdom. The atmosphere of a mournful memorial service is depicted here: seasoned choir pedals, strettas, archaic quint “conchords”, a homophonic structure sustained in texture with the inclusion of imitative counterpoint techniques, basses, the only sound lasting slowly and painfully in a state of grief, despair from the loss of a loved one. Pedals on the sound “e” are persistently and tenaciously bass or soprano maintained, the mode changes shades (Aeolian, Phrygian, Dorian), lamentose intonations inherit the semantics of sorrow, suffering, crying.

*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 flow’r 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 Coolin being the last choir in Samuel Barber's "madrigals' collection" is one of the most expressive of the choral miniatures, according to the verbal translation of the title, it gives a hint at a tender address to the beloved woman, literally meaning a wavy strand of blond hair at the back of the head. Poetry and music include the emotional world that dives deeply into lyrical yearning for a long time that is the state known in any era, but clearly dominant in the aesthetics of the European Renaissance and Romanticism eras. The sound has a pastoral tone, slight swaying in the alternated $12/8$ and $9/8$, sensual lyricism of melodic intonations, dialogue of male and female voices, melismatic decorations of sequence lines that create the atmosphere of romantic enthusiasm of feelings.

*Come with me, under my coat,
And we will drink our fill
Of the milk of the white goat,
Or wine if it be thy will.*

This madrigals' album of is the most significant of Barber's early a cappella choral compositions.

Ad bibinum cum me rogaret ad cenam for a cappella mixed choir, 1943 being a composition created on the occasion of Carl Engel's anniversary, is laudatory with a touch of light humor, pastoral, with a code ending accompanied by the words "already my eyes begin to droop and slowly my songs go to sleep" to the melody similar to the lullaby genre.

In the middle of the 20th century, the composer's activity in writing choral works without being accompanied noticeably decreased, however, he continued to work on choral music with instrumental accompaniment. In 1964, Barber returned to the a cappella choral tradition on a piecemeal basis: working in the genre of festive Easter chants, he composed ***Easter Chorale*** for a mixed choir, brass instruments, timpani and organ, op. 40, with lyrics by Park Browning. Only the first part of the chorale sounds without any accompaniment. The music was written on the lighting of the National Cathedral bell tower in Washington. There are noticeable signs of stylization in it: modal diatonic chords, ancient church modes, the syllabic principle of the relationship between music and words. The chorale reminds about the ancient traditions of Gregorian monodies being harmonized by baroque composers. Barber stylizes the melody in the spirit of church hymns and adds a strict monorhythmic harmonic texture, modal cadenzas (clausulas) to it. The phrasing in the stanzas is distinguished by caesuras

and a bar line without indicating the size, each time the last chord is marked with a fermata. The second time the chorale sounds even more solemnly, accompanied by brass, timpani, and organ.

Agnus Dei for choir *a cappella* (or accompanied by an organ / piano *ad libitum*), 1967, represents is a unique case of the composer's appeal to a canonical liturgical text integrated into an earlier work: *Adagio for Strings*, op. 11, 1936. Barbara Hayman¹¹ mentions that many new timbre versions of Barber's *Adagio* appeared for a string quartet (1936). They were created by the composer himself or by other musicians with his active assistance: *Adagio* for string orchestra (commissioned by Antonio Toscanini, 1938), for *solo* organ (William Strickland, 1949), for clarinet ensemble (Lucien Caillé, 1964), for woodwind ensemble (John Oreilly, 1967), "*Agnus Dei*" for a mixed *a cappella* choir (Samuel Barber, 1967), "*Agnus Dei*" for a mixed choir accompanied by an organ or a piano (Samuel Barber, 1967). The choral transcription was completed at a very difficult time for the composer. Just after the unsuccessful premiere of the "Antony and Cleopatra" opera and his mother's subsequent death, he decided to hide away from everyone and was even ready to give up composing music. Barber could find a secluded place in Europe, in Italy, where being absolutely isolated he "ran through" his *Adagio* from the very beginning. Currently a complete list of *Adagio* latest transcriptions is given in the recently published works of French and English musicologists^{12, 13}.

It was possible for the composer to find an opportunity in the choral version to unite the originally sounding "sacred music overtones with a real liturgical text, to strengthen the spiritual currents of intonations that found their place here, in union with the canonical word¹⁴: *Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis. Dona nobis pacem*. Anniversaries, melismatic chants inspired by an old church tradition are close to the prayer text from the funeral mass. The soprano melody "moves against the barline, bypassing the metrical periodicity regulations, as if resurrecting the memory of the music medieval past, of the *longissima melodie* cult, early Gregorian chants with a deep spiritual meaning established in them"¹⁵. The melodic pattern

¹¹ Heyman, Barbara B., *op. cit.*, p.175.

¹² Brévignon, Pierre. *Samuel Barber: nostalgique entre deux mondes*. Editions Hermann, 2011.

¹³ Wentzel, Wayne C. *Samuel Barber: A Research and Information Guide*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2010.

¹⁴ Filatova, Tetiana. "*Agnus Dei*" by Samuel Barber: *choral version of Adagio for strings (to the problem of style interactions)*. *Muzychnye mystetstvo*, vol. 13, 2013, p. 70.

¹⁵ Filatova, Tetiana, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

resembles somehow the baroque musical and rhetorical figures *climax*, *circulation*, the *anabasis*, *catabasis* moves are obvious in the bass line namely the ascent to hope and descent to suffering. The music is not ascetic, on the contrary, it is filled with tragedy, sorrow, beauty and often romantic expression of feelings. These feelings are transmitted by the colorful, coloristic harmonies of the romantic era. The similarity with the Renaissance and Baroque choral voicing practices is displayed in the polyphonic movement of melodic lines. The modal linear thinking allusions of the pre-classical era are combined with a powerful romantic platform of harmonic means.

E. g. 1

Samuel Barber

Molto adagio
molto espr.

Soprano
Alto
Tenor
Bass

A - gnus De - gnus De -

“Agnus Dei” for choir a cappella, bars 1-3.

The *Twelfth Night* composition for a mixed a cappella choir, op. 42, No. 1, 1968, was composed on the twentieth-century English poet Laurie Lee’s text about the birth of the baby Jesus Christ, who saved the world from destruction. There is no night darker or colder than this representing the poetic lines that are emphasized at the moments of the sound of key words by gloomy chromatic harmonies, variable meters, hemiolous rhythmic patterns.

*No night could be darker than this night,
No cold so cold,
As the blood snaps like a wire,
And the heart’s sap stills,
And the year seems defeated.*

Talking about the other composition taken from the same opus **To Be Sung on the Water** for a mixed a cappella choir, op. 42, No. 2, 1968, to the words of the contemporary American poetess Louise Bogan, the composer uses the technique of antiphonal division of the choral sound, namely into female and male parts of voices assigned a solo or accompanying part. They are exchanging their parts in turns.

*Beautiful, my delight,
Pass, as we pass the wave,
Pass, as the mottled night
Leaves what it cannot save,
Scattering dark and bright.*

This choral tradition known long ago has a pictorial function here. Replicas of female and male singing enter a dialogue, creating a spatial perspective similar to the image of a water landscape, the splashing of waves, the swaying of oars in a boat. The choir can sound both unaccompanied and accompanied by a piano.

3. Choral music with instrumental accompaniment

A **Stopwatch and an Ordnance Map** for male choir, brass wind instruments and timpani, op. 15, 1940, actualizes a military theme, namely a soldier's death during the Spanish Civil War. The army choir of 75 voices sounds in a gloomy, dramatic, ominous way: war, heroism, death are infused with the composer's recollections with personal experience of guard duty in the US Army. On the score pages, the author demonstrates an excellent mastery of choral polyphonic technique. Let's remind that the composition was created at the same time as *Reincarnations* for the *Madrigal* choir, but in this case, the male choral four-parts are accompanied by instrumental timbres associated with an atmosphere of military signaling.

*A stopwatch and an ordnance map.
At five a man fell to the ground
And the watch flew off his wrist
Like a moon struck from the earth
Marking a blank time that stares
On the tides of change beneath.
All under the olive trees.*

Choral groups are divided in pairs. The kettledrums lead their marching, militarized, pulsating rhythmic line added by the elements of melodic figures and introduce ominous shades into the general atmosphere. The moments of enlightenment appear in the code namely in the choral ritual of requiem, memorial service.

Prayers of Kierkegaard for mixed choir, soprano and orchestra, op. 30, 1954 is a colossal religious composition inspired by the composer's recollection of a spiritual experience after a midnight attendance of a small church where a 70-Benedictine-monk choir was singing the Gregorian mass for several spectators. Barbara Heyman cites these recollections from the composer's letter: "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"¹⁶. The monks' singing, tranquility, quiet delight, and enlightenment before the benefit of clergy sacraments are expressed through the included elements of Gregorian chants in the choral score. The composer admired them so deeply and sincerely. The choir poetic foundation is based on the Danish theologian Søren Kierkegaard's words, reflections on how intense the human feelings, inspiration and the "passion of freedom" are. Barber chose two of Kierkegaard's prayers; "God the Unchangeable" (1855) and "Christian Judgments" (1848). These are not canonical texts, but theological judgments, consequently the composer freely changed phrases and words in the original text.

The liturgical Gregorian chant and its associations are intensified by the unison sound of male voices, meter variability, rhythm irregularity, the movement of melodic chants according to the connected syllabic principle with the words of prayer, and the Dorian mode diatonicism. Homophonic and antiphonal choral chants, the cantus firmus technique in tenor voices, whispering, the sound of bells backstage, fugato, chorale sounds in the string section, the xylophone solo using the twelve-tone row technique and retrograde methods of the series development and the techniques when the theme is presented as rhythmically increased, namely, everything consolidates into a multi-dimensional style alloy. The contrapuntal technique of leading voices, canons, imitations, polychords, tetrads, pandiatonic or chromatic alteration of a tone, antiphonal interchange of voices, melody recitation, passacals in instrumental voices represent the polyphonic writing techniques of the medieval, renaissance, baroque eras coexisting with the modern musical vocabulary in the composition. They create a liturgical mood jointly allowing not only secular musicians, but also church soloists to participate in

¹⁶ Heyman, Barbara B., *op. cit.*, p. 348.

the composition performance as intended by the composer. The composition reaches the scale of cantata-oratorio genres in terms of dramatic and compositional scope. The first nights were a great success in the USA and Europe.

Samuel Barber called his last composition for choir with accompaniment as ***The Lovers*** and intended for mixed choir, baritone, soprano and orchestra, op. 43, 1971. The magnificent cast consisting of a mixed choir of two hundred voices, solo parts accompanied by an orchestra was designed for the anniversary music performance presentation by the Philadelphia Orchestra, Finnish baritone Tom Krause and the Temple University Chorus. The composition was created using the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda's words translated by Merwin. The composer arranged the poetic texts into a series of excerpts taken from different poems dictated by the logic of how the lovers' romantic feelings grow: from their inception to a difficult, painful breach of relations. This is a striking choral example of sensual lyrics in the composer's creative activity with juicy coloristic verticals in vocal and orchestral parts. The poet reproduces a strong, burning feeling of passionate love in an erotic tone of his poetic statement. It transforms into a state of deep despair, collapse, painful loss, and loneliness. Barber's style palette mixes romantic musical language with rich nuances of exaltation, rich colors of impressionistic harmonies and a world of sharply dissonant modern sounds.

4. Conclusions

Samuel Barber's choral heritage ranks a decent place among instrumental, vocal, and theatrical genres in terms of the number of his creative works: all the composer's choirs can be placed in one author's concert. However, these compositions often go to the highest creative heights in terms of artistic merit and exploratory ideas. Choral compositions reflect the variety of author's interests in genre and style. He refers to biblical texts from the *Book of Job*, canonical church prayer *Agnus Dei* from the requiem mass using the English poet and Catholic priest Gerard Manley Hopkins' words, the medieval Belgian historian and monk Sigebert of Gembloux's poems translated from Latin, poems by the American poet Emily Dickinson, the poetry translations of the following Irish authors David O'Bruadair, Egan O'Rahilly and Anthony Raftery, Park Browning's poetry, the twentieth-century English poet Laurie Lee's texts about the Jesus Christ's birth, the American poet Louise Bogan's words, the Danish theologian Søren Kierkegaard's poetic reflections, or, finally, the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda's sensual, lyrical poems translated by Merwin.

Having the foundation of a poetic source, Samuel Barber creates a rich world of artistic images and emotional states. Sacred ones clearly dominate among them being ranged from mournful, sepulchral, sorrowful, prayerful to jubilant, Christmas, enlightened ones. They are joined by the related states of philosophical reflection, though not about biblical stories, but connected with real events and people, namely, the thoughts about their life and death, feelings of fear and humility, about the inevitability of losses and military agony. Lyrical, love themes elaborated with no less impressive amplitude of states play a significant part in the figurative range of choral compositions: from idyllic, peaceful, with a pastoral tinge of merged feelings, to languid, enthusiastic, erotic, ecstatic, and the opposite ones being as strong namely dramatic depths loss and despair.

The composer conveyed his personal view of the world through this palette of images that attracted him to appeal to the musical styles of bygone centuries. He was like-minded to the old choral chants, the ascetic lines of Gregorian monodies, he admired counterpoints, the old polyphony masters' free imitation technique. At the same time, the composer leaned toward the vibrance and richness of late romantic harmony, he sometimes added sharp dissonances and the sound uniqueness technique to it in a spontaneous way. As a result, the image of genre and style interactions appears to be many-sided in Barber's choral music. The composer worked with the elements set in the genre traditions of Gregorian monodies, antiphons, chorales, motets, madrigals, Easter hymns. He created choral miniatures, cycles of choral miniatures, large multi-part compositions where the musical thinking attributes of the bygone eras interchanged, synthesized, and infused with the world language being contemporary to the composer.

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