THE CHORAL CYCLE:
A CONDUCTOR’S GUIDE TO
FOUR REPRESENTATIVE WORKS

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Introduction

What Is a Choral Cycle?

The term “choral cycle” has appeared on the musical scene only relatively recently. The reason for the use of the term is speculative: Presumably, choral cycle was (and is) used when another established genre name does not accurately describe the composition for which it is used. One of the earliest uses of a variant of the term seems to apply to pieces by Franz Liszt, though it is unclear whether the composer himself used the designation, or if it was used by a scholar cataloguing Liszt’s works. The idea, though not the exact term, appears as Letzte zyklische Chorgesänge mit Orgel, (Later Cyclical Choral Songs With Organ). The earliest evidence of the term in English occurs with some obscure pieces by obscure composers, who included the term “choral cycle” in titles from as early as 1918. While the term “choral cycle” appears in published reviews as early as 1932, it was not until 1970 that a musicologist used the term in a journal article or a book. In an article in Choral Journal titled “The Choral Cycle,” author Kirke Mechem suggested a definition of a choral cycle. In his words it is “a group of individual choral pieces, unified in some way, intended to be performed together but also capable of

being performed separately.”

The unification of the pieces may stem from the fact that they all use texts by the same poet, or they may have a common subject, even to the extent of being narrative, or the pieces are merely all of the same general tone and style.

The name “choral cycle” is derived from the term “song cycle,” which has been a part of the musicological vocabulary since the early nineteenth century. Song cycles, like choral cycles, are composed as a unit, and are often excerpted in performance; that is, singers choose to sing one or a few songs from a cycle rather than the entire set. Choral cycles and song cycles, however, differ from “collections.” A collection may be published together, but that is the only connection between the pieces. A collection may be titled, for example, “24 Songs,” while a title of a cycle often will indicate what is unifying the individual pieces. *Five Flower Songs* by Benjamin Britten and *A Poet’s Love* by Robert Schumann are examples of cycles.

Among the problems with the term “choral cycle” is that it does not have a universally accepted meaning and usage. The time lag in its development is similar to that of the term “song cycle,” with which musicologists identified pieces that had been written several decades earlier. In 1865 the term “song cycle” first appeared in the scholarly German *Musikalisches Lexicon*, describing, for example, works composed by Beethoven and Schubert between 1800 and 1828. This shows that the terminology used to describe pieces of music lagged behind the pieces themselves, as is typical throughout musical history. The use of the term “choral cycle” similarly lags behind the actual composition of pieces. Choral cycles may have been, and may still be, called by other

names by their composers. “Suite,” “Set,” or “Group” are among the ambiguous designations for what qualify as choral cycles. Less ambiguous are “Choral Song Cycle” and “A Cycle of Songs [for Choir].”

Though they are more often secular, some sacred choral cycles have been composed. Sacred genres that have a similar structure, however, are more often called cantatas, motets, or oratorios. Typically in cantatas and oratorios, unlike choral cycles, there are solo movements intermingled with the choral movements. I have observed that the term “choral cycle” is increasing in usage among choral conductors and scholars in literature written about the genre, and has increased in composers’ usage in the titles of compositions as well, particularly since the 1970s. In determining which choral cycles are worthy of mention here, as well as the four to be analyzed in depth, I was aided significantly by an online community of choral professionals called Choralist; in two separate discussion threads, I asked them to list their favorite choral cycles as well as those cycles they felt were most influential or historically significant. Many of their suggestions are also listed in the Appendix.

I have seen and heard choral cycles by written by composers from all over the world; there seems to be particular interest in this genre in Eastern Europe. For this study, however, the four specific examples of choral cycles that will be analyzed in depth are all composed by American composers. The choral cycles chosen for this study are: The Hour-Glass by Irving Fine (1949), American Madrigals by Kirke Mechem (1976), Voices by Stephen Paulus (1988), and Five Hebrew Love Songs by Eric Whitacre (2002).

All four of these composers are known for their choral music, though they have all composed in other genres as well. Irving Fine died in 1962; the other three composers are living as of 2010. These cycles were chosen because each represents a different aspect of choral composition. *The Hour-Glass* was composed for unaccompanied voices. *American Madrigals* was composed for chorus with piano accompaniment, although the composer also prepared a version with a small instrumental ensemble. *Five Hebrew Love Songs* is accompanied by a string quartet. Lastly, *Voices* utilizes a large orchestra to accompany the choir. While these are not all of the various permutations of choral cycles, they represent, from my observations, the most common. Other reasons for their inclusion will be explained further in the upcoming section.

**Statement of Purpose and Need for the Study**

In my experience, choral cycles are an increasingly important part of the choral repertoire. Based on my observations, composers are composing more choral cycles, and conductors are programming more choral cycles in their choirs’ concerts. The purpose of this study is to aid choral conductors and other musicians to better understand how choral cycles have developed, particularly in recent decades, and to see how four different composers approached the genre. This information may be used to influence the choices that a conductor makes for the preparation of a performance of any of these specific pieces, whether as a whole cycle or as excerpts from a cycle. In addition, the first chapter will provide some historical background of choral cycles.

A conductor may choose to perform a complete cycle or an excerpt or excerpts from a cycle; whichever choice is made, understanding how the composer conceived the
whole piece and how the separate parts are interrelated should be useful information to a well-informed conductor. This information can influence how the piece is taught and how a choir will understand and perform the piece. The choral profession will benefit from further information and analysis about this growing genre.

The trend that I have noticed is that composers writing major works for choir are increasingly choosing the choral cycle as the genre for these works. Despite this trend, very little has been written about choral cycles as an emerging genre. These specific pieces were chosen because they represent different approaches to writing choral cycles and because they illustrate how the genre differs from other major works for choir. Irving Fine’s *The Hour Glass* is written for unaccompanied voices and uses texts by Elizabethan poet Ben Jonson. The composer refers to the set as “A Cycle of Six Songs;” each of the six songs in the set is published separately. Kirke Mechem’s *American Madrigals* has piano accompaniment, with an optional small ensemble of woodwinds and strings. According to the composer, the set may also be performed *a cappella*. The texts and original tunes are folksongs, though the composer has injected enough original material to make them more than simply arrangements or settings. Though composed as a set, the words “choral cycle” do not appear anywhere on the published *American Madrigals*. They, too, are published as individual pieces. Stephen Paulus’s *Voices* utilizes a full orchestra, and he uses texts from the esoteric turn-of-the-century poet Rainer Maria Rilke. It is published as a unit, with all of the pieces enclosed within one cover. Though there is a reference to the poet’s cycle from which the texts come, the published score has no visible reference to its being a choral cycle. In *Five Hebrew Love Songs*, Eric Whitacre calls on a string quartet, or violin solo with piano, to accompany the voices. His
Hebrew texts were written specifically for him by his girlfriend (later to become his wife), Hila Plitmann. All five songs are published within one octavo. In notes included on the inside cover of the published version, Whitacre refers to the songs as a set, but does not use the term cycle. All of these four choral cycles have been performed and recorded, and, as such, represent accepted choral composers’ examples of this increasingly significant choral genre.

Any musicological terminology undergoes an evolutionary process before it gains acceptance and is used consistently. “Choral cycle” is no exception. Standard music dictionaries have not yet provided a definition. The fact, however, that conductors, composers, and musicologists are using the term, and have been for nearly a century, suggests that there is a need to more clearly define it and to demonstrate its various permutations. This study will show how the usage of the term has grown, and will provide in-depth analysis and commentary that shows how four composers have conceived and produced works in this genre, particularly in relation to how well these fit the 1970 definition proposed by Kirke Mechem.

Definition of Terms and Methodology

The term “choral cycle,” for the purposes of this study, will mean a group of choral pieces written by a single composer intended to be performed as a set. The term “song cycle” will be used for similar groups of songs but for solo voice. “Cyclic” will be used generally to refer to multi-movement works with some unifying characteristic, not in the stricter sense of “Cyclic Form” used in instrumental music. The term “mixed chorus” (or “mixed choir”) will mean soprano, alto, tenor, and bass parts, and may be
abbreviated SATB. Other musical terms used will conform with definitions found in the
*Harvard Dictionary of Music.*

I will analyze each of the individual pieces within the cycles in relation to their
texts; the characteristics of their vocal lines; their metrical, rhythmic, harmonic, and
formal characteristics; their texture; and performing forces required. I will summarize
each cycle in terms of the whole work and how the individual pieces in it are interrelated.
I will explain the circumstances of the genesis and intent of each of the compositions. As
a result of my analysis, I will offer interpretive and practical suggestions for conductors
to use in preparing these pieces for performance with a choir. The format for my own
analyses will be based on those found in Larry Smith’s doctoral dissertation, “The Choral
Music of Libby Larsen and Stephen Paulus: An Examination and Comparison of Styles,”
and Roger MacNeill’s doctoral dissertation, “Secular Choral Chamber Music in America
Since 1950, as Represented by the Music for this Genre by Samuel Adler, Jean Berger,
Eugene Butler, and Kirke Mechem.” I will also include a brief biographical sketch of
each of the four composers, a bibliography, a brief discography, and a list of multi-
movement choral works that I consider choral cycles. I will present the more general,
historical information about choral cycles in the format used by Nick Strimple in his
books, *Choral Music in the Nineteenth Century* and *Choral Music in the Twentieth
Chapter 1: Choral Cycles in Historical Context

The Emergence of the Choral Cycle

What qualifies a group of musical compositions to be categorized as a choral cycle? First, they must be pieces written for a choir. Second, the composer must have written the group of pieces with the intent of having them performed as a set. Third, the texts of choral cycles are almost always poetic, as opposed to biblical or liturgical. They may be sacred or secular, though extended sacred choral works more often are given other genre names, such as cantatas, motets, or oratorios. Further differentiation between choral cycles and cantatas, sacred or secular, is that choral cycles will typically use several different poems for the individual songs or movements, rather than a single text divided into sections, which is typical for cantatas. Another distinction is that choral cycles usually don’t have solo movements, whereas cantatas typically do. As a point of further clarification, a “song cycle” is composed for solo voice, while a “choral cycle” is a set of songs written for a choir. Some composers have designated a set of choral pieces as a “song cycle for chorus” or a “choral song cycle,” but since, in my experience, “choral cycle” is the term that has emerged in the last several decades as the term most often employed, it is the term that will be used herein. Beginning in the twentieth century, composers have chosen to write more choral cycles than previously, and this trend is continuing in the twenty-first century. This indicates that the choral cycle as a genre has
become an accepted and significant part of the choral repertoire. If this trend continues, choral cycles will be the most numerous extended choral works in the Twentieth and Twenty-first Century portion of the choral library.

When a composer chooses to use the term “choral cycle,” he or she implies that another genre name does not accurately describe the composition. As a point of comparison, while the texts may be dramatic, narrative, or even a dialogue, if there is no intent of staged action, clearly the work cannot be called an opera. Oratorio has implied a work much longer than most choral cycles, and typically includes solos as separate movements within the work. Cantatas, whether sacred or secular, typically include recitatives, arias, or duets interspersed with the choral movements. Many cantatas do not contain choral movements at all, so they are not a strictly choral genre. A multi-movement sacred choral work that has a poetic text rather than a liturgical or biblical text and includes no solos might very well be called a choral cycle. Similarly, while composers sometimes designate pieces “secular cantatas,” unified multi-movement choral works without separate solo movements set to secular poetic texts have more often been called choral cycles.

The term cyclic, or cyclical, is defined in the Harvard Dictionary of Music as generally “any musical form including several movements,” and more specifically as “compositions…in which related thematic material is used in all or some of the movements.”¹ In 1950, the seminal musicologist Manfred Bukofzer wrote that the earliest

form of composed cyclic compositions were settings of the Ordinary of the Mass that were composed as a unit, with the intent of being performed together as part of the same service. While acknowledging the liturgical unity inherent in the texts, he opined, “[i]t takes a very bold and independent mind to conceive the idea that the invariable parts of the Mass should be composed not as separate liturgical items, but as a set of five musically coherent compositions.”\(^2\) When referring to these cyclical musical compositions, Bukofzer pointed out that these early polyphonic masses might have several possible unifying characteristics of the related thematic material. These characteristics might have been 1) a repeated opening motive, 2) a cantus firmus melody, or 3) a quote from a secular polyphonic piece. The repeated opening motive, or head motto, is a melodic pattern found in one or more voices at the beginning of several different movements of a multi-movement piece. A cantus firmus is a complete melody that is used in a context different from its original use. It could be a sacred chant melody or a secular song, around which a polyphonic mass was constructed, reusing the melody in many or all the movements. In some Renaissance Masses, entire sections of polyphonic pieces were used, with the words of the mass superimposed, in a practice that has come to be known as parody.

A later multi-movement genre that often exhibited the more specific cyclical characteristics mentioned above is the symphony.\(^3\) A cyclical symphony reused a melodic


motive in two or more separate movements. In some, notably Berlioz’s *Symphonie fantastique*, the melodic motive corresponds to a specific narrative strand that connects the movements. Like the cyclic symphony, the use of the same musical material in two or more movements is a characteristic of some choral cycles.

While these structural characteristics have been important historically, the unifying factor in song cycles and choral cycles often has more to do with the text choice than the music. Examples of this are: 1) the composer may choose a single lengthy text to split up into several individual songs; 2) the composer may choose to set several different poems by a single poet – in this case, the poems themselves may have originally been part of a set, grouped together by the poet often in a narrative fashion; 3) the composer may choose to set several poems by different poets but on the same general subject. Sometimes the unifying factor in what seems to be a song or choral cycle is that the composer wrote the pieces all about the same time, or included them in the same album, or even that the publisher chose to group them together for reasons that have nothing to do with the music or texts. An example of this is Johannes Brahms’s *Sieben Lieder*, opus 62. In this case, it may be difficult to know if the composer intended the pieces to be sung as a set. If they are related as a group, they could be called a cycle; if not, they are often more correctly referred to as a collection. Whether or not they are performed as a set is a decision for the conductor.

**Early Predecessors of the Choral Cycle**

Some of the earliest examples of what might today be considered song cycles and choral cycles are the chansons and madrigals of the late Middle Ages and the
Renaissance. A favorite subject then, as now, was love. Sometimes chaste, sometimes bawdy, these songs were the popular music of their day. Composers set the texts of popular poets, or often wrote the texts themselves. Poet composers such as Guillame de Machaut (c.1300-1377) and John Dowland (1563-1626) wrote many such songs, but whether the composers intended for specific groups of these to be performed together is unclear.

Another example of a predecessor to the choral cycle comes from the master of late Renaissance polyphony, Orlandus Lassus (c.1532-1594), sometimes referred to as Orlando di Lasso. Lassus wrote a few cyclical madrigal sets, the best known of them completed shortly before his death. This was a set of twenty pieces, the *Lagrima di San Pietro* (The Tears of Saint Peter). Although these pieces are religious in nature, they are written in the secular style of a madrigal, using Italian instead of the Latin that would have been used for service music in the Roman Catholic Church at that time. For this reason, they are referred to as *madrigali spirituali*, or sacred madrigals, rather than any of the other genre names used for sacred pieces written in Latin. The fact that Lassus chose to finish the set with a twenty-first piece, *Vide Homo*, a motet in Latin, does not negate the importance of this set as a predecessor to the choral cycle.

The relatively obscure German composer Leonhard Lechner (c. 1553-1606) was the first to use an entire poetic cycle by a German poet in a cyclical work for voices. Compared to many other composers of that time, he had a stable employment record that

included ten years in Nuremberg and 22 years employed by the dukes of Württemberg.\(^5\)

His *Deutsche Sprüche von Leben und Tod* (German Sayings of Life and Death), which he completed shortly before his death in 1606, is characterized as a choral cycle by Denis Arnold and Basil Smallman in *The Oxford Companion to Music*, though that designation was not used for the set in its own time.\(^6\) It consists of fifteen couplets set as distinct polyphonic songs for four unaccompanied voices.

Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643), though considered a master in the early Baroque style, also wrote polyphonic madrigals in *stile antico*, the older style more typical of the Renaissance. His Sixth Book of Madrigals, published in 1614, includes two sets that would qualify as choral cycles, except for the fact that they would have probably been performed with only one singer on a part, making them more properly vocal chamber works, in this case quintets. The first of these, *Lamento D’Arianna* (Arianna’s Lament), contains four songs; the second, *Lagrima d’amante al sepolcro dell’amata* (A Lover’s Lament at the Tomb of His Beloved), contains six songs. The book also contains eight other unrelated madrigals, which are not part of either cycle.

At about the same time, farther north in Leipzig, Germany, Johann Hermann Schein (1586-1630) produced two cyclical works for five voices. They are not particularly well regarded among his output of choral works, but are worth mentioning


here because of their relevance to the evolution of choral cycles. The first of these, *Venus Kräntlein* (Venus’s Garland), was written in about 1608, while Schein was a student at the University of Leipzig. It contains seventeen pieces, sixteen of which are for five voices (two sopranos, alto, tenor, and bass). The pieces are short, homophonic, and syllabic. The subject of love ties them together as a cycle. Schein chose another subject presumably near and dear to him, drinking, for his other cyclical set of secular songs, the *Studenten-Schmauss* (Students’ Feast), of 1626. This smaller set of five songs was similar in style to the earlier one, unlike his much more imaginative sacred works and individual madrigals.

In line with what we know about performance practice of madrigals and other secular genres in the Renaissance, most of these early examples may more likely have been performed by a quartet or quintet (that is, one on a part) than by a choir. Their reference here acknowledges them as part of the developmental lineage of choral music.

Sporadic examples of cyclical groups of songs for solo singer with accompaniment were written in the Baroque and Classical periods, but the song cycle as a genre gained significant popularity around the turn of the eighteenth century to the nineteenth century. Publishers capitalized on the growing prevalence of amateur musicians and their thirst for new music. Ludwig van Beethoven provided two examples of song cycles, his *Six Songs* of 1802, written to poems by the German poet Christian Gellert, and his *An die ferne Geliebte* (To the Distant Beloved), also a set of six songs, these set to texts of Austrian poet Alois Jeitelles. This latter set has the distinction of being the first identified with the description *Liederkreis* in the publication title, meaning
“song set.” These practices established a pattern for song cycles followed by many Romantic-Era composers.

Romantic-Era Song Cycles

The exact term *liederzyclus* (song cycle) was first used in 1865 in the scholarly German *Musikalisches Lexicon*, but it was used to describe extant musical genres. The term is most often applied to sets of songs composed in the Romantic period, about 1820 to 1900. According to Susan Youens in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, these cycles can be as short as two songs, referred to as dyad-cycles, or examples can be found as long as thirty songs. The prototypical examples of song cycles are Franz Schubert’s *Die Schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise*, and Robert Schumann’s *Dichterliebe* and *Liederkreis*.

*Die Schöne Müllerin* (The Beautiful Miller-Maid) is a set of narrative poems by Wilhelm Müller. Schubert composed this song cycle in 1823, and it was published in 1824. The original published title refers to it as “*ein Cyclus von Liedern*” (a cycle of songs). This cycle for vocal solo with piano accompaniment tells the story of a young miller and his love for the daughter of a neighboring mill owner. Another cycle of Schubert’s, especially notable for this discussion, is the 1825 cycle of songs from The


8. Ibid.

Lady of the Lake, which is unusual in that it combines solo songs with choral songs. This cycle consists of seven songs, three for solo woman’s voice, two for solo man’s voice, and two choruses – one male (TTBB) and one female (SSA). The well-known Ave Maria is one of the solo songs for woman’s voice from this cycle. Schubert’s song cycles are exemplars of the genre, and are therefore important to the development of the choral cycle genre. Another example of a song cycle in German is Robert Schumann’s Liederkreis (song set), which is made up of a dozen selected poems by Joseph Eichendorff, and is composed for solo singer and piano. Though they are similar in tone and style, being a “series of brief mood pictures,” they are otherwise unrelated, and carry no narrative intent throughout the set. As such, this provides a slightly different model for later composers of choral cycles. Cycles in this idiom may have a general title, such as Poulenc’s Sept Chansons (Seven Songs), not really hinting at the reasons for including them together in one set. Other cycles in this idiom may have a somewhat descriptive title that does not explicitly delineate why the pieces are grouped together, such as John Rutter’s Fancies.

Although the Austro-Germanic influence is certainly strongest, composers of other nationalities also produced significant song cycles. The French are well represented by, among others, Hector Berlioz, Charles Gounod, and Gabriel Fauré. Claude Debussy favored the three-song set both for solo voice and for choir; his choral trilogy Trois Chansons, on texts of the Medieval French poet Charles D’Orleans, is a staple in the

choral repertoire. The Russian Modest Mussorgsky and the Czech Antonín Dvořák also contributed several song cycles each to the solo repertoire.

Choral-like Genres: Vocal Chamber Music

Cycles of songs specifically written for choir were slower to evolve than those in the solo repertoire. Some of what choral conductors claim for use with choirs, however, began in the Romantic era as vocal chamber ensembles, mostly mixed quartets. One composer of these genres of vocal chamber music was Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868). Rossini became rich and famous through the success of many of his 39 operas, all written between 1810 and 1829. However, some of his lesser-known vocal chamber works written during that time period, as well as after his relatively early retirement from composing opera, have become well known and loved as choral music. Rossini’s La Passaggiata and Il Gondolieri, currently published for and performed by choirs, were both originally part of a set of pieces that the composer put together called the Album Italiano, one of fourteen such albums written in the composer’s latter years for his own private use. The pieces in these albums were performed, by friends or professionals living in or passing through Paris, at soirées hosted by Rossini in his home, and were usually accompanied by Rossini at the piano. Though many of the albums are pieces written for solo piano or other instruments accompanied by piano, The Italian Album and two others were written for vocal solos and groups of up to eight singers. Rossini referred to these albums as Péchés des Vieillement (The Sins of [My] Old Age) and included among them some humorous titles and subjects, including a “Comic Duet for Two Cats.” He dedicated all of them to “pianists of the fourth class, to which [category of musicians] I have the
honor to belong myself.”¹¹ They remained unpublished during his lifetime, and it was not until nearly a century after his death that they were rediscovered and published. The difficulty of the parts, and notably the range of the soprano part, in La Passaggiata is evidence that Rossini composed these pieces for rather accomplished soloists, not for an average choir (see Example 1.1). The work also requires a rather accomplished pianist, despite Rossini’s self-deprecating claim. These are definitely factors to consider for those conductors wanting to perform this work with their choirs.

Example 1.1. *La Passaggiata* by Gioachino Rossini, last three measures of vocal parts

Johannes Brahms’s vocal chamber works include two sets of vocal quartets with piano four hands, the *Liebeslieder Walzer* (Love Song Waltzes) and the *Neue Liebeslieder Walzer* (New Love Song Waltzes). Written about five years apart, they both used translations of traditional love poems from various countries and cultures. These
texts were collected and translated into German by Georg Friedrich Daumer and were published in two volumes titled *Polydora* some fourteen years before Brahms began to set them to music. Brahms wrote many other cyclical sets for vocal chamber ensemble and even for choir. The latter will be explored in further detail below.

Jules Massanet, like Rossini, is most remembered for his operas, of which he wrote 25. His best-known operas are *Manon* and *Thaïs*. However, he also wrote several sets of vocal chamber music, including the set *Chansons des bois d’Amaranthe* (Songs from the Amaranth Woods) with texts by Marc Legrand. This set of five songs includes two quartets, two trios, and a duet. Massanet’s other cyclical chamber vocal works include *Poèmes de fleur* (Flower Poems) for women’s voices and piano, and *La vision de Loti* (The Vision of Loti) for soprano, alto, tenor, and baritone quartet with piano.

Vocal chamber works like these, with their various unifying characteristics, paralleled the song cycle in many ways. As such, they were closely related predecessors of the twentieth-century secular choral cycle.

**Sacred Cyclical Choral Works of the Romantic Era**

Sacred choral works in the nineteenth century often used genre names of previous eras, such as cantatas, oratorios, or motets. There were, however, some sacred pieces written that are not thus designated that seem to fit the criteria for choral cycles. These are pieces on a single theme with non-biblical, poetic texts, written for choir or choir with soloists. While these might also fit what we think of as a cantata, they were not thus designated by their composers or publishers. Two examples of this type of cyclic choral piece are *Via Crucis, les 14 stations de la croix* (The Way of the Cross; the 14 Stations of
the Cross) by Franz Liszt (1811-1886) and *Sechs geistliche Lieder* (Six Spiritual Songs) by Hugo Wolf (1860-1903).

Liszt’s *Via Crucis, les 14 stations de la croix* used poems, rather than liturgical texts, written by P. Gerhardt and J. Rist, and was composed between 1876 and 1879.\(^{12}\) It is in a 1936 edition of Liszt’s complete works that this set and others are referred to by editor Philipp Wolfrum as *zyklisches Chorgesänge* (cyclical choral songs).\(^{13}\) While the volume that includes this piece bears the copyright date of 1936, the project was begun in 1907; and because Wolfrum died in 1919, it is likely that this is the first documented usage of an approximation of the term “choral cycle,” even if Liszt did not employ the designation himself. Other works included in this volume include *Septem sacramentum* (The Seven Sacraments) and the canticle *Te Deum laudamus*, both of which are liturgical and, as such, do not fit the criteria for choral cycles.

For his *Sechs geistliche Lieder*, Hugo Wolf used poems by Joseph Eichendorff, a favorite among German Romantic composers. He composed these pieces in 1881, at about the time when his fiancée wrote him to break off their engagement. Because of this, the longing and loss evident in the musical settings of these religious texts may well have

\[\text{References:}\]


been of a more earthly nature.\textsuperscript{14} One of the pieces, “Ergebung,” was sung at Wolf’s own funeral some 22 years later. In the \textit{New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians} article on Hugo Wolf, musicologists Eric Sams and Susan Youens refer to the set as a “choral cycle,” presumably because they were written with the intent of being performed together as a set, and because they contain texts written by a single poet.\textsuperscript{15} The designation of “choral cycle,” however, was not used while the composer was alive, either by himself or by his publisher.

\textbf{Secular Cyclical Choral Works of the Romantic Era}

In the Romantic era, some of the same composers who are well known for their song cycles composed cyclical choral works as well. Franz Schubert’s \textit{The Lady in the Lake} is something of a hybrid, as it includes both solo songs (including the sublime “Ave Maria”) and choral songs.

Robert Schumann has already been mentioned as a composer of song cycles. His choral music is not as frequently performed as that of Schubert or Brahms, but it is beautiful and lyric. He wrote many choral sets that seem to have a cyclical function. He wrote four sets of \textit{Romanzen und Balladen} for mixed voices, but these do not seem to be connected by a common poet, subject, or story line. His \textit{Fünf Lieder} (Five Songs), Opus 55, are less descriptively titled, but have a stronger cyclic connection, as the texts are all

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
\end{flushleft}
by the same poet, Robert Burns. His *Fünf Gesänge aus H. Laubes Jagdbrevier* (Five Songs from H. Laube’s Hunting Breviary), for men’s voices with four horns, have an even clearer case of cyclicality, as all of the texts are by the same poet, Heinrich Laube, and they are all about the same subject, hunting.

Johannes Brahms’s quartets were mentioned previously, particularly because full choirs have often used them since Brahms’s time. He also wrote a number of cyclical sets of songs intended for choir. His *Vier Gesänge* (Four Songs) of 1860 was written for women’s choir, harp, and two horns, and is described as “a cycle of Romantic tone sketches” by musicologists George S. Bozarth and Walter Frisch.16 Also for women’s voices is the set *Zwölf Lieder und Romanzen* (Twelve Songs and Romances), with piano ad libitum, which are tied together stylistically, as Brahms evoked a folk style in his text choice and strophic settings, but added his own unique compositional touches. He used a similar format for mixed choir with his *Sieben Lieder* (Seven Songs), written in 1873-4; that is, the songs are related by Brahms’s use of texts with roots in folk music and from traditional legends. His last set of secular choruses is the *Fünf Gesänge* (Five Songs) for mixed voices written between 1886-88. These are related in overall tone, expressing Brahms’s sadness and loneliness in the late autumn of his life. Other than grouping these songs into sets, there is nothing overt to show that Brahms intended them to be sung together as a set, but in each of the examples the unifying qualities mentioned above lead me to view them all as choral cycles.

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Franz Liszt, mentioned earlier for his sacred cyclical choral works, also produced at least one secular choral cycle, *Les quatre élémens* (The Four Elements). This piece was composed in versions for men’s voices and piano, piano four-hands, or two pianos in 1844-5, and was orchestrated before 1848. The cycle is made up of four movements: “La terre,” “Les aquilons,” “Les flots,” and “Les astres,” (“The Earth,” “The Wind,” “The Floods,” and “The Stars”), on texts by the French poet Joseph Autran. The justification for calling this work a choral cycle lies in the unified subject matter, that is, the four elements from Greek antiquity, and the single poet responsible for the lyrics to all of the movements. The various arrangements of the accompaniment imply that the cycle was performed on several different occasions, but it remained unpublished during Liszt’s lifetime.

Antonín Dvořák’s extended choral works include oratorios and secular cantatas, as well as several sets of unaccompanied choral works that might be considered either collections or cycles. His *Four Choruses, Five Partsongs*, and a set of three songs titled merely *Choral Songs* are all written for unaccompanied men’s voices, many with texts by Czech poet Adolf Heyduk. A stronger case of cyclicality can be made for *Bouquet of Czech Folksongs* and *From a Bouquet of Slavonic Folksongs*. Both of these are also written for men’s voices, with the latter including piano accompaniment. Probably best known is his set for unaccompanied mixed voices, *Songs of Nature* (or *In Nature’s Realm*). This set fulfills two criteria for being a choral cycle: The five songs are all about the same general subject, that is, nature; and the song texts are all by the same poet, Viteslav Hálek.
The Choral Cycle in the Twentieth Century

In the twentieth century the choral cycle became recognized as a genre. Each of the thirty composers listed in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* as creators of secular choral cycles worked in the twentieth century, and some of them continue to compose into the twenty-first. Some of the early examples cited have fallen into obscurity, but the most significant cycles, most of which were composed in the second half of the century, are still regularly performed and enjoyed by choirs and audiences worldwide.

Early Twentieth-Century American Cycles

The precise use of the term “choral cycle” to describe a group of interrelated choral compositions appears to have begun in the United States in the early part of the twentieth century. Among these early examples are:

- *Old Plantation Days: Choral Cycle for Mixed Voices; Soprano and Alto Soli (Tenor solo ad lib.*)* by N. Clifford Page, published in 1918 by C. C. Birchard

- *A Rococo Romance: A Choral Cycle of Four Poems for Women’s Voices, Solo Soprano and Orchestra (or Piano)*, by A. Walter Kramer, published in 1924 by C. C. Birchard


While each of these scores is available in at least one American library, the composers are obscure and little-known today; only Kramer is profiled in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, while *The New Grove Dictionary of American Music* includes brief articles about both Kramer and Bornschein. In addition to these examples, the idea of a choral cycle, if not in those exact words, crept into reviews of music in periodical journals. Will Earhart provided an early example while reviewing Gena Branscombe’s *Youth of the World* (described as a “cycle of songs for a chorus of women’s voices,”)\(^\text{17}\) and of Charles Wakefield Cadman’s *Indian Love-Charm*, (commenting that “[i]n form it is a choral cycle or narrative cantata”).\(^\text{18}\) Both Branscombe and Cadman were profiled in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* and *The New Grove Dictionary of American Music*; the articles about Cadman are more comprehensive. In Earhart’s review of the Branscombe work, he merely paraphrased the subtitle of the work; in his review of the Cadman work, however, he drew his own conclusion about it being a choral cycle, without relying on any reference to what the composer called it.


Twentieth-Century European Cycles

The use of a consistent nomenclature for choral cycles in the various European languages was also slow to evolve, and to a large extent has not paralleled the usage in English. Even in Great Britain the usage of the term is less common than in the United States. There are, however, many examples of pieces that clearly fit the criteria, as defined above, for being a choral cycle.

Claude Debussy and Maurice Ravel both wrote cycles of three unaccompanied songs for mixed voices. Debussy’s, titled *Trois Chansons de Charles d’Orléans* (Three Songs of Charles of Orleans), set texts by the fifteenth-century French poet Charles d’Orleans. They are: “Dieu! Qu’il la fait bon regarder” (“God! She is good to look at”), “Quand j’ai ouy le tabourin” (“When I hear the tambourine”), and “Yver, vous n’estes qu’un villain” (“Winter, you are nothing but a villain”). Debussy composed these on the cusp of the twentieth century, in 1898, and they bear his impressionistic stamp. Ravel named his set more simply as *Trois Chansons* (Three Songs). Written during World War I, in 1914 and 1915, the set stylistically evokes something of the Renaissance, when the French chanson was in its full flower. It consists of “Nicolette,” “Trois beaux oiseaux du paradis” (“Three beautiful birds of paradise”), and “Ronde.” Both of these cycles have become standard repertoire for choirs in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

English composer Edward Elgar, straddling the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, composed a vast array of music in various genres. Among them are cyclical choral works that, despite not being identified as choral cycles, clearly fit the criteria for choral cycles as established earlier in this document. Elgar composed *From The Bavarian*
Highlands in 1896 to texts that are “imitated from Bavarian Volkslieder [folk songs] and Schnadahüpfler” by his wife, C. Alice Elgar.\(^1\) (A schnadahüpler is a particular kind of dance-song of southern Bavaria.) They were characterized simply as “Six Songs,” and published all within one cover; they have a common lyricist, similar subject matter, and the similar overall tone of Bavarian folk music. The set was composed for SATB voices, with some divisi, with orchestra or piano accompaniment.

Elgar’s *Five Partsongs from the Greek Anthology*, written in 1902 for four-part men’s voices, is another cyclical set, having texts from a similar source. A much larger work, *The Spirit of England*, was composed during World War One, and is subtitled “Three Poems by Laurence Binyon.” The three poems, which became the three separate movements of the work, are “The Fourth of August,” “To Women,” and “For The Fallen.” After the war had ended, Elgar reworked the final movement, and renamed it “With Proud Thanksgiving.” This was the last major choral/orchestral work that Elgar composed. Other sets of songs by Elgar seem to have less cyclical intent. The *Four Choral Songs* of 1907-8 share a common opus number (Op. 53), but the texts are by four different poets on four divergent subjects. His Opus 18 and Opus 26 sets do not have a title for the set; only the individual songs are named, giving no indication that they should be performed as a set or that they are otherwise correlated.

English-born composer Frederick Delius also contributed cyclical choral works. He composed two dyad cycles, *Two Songs for Children*, composed in 1913 for unison

\(^{19}\) Edward Elgar, *Scenes from the Bavarian Highlands* (London: Joseph Williams, 1901).
and two-part treble voices and piano, and *Two Songs to be Sung of a Summer Night on the Water* composed in 1917 for SATTBB unaccompanied chorus. The *Two Songs for Children* were set in simple folk style. The first song, “Little Birdie,” is a poem of two stanzas by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, composed strophically for unison voices. The second song, “The Streamlet’s Slumber Song,” uses for its text another two-stanza poem, this by May Morgan. This is also set strophically, this time for two-part voices (designated Voice I and Voice II). By contrast, the second cycle features wordless singing with a more complex harmonic palette, and the second song of the set includes a tenor solo over a choral accompaniment throughout the entirety of the song. An earlier, smaller-scale work, more likely to be categorized as a collection than a cycle, is Delius’s *Six Partsongs*, composed between 1885 and 1891.

On a larger scale, Delius contributed *Songs of Farewell*, a cycle containing six songs, all with texts by Walt Whitman from the poet’s collection *Leaves of Grass*. This piece was composed between 1920 and 1930. The title page of the vocal score calls it a “Choral Work for Double Chorus and Orchestra.” The choral writing, however, is not double-chorus style (i.e., antiphonal), but is homophonic *divisi* writing. Even the *divisi* is reduced to four or six parts for certain sections of the work. Other large-scale cyclical choral works with orchestra works include *Songs of Sunset* from 1906-7, and his “American” choral works,²⁰ *Appalachia* and *Sea Drift*, composed in 1902-3 and 1903-4, respectively. Delius did not use the term “choral cycle” in descriptions or titles of any of

²⁰. This is the title found on the published score containing both of these works: Frederick Delius. “*American*” *Choral Works."
his works; their inclusion for discussion here is because they clearly fit in the category, despite the fact that the terminology was not yet in common use.

Béla Bartók was one of the most influential composers of the twentieth century. Originally from Hungary, he spent the latter part of his life in the United States. His *Four Slovak Folksongs* and *Four Hungarian Folksongs* are often performed by college and professional mixed choirs. These sets are grouped together under one cover, indicating the intent to have them performed as a unit, and each has a common text source. These factors place them in the category of choral cycles. He also set four groups of songs for men’s voices, each set containing several songs all under the same cover, and all of a single ethnic character. Two of the sets are traditional Hungarian songs, one is Slovak, and one is Székely, an ethnic sub-group of Hungary and Romania. Bartók also set a group of Slovak folk songs for women’s voices, titled *Falun (Tri dedinskéscény)* [Three Village Scenes]. Perhaps Bartók’s greatest influence on subsequent choral composers was his use of folk material in these unified sets of songs as well as in individual songs. Many noteworthy composers, including several mentioned below, have chosen to use folk material not only in choral cycles, but in other genres in the way that Bartók pioneered.

Michael Head (1900-1976) was an English composer mainly known for his vocal and choral works. His *Snow Birds*, of 1956, is a seven-movement cycle with piano accompaniment, and includes solos with the chorus. The published subtitle is “Seven Songs for Baritone (or Mezzo) Solo with Ladies’ Choir.” All seven movements utilize the choir, though the composer suggests that numbers 1, 4, and 6 may be performed by soloist alone. Numbers 2, 3, and 5 have no solo parts. The texts are all poems by Ananda
Acharya, an Indian swami, who wrote poetry in English. Head also penned *Five Finnish Christmas Songs* for mixed chorus and orchestra in 1972.

The Swiss composer Frank Martin (1890-1974) was comfortable with composing vocal music of all kinds. He wrote operas, oratorios, cantatas, a Mass, and a Requiem, as well as shorter works both sacred and secular. His *Songs of Ariel: Five Choruses from Shakespeare’s “The Tempest”* is published as a choral cycle for unaccompanied mixed chorus, dividing into as many as sixteen vocal parts at times. Written in 1950, this set predates his opera *Der Sturm (The Tempest)*, which is also based on the Shakespeare play. The five movements in the cycle are “Come Unto the Yellow Sands,” “Full Fathom Five,” “Before You Can Say ‘Come and Go’,” “You Are Three Men of Sin,” and “Where the Bee Sucks.” The compositional techniques vary considerably from song to song; some are homophonic, others polyphonic; some are tonal, while others are atonal. While they are published together as a set, and with the obvious relation of the texts, there is, however, no specifically musical continuity connecting the individual movements.

Matyas Seiber (1905-1960) was Hungarian by birth, but spent most of his career in England. His choral cycles include *Six Yugoslav Folksongs* for mixed chorus, *Soldiers’ Songs* for male chorus, and *Two Madrigals*, a dyad cycle for mixed chorus with texts by Christian Morgenstern. His best-known choral work, however, is *Three Hungarian Folksongs* for unaccompanied mixed chorus, composed in 1931. The three songs are most often published under one cover, and are performed at alternating tempos of fast, slow, and fast. The songs, in the English-language translation by A. L. Lloyd, are “The Handsome Butcher,” “Apple, Apple,” and “The Old Woman.”
Ernst Pepping (1901-1981) was a German composer who spent most of his career in Berlin. He took the choral cycle idea a step further when he composed a series of six choral cycles collectively titled *Der Wagen: Liederkreis für gemischten chor a cappella nach Gedichten von Jos. Weinheber aus “O Mensch, gibacht”* (The Wagon: Song set for mixed choir unaccompanied from the poetry of Josef Weinheber from “O Men, Hearken”). Published in 1942 under separate covers, they are:

I. *Bauerngarten*
   1. “Bauerngarten”
   2. “Marterl”
   3. “Stiefelknecht und Wetterhahn”

II. *Das Licht*
   1. “Unbetung des Kindes”
   2. “Lichtmess”
   3. “Das Licht”

III. *Der Herd*
   1. “Hausspruch”
   2. “Der Herd”
   3. “Das Dach”

IV. *Jahraus – jahrein*
   1. “Jahraus – jahrein”
   2. “Sankt Laurentius”
   3. “Der Wagen”

V. *Im Weinland*  
(subtitles of individual movements not available)

VI. *Herr Walther von der Vogelweide*  
(subtitles of individual movements not available).

In addition, he composed another *Liederkreis[en] für Chor* (“song set[s] for choir”), *Heut und ewig*, on texts by Goethe. This, like *Der Wagen*, is a set of cycles within a cycle, composed for unaccompanied mixed choir. It begins with *Proömion* (Prologue), which is the only section not divided into shorter subsections. That is followed by:

I. *Gefunden*
   1. “Versus memoriales”
   2. “Gefunden”
3. “Mit Mädeln sich vertragen”
4. “Selbstbetrog”
5. “Herbstgefühl”

II. Kläffer
1. “Heut und ewig”
2. “Beruf des Storches”
3. “Anakreons Grab”
4. “Kläffer”
5. “Die Nachtigall”

III. Hymnen
1. “Prometheus”
2. “Ganymede”
3. “Lied der Parzen”
4. “Grenzen der Menschheit”

IV. Venezianische Epigramme
1. “Kaum an dem blauen Himmel”
2. “Immer halt ich die Liebste”
3. “Feierlich sehn wir”
4. “Warum leckst du dein Mäulchen”
5. “Emsig wallet der Pilger”
6. “Warum reibt sich das Volk so”
7. “Diese Gondel”

V. Paradiesisches
1. “Vorschmack”
2. “Einlaß”
3. “Anklang”
4. “Begünstige Tiere”
5. “Höheres und Höchstes”

One subtle but notable characteristic is Pepping’s consistent use of the term Liederkreis (song set) as opposed to Liederzyklus (song cycle) in his naming of these pieces. The single poet and unity of subject matter in both of these sets is what identifies them as choral cycles. They are, however, unusual in the genre because they both contain several smaller cycles within a larger cycle.

Though he wrote a wealth of instrumental music, French composer Francis Poulenc is probably best known for his vocal and choral music. Among his choral works are three cyclical sets of secular songs for mixed chorus, the Sept Chansons (Seven}
Songs) of 1936, *Figure Humaine* (Human Figure) of 1943, and *Chansons Française* (French Songs) of 1945-6. When he began composing the first of these, in 1936, it had been fourteen years since he had written for choir, and the impetus for this return to choral music seems to have been a study of Monteverdi’s motets in composition classes with Nadia Boulanger. This prompted Poulenc to write many more choral works both in secular and sacred genres. The *Sept Chansons* are settings of poems by two of Poulenc’s favorite poets, Guillaume Apollinaire and Paul Eluard, whose texts he had frequently set in solo songs and song cycles. In this way they may be construed as being grouped together in the manner of a cycle; it could be argued, however, that they were grouped together as a collection, without necessarily carrying the intention of having them performed together. The evidence of the cyclical nature of the two later sets is stronger.

In the dark days of World War Two, as France was occupied by Nazi forces, Poulenc chose several of Eluard’s underground patriotic poems to set in the monumental *Figure Humaine*. Although Poulenc referred to this piece as a cantata, the lack of solos and the poetic text make it qualify as a choral cycle. In the cycle *Chansons Françaises*, composed in 1945 and 1946, Poulenc glorified the French folk song with his eight settings contained therein.

Paul Hindemith (1895-1963) was the most important German composer and theorist in the years between the two World Wars. His popular *Six Chansons* for unaccompanied mixed chorus, settings of French poetry by the multi-lingual poet Rainer

Maria Rilke, were published in 1939. With the exception of the extremely short and quick “Puisque tout passe” (Since All Is Passing), all have nature as a common theme. In addition to this set, he composed Lieder nach alten Texten (Songs on Old Texts) in 1923, and revised them in translated form in 1937-8. Other than the fact that the texts are all old, there is little to tie these together except for the composer’s own grouping of them. The same is true of his Five Choruses for male voices of 1930 and his Three Choruses for male voices of 1939: Both the text sources and the subject matter vary. His Chorlieder für Knaben (Choral Songs for Boys) from 1930 and his Twelve Madrigals from 1958, however, are more clearly choral cycles because they each have a single poet; the former texts were supplied by Karl Schnog, the latter by Josef Weinheber.

Benjamin Britten composed his cycle Five Flower Songs in 1950, and it was premiered on a BBC radio broadcast in 1951. The texts, written by one anonymous and three known English poets, are all ostensibly about flowers. While the other four are lovely, the most playful of the individual songs is “The Ballad of Green Broom.” Its text is assumed to be several centuries old, though the name of the poet is unknown. In this ballad, the protagonist is the son of a merchant who collected and sold the yellow flowers of the green broom plant. The song, however, is not so much about the flowers as it is about the young man’s amorous adventures resulting in his marriage to an older woman in “full bloom.” The tongue-in-cheek retelling of this story, with its rhythmic anomalies punctuating the humor, shows the playful side of Benjamin Britten, a composer who seemed to change his style and compositional vocabulary with each new piece that he wrote. Other choral cycles by Britten include Friday Afternoons, a cycle of twelve
children’s songs, a majority of which set anonymous texts, written for children’s voices and piano; and *Sacred and Profane*, a cycle of eight medieval lyrics for five-part choir.

Since the 1970s, Englishman John Rutter’s music has been popular in choral circles, with its extended tonality, rhythmic excitement, and memorable melodies. His best-known pieces are his extended works in sacred genres, such as his *Gloria*, *Requiem*, *Magnificat*, and *Mass for the Children*. He has also composed several choral cycles: *Fancies, When Icicles Hang,* and *Birthday Madrigals* are on texts by Shakespeare, Campion, and other English poets of the Golden Age. Also in the choral cycle genre are his *Five Childhood Lyrics* and his folksong arrangements in *A Sprig of Thyme*.

In more recent decades, the political changes in the former Soviet Union have allowed American choirs greater access to the works of, among others, Estonian composer Veljo Tormis. Tormis has written an extraordinarily large number of choral cycles, some of which, like Pepping’s *liederkreisen*, are sets of cycles. An example of this is Tormis’s *Estonian Calendar Songs*, which are a group of five separate choral cycles. In all, he has composed or arranged 39 choral cycles, some for unusual or extensive groupings of voices.22 For example, his *Lauludlaulustjalaulikust*, or “Songs about Song and the Singer” was composed in 1966–71, and is scored for soprano solo, two alto solos, and eight-part women’s chorus. Many of his cycles have twelve voice parts, and 1981’s *Mõtisklusi Hando Runneliga*, translated as “Reflections,” is scored for 13 voice parts, arranged in a double choir, one SSSAATB, and the other TTTBBB. He

retired from composing in 2000 at the age of 70, having composed and arranged more than 500 choral songs.

Virtually unknown outside of his native Bulgaria, Todor Popov’s (1921-2000) choral cycles were the subject of more recent study.\(^{23}\) Considered a master of melodic writing, Popov wrote two choral cycles, *Sofia* for unaccompanied mixed voices, and *Autumn Motifs* for unaccompanied treble voices. Each of the cycles consists of five movements. For *Sofia*, named for Bulgaria’s capital and largest city, Popov set texts by three different poets. The five movements, however, have common subject matter and a similar impressionistic poetic style. The texts in *Autumn Motifs* are all by the same poet, Peyo Yavarov, and are also impressionistic in style.

Later Twentieth-Century American Cycles

Randall Thompson was a New England composer who produced works in many different genres, but his most performed works are his choral settings. Much loved by choral musicians is his 1959 choral cycle *Frostiana*, seven settings of poems by another twentieth-century New Englander, the four-time Pulitzer Prize winning poet, Robert Frost. These settings alternate between mixed chorus, women’s chorus, and men’s chorus. Like most of Thompson’s choral works, they are harmonically conservative. The individual pieces from this set that are most often performed are the thoughtful “The Road Not Taken” and the lovely “Choose Something Like a Star.” Other choral cycles in

Thompson’s rather long compositional career are the *Odes of Horace* for men’s voices, written in 1924; *The Testament of Freedom*, written in the middle of World War Two in 1943; and *A Concord Cantata*, written in 1975, which, despite the title, is a choral cycle because of the lack of separate solo movements.

American composer William Schuman dropped out of business school in 1930 to study music at Malkin Conservatory in Boston, and shortly afterward began private composition studies with Roy Harris. In his long career, he wrote two operas, ten symphonies, and a great deal of chamber music. He also wrote four choral cycles: *Four Canonic Choruses*, with texts by four different English and American poets; *Carols of Death and Perceptions*, both on texts by Walt Whitman; and *Mail Order Madrigals*, with texts from the 1897 Sears Roebuck catalogue.

Samuel Barber was a composer who reached maturity between the two World Wars, but unlike so many composers of the time, he avoided experimental styles of composing, preferring to write “expressive, lyrical music... [in the] tonal language of the nineteenth century.” Barber’s trilogy *Reincarnations* is worth mention because it is so often performed and has been so influential on subsequent composers. Composed from 1937 to 1940 on texts by Irish poet James Stephens, it includes the playful “Mary Hynes,” a mournful “Anthony O’Daly,” and the tender “The Coolin.”

Another American composer, Ned Rorem, composed cyclical secular choral works, but as with many other composers, he often does not refer to them with the title

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choral cycle. His *Poet’s Requiem* of 1955 used the name of a sacred genre in its title, but consists of settings of non-sacred texts. Rorem’s *Whitman Cantata* of 1983, despite the title, is more of a choral cycle than a cantata because it contains several different poems and has no solo movements. His *In Time of Pestilence*, written in 1974, along with *Five Armenian Love Songs* and *Three Poems of Baudelaire*, both of 1987, are less problematic in categorization, though the composer did not specifically designate any as choral cycles. *In Time of Pestilence* is subtitled “Six Madrigals on Verses of Thomas Nashe.” Each of the six stanzas of the English Renaissance poet Nashe’s poem ends with a “Kyrie” of sorts, “Lord have mercy on us!” Though Rorem does not reuse specific motives, his consistent use of madrigal-like styles such as imitation and melisma, along with the text of a single poet, tie these six pieces together.

Alice Parker, so long known by her association with Robert Shaw and the Robert Shaw Chorale as both an arranger and composer, has composed several choral cycles. One of these is *Songstream*, for mixed voices and either one or two pianos; another is *An Exaltation of Birds*, for mixed choir with optional children’s choir. She uses texts from American poets as well as drawing on folk traditions of American Indians, African Americans, and traditional Hebrew texts. Her original compositions and arrangements use a wide variety of voicings and instrumental accompaniments.

*Les Chansons des Roses* (The Songs of the Roses) is a representative work from a west-coast American composer, Morten Lauridsen. The cycle uses lyrics from Rainer Maria Rilke, an Austrian poet known for writing in both German and French languages. The fifth and final song of this cycle, “Dirait-on,” is the only one of the set that is accompanied, and is often performed alone. Starting simply and unfolding tenderly, this
piece is composed in a verse/refrain form in which the composer uses different imitative and canonic devices to give fresh restatements of the increasingly familiar refrain.

Further, Lauridsen utilizes in it a lush harmonic language that is the hallmark of his many choral works. While this cycle is his best known, he has also written other choral cycles, including *Four Madrigals on Renaissance Texts* (which Lauridsen considers a student work), 25 *Mid-Winter Songs* on texts by Robert Graves, and *Madrigali: Six “Firesongs” on Italian Renaissance Poems*.

Emma Lou Diemer made her mark in the early 1960s with the often-performed cycle *Three Madrigals* for choir with piano accompaniment on texts by William Shakespeare. More recently, and in a similar mold, she has contributed four additional sets of madrigals for mixed choir and piano, as well as settings of groups of poems by Ogden Nash for men’s choir, by Emily Dickinson for women’s choir, by Oscar Wilde and Edgar Allen Poe for mixed choir, and *Eleven Limericks* by Edward Lear for women’s voices.

Vermont composer Gwyneth Walker used jazz idioms and aleatoric techniques in her cycle for mixed choir, *Harlem Songs*. Examples of these can be found in the middle song of this trilogy, the evocative “Harlem Night Song,” in which the choir aurally presents various scenes from a Harlem neighborhood, including passing by a nightclub where jazz is being played, and hearing lovers calling to each other across an alley. Other choral cycles she has composed are *A Heart In Hiding*, on texts by Emily Dickinson; the

seven-part An Hour To Dance; Love — By the Water using traditional texts; Three Days
By the Sea; Dreams and Dances; New Millenium Suite; River Songs; To An Isle In the
Water; and a set of arrangements of traditional American folksongs, American Ballads.
All of these are for mixed voices. In addition, she has composed choral cycles for
women’s voices, including My Girls, The Spirit of Women, and Songs for Women’s
Voices.

Dominick Argento is a first-generation American composer, born to Sicilian
immigrant parents. His composition training began at the Peabody Conservatory in
Baltimore, where he studied with Nicholas Nabokov, Henry Cowell, and Hugo Weisgall.
A Fulbright Scholarship allowed him to study in Florence, Italy, with Luigi Dallapiccola,
and when he continued his schooling in the doctoral program at Eastman School of
Music, he studied with Alan Hovhaness, Bernard Rogers, and Howard Hanson. This
“Who’s Who” list of his teachers, ironically, had little direct influence on the
development of choral cycles, but through him their influence is still felt. Argento has
spent most of his career in Minnesota, much of that time as a faculty member at the
University of Minnesota. His choral cycles include two works that he referred to by other
genre names; his A Nation of Cowslips he called bagatelles, and his Peter Quince at the
Clavier he called a sonatina. His other choral cycles include I Hate and I Love, Walden
Pond, and two cycles composed for two of the premiere collegiate men’s glee clubs in
this country: Dover Beach was composed for the Yale Glee Club, and Apollo in
Cambridge was composed for the Harvard Glee Club. In 2009 his cycle Cenotaph was
premiered at the American Choral Directors’ Association National Convention in
Oklahoma City.
James Quitman Mulholland, an Indianapolis composer and professor at Butler University, is one of the most published of American composers in the early twenty-first century. The songs in his 1980 cycle *Four Robert Burns Ballads* have become standards in the choral repertoire, especially “A Red, Red Rose.” His love of the poetry of the British Isles is evident in this setting and the more recent *More Burns Ballads* and *A Shropshire Lad*. He has further added several trilogies of a cyclical nature to choral literature with *Three Love Songs*, *Three 17th-Century English Lyrics*, *Three Scottish Songs*, and *Three Anonymous Irish Love Songs*.

**Summary: Reasons That Choral Cycles Have Become So Numerous**

Within the past century, composers of choral music have chosen to write extended works in the choral cycle genre with greater frequency. Though historical examples of cyclical choral works have existed for several centuries, it is only within the last century that a large number of this type of composition have been identified as choral cycles, both by musicologists and by composers themselves. This categorization most closely follows the pattern of the song cycle. These typically have a single poet, or a single subject, or a unifying theme of some kind. The obvious difference is that song cycles are composed for solo voice, while choral cycles are composed for choir. Choral cycles also bear certain similarities with cantatas, but while cantatas often have solo movements, choral cycles typically do not. Moreover, choral cycles typically use several poems for their texts, compared to cantatas, which typically employ a single text divided into sections.

The reason for studying choral cycles is not to limit their use and influence by pigeonholing them. On the contrary, the reason to study existing or emerging genres such
as the choral cycle is to provide understanding of what they are and why they exist. Singers and conductors that strive to reflect the composer’s intent in their performances will try to find out as much as possible about a piece or group of pieces in order to provide authentic performances, finding in the music what the composer intended to be found. In this way, scholars of the mid-nineteenth century identified and codified solo song cycles.

As for the reasons that composers have written so many more choral cycles in recent years, one reason must surely be an increased demand for major choral works with significant, meaningful texts that are secular rather than sacred. If a composer wants a meaningful text that is not sacred in nature, the best poets’ works will be gleaned. These texts will sometimes suggest an overarching form, whether they are poems on the same subject or by the same poet. When put together, they become a “major work,” which is something many composers aspire to create. Anecdotally, organizations that commission major works are also responsible for urging composers to write choral cycles. This compositional ambition is a benefit to the growing number of professional or semi-professional choirs, for whom performing newly composed, or at least twentieth-century, music is a priority. It really is not substantially different than the development of the symphony; some composers will choose to compose what performers want to perform and what audiences want to hear. Composers, performers, and audiences have benefitted from this evolution of the choral cycle as a genre capable of providing meaningful and rewarding musical experiences.
Introduction to Analytical Chapters

The specific choral cycles chosen for in-depth analysis represent just four different approaches among the many possible permutations that composers may employ when writing in this genre. The analyses will be presented in chronological order, based on the year that each was composed. All four were written for mixed-voice choir, though in some cases other voicings are available. Irving Fine wrote *The Hour-Glass* cycle for unaccompanied choir, which is often divisi, and often employs soloists. *American Madrigals*, by Kirke Mechem, was written for chorus with piano accompaniment, though it is also available with a small instrumental ensemble as accompaniment; in it the composer incorporated original melodies along with adapted folk melodies. Stephen Paulus’s *Voices*, with nine movements and full orchestra, is the largest scale work represented, and, as such, represents an extreme end of the choral cycle spectrum. Finally, Eric Whitacre composed *Five Hebrew Love Songs* with a string quartet for accompaniment, though the piano and violin solo version also works well. Because of its shorter length and less technically demanding vocal parts, it is probably the most accessible of the four.

In providing detailed analyses of these works, I will analyze each movement in the sub-categories of text, melody, harmony, rhythm, form, and texture. These specifics should be useful to conductors who are preparing any of these works for performance, or to anyone who wants an in-depth analysis of these pieces as representative works in the increasingly popular genre of the choral cycle. In addition, based on my analysis, I will offer interpretive and practical suggestions that conductors may choose to employ.
To facilitate analysis of the text, in all cases where the composer has changed a word or phrase from the original poetry, the composer’s choice is in Italics, and the original text is enclosed in [brackets]. Archaic spellings not used by the composer are also marked with brackets. Oftentimes the composer repeated a word or a phrase in one or more voices; this will not be reflected in the texts below.

The following system will be used for identifying specific pitches: Middle C will be C4, the B one half step below C4 will be B3, and so forth. Identifying specific beats within a measure will be after the decimal point; fractions of the beat will be shown as fractions; for example, measure ten, beat four, on the second half of the beat, will be indicated as m. 10.4½.
Chapter 2: *The Hour-Glass* by Irving Fine

Brief Biographical Sketch and Introduction to the Cycle

Irving Fine (1914-1962) was an American composer, conductor, and teacher. He studied composition at Harvard with Walter Piston and in Paris with Nadia Boulanger, and also studied conducting with Serge Koussevitsky. Fine taught at Harvard from 1939 until 1950, and from then until his death taught at Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts. He also served on the composition staff of the Berkshire Music Center from 1946 to 1957.

Fine’s relatively short life featured an active compositional period of about twenty years, from 1942 to 1962. He composed in many genres, tending to favor chamber music for strings or woodwinds. His choral output includes two choral cycles on texts by Lewis Carroll, *Three Choruses from Alice in Wonderland (First Series)*, which includes “The Lobster Quadrille,” “Lullaby of The Duchess,” and “Father William;” and *Three Choruses from Alice in Wonderland (Second Series)*, which includes “The Knave’s Letter,” “The White Knight’s Song,” and “Beautiful Soup.” The first series was composed in 1942 for mixed voices and piano, the second in 1953 for treble voices and piano. Also notable within his choral works are choral arrangements of Aaron Copland’s *Old American Songs*. 
Fine composed *The Hour-Glass*, which he referred to as a song cycle, in 1949. It contains six settings of poems by Elizabethan poet Ben Jonson (1573-1637). All of the songs are ostensibly about love, though some are cynically and decidedly opposed to it. The songs are published by Boosey and Hawkes as separate octavos; each is unaccompanied, with textural diversity achieved through the use of soli and divisi. A separate staff is given for each voice part (SATB); a piano reduction of the voice parts is included to aid in rehearsal. The musical examples used in this analysis, however, have been reduced to save space. The entire set lasts about fifteen minutes, with no individual song longer than about three minutes. While the use of texts all by the same poet unifies the cycle, the mood among the individual pieces diverges widely. It is, in turns, sly and wistful, as in “O Know to End as to Begin” and “O Do Not Wanton with Those Eyes;” tender, as in “Have You Seen the White Lily Grow” and “Lament;” angry and self-deprecating in “Against Jealousy;” and contemplative in “The Hour-Glass.”

The performing forces used in *The Hour-Glass* maintain a certain consistency, being primarily SATB unaccompanied voices. “O Know to End as to Begin” has significant *divisi* to eight parts, as well as soli for soprano 1 and 2, alto 1 and 2, tenor, and baritone. “Have You Seen the White Lily Grow” has some *divisi*. “O Do Not Wanton with Those Eyes” has no *divisi*, but has soli for soprano, mezzo-soprano, and alto. “Against Jealousy” uses some *divisi* as well as a semi-chorus and both soprano and alto soli. “Lament” is undivided SATB, and “The Hour-Glass” uses some *divisi*; neither have any solos.
1. “O Know to End as to Begin”

For the first song of the cycle, Fine employed a fast tempo, and packed a wealth of music into the approximately three minutes’ duration of the piece. It begins with a rhythmic drive that returns throughout the piece, alternating with more lyrical sections. The alternating use of female voices and male voices has no particular narrative reason behind it, nor does the later alternation of soli with tutti voices. These variations, however, add musical and dramatic interest in the sections where they are employed. The whole piece, and especially the ending, has a declarative, emphatic feel that sets up the sharp contrast between it and the subsequent movements, though this will not be evident to the audience until the beginning of the second movement.

Performing forces

Unaccompanied SATB choir with divisi and soli soprano 1 and 2, alto 1 and 2, tenor, and baritone.

Text choice, setting, and analysis

The text of this poem is from the Masque of Hymen. (A masque was a pastiche of drama, dance, and music that predated the development of opera in Europe.) In the original context, it is a song sung by one or more of the musicians, as opposed to any of the named characters in the drama.

1 O know to end, as to begin:
2 A minute’s loss in love is sin
3 [These humors will the night out-wear
4 In their own pastimes here;]
You do our rites much wrong,
In seeking to prolong these outward pleasures:
The night hath other treasures than these,
Though long conceal'd, ere day to be reveal'd.
Then, know to end, as to begin;
A minute's loss in love is sin.
(Also “La la la,” not in original poem)

Hymen was the Greek god of marriage, so the story in which this song appears centers around a wedding ceremony. It occurs near the end of the masque, as the wedding celebration (the “outward pleasures” in line 6) is winding down, and the guests are urged to allow the happy couple to retire to their bedchamber for the “other treasures” (line 7).

The setting of the text is almost entirely syllabic, that is, one syllable per note. Fine did not use lines 3 and 4 from the original poem, as indicated, but repeated other lines as he saw fit, notably the first line. He also added a refrain of sorts using the nonsense syllable “la.”

**Melodic characteristics**

m. 1 disjunct melody in alto 2 of two descending minor sevenths with an ascending minor sixth in between, beginning on Bb4 and ending on Bb3, to the text “O know to end;” this motive is reiterated with the same pitches at m. 5 on the text “as to begin,” and several times in various voices throughout the piece, though with differing intervals

m. 3 alto 1, sopranos 1 & 2 enter, each with their own intervallic motive

mm. 10-16 SSAA move, with some up and down in between, gradually upward to highest pitches of the piece to this point: alto 2 to Bb4, alto 1 & soprano 2 to D5, and soprano 1 to F5

m. 17 bass1 begins a fairly static section on Bb3

m. 19 bass 2 enters a major third below with a two-note motive encompassing a descending half step

m. 22 bass 2 foreshadows an upcoming motive with a shortened version of it: Bb2-Db3-Gb3

m. 27 bass 1 sings this motive, adding the fourth note, on “these outward pleasures” using Bb2-Db3-Gb3-Ab3

m. 28 tenor 1 uses same motive an octave higher on the same text
m. 29  bass 2 and tenor 2 use a variant of this motive on the same text
m. 32  solo alto 1 sings a variant of the opening motive on text “O know to end as
to begin,” built on descending perfect fifths
m. 37  solo soprano 1 sings an inverted variant of the opening motive, and
continues with some rests in between, to sing contrapuntally with the solo
alto 1 over the more accompanimental TTBB parts, until m. 54
mm. 54.2-63  tutti SATBB choir; melody in soprano predominantly perfect fourths and
major sixths
m. 64  tutti Bb3 (TB) and Bb4 (SA); soprano and tenor sustain pitch; alto and
bass release after short note
m. 65  alto and bass sing a variant of the opening motive
mm. 66.3-67  a brief three-note phrase: soprano Bb4-Eb5-Bb4, alto F4-Ab4-F4, tenor
Ab3-Bb3-C4, and bass D3-C3-D3
mm. 68-70  repeat of mm. 65-67, except with simultaneous start
mm. 71-73  three-part imitative counterpoint in SAT, on “la la la…”; bass part, on
text, predominantly descending in a four-measure phrase followed by a
three-measure phrase
mm. 82-87  SSAATTBB divisi; three three-chord phrases; soprano 1 melody the same
all three times: Ab5-F5-Bb4; all other parts move predominantly in steps
with some thirds and unisons
m. 88  soprano sustains D5 while alto sings variant of opening motive
m. 89.3  SSATTBB three-chord phrase ascends then returns in all parts
m. 91  soprano sings two preliminary pitches, then repeats with alto m. 88, with
different text
m. 93.2  reiteration and extension of motive from m. 89.3
m. 100  canonic entrances using variant of opening motive: solo alto 2 then solo
alto 1 beginning on D5, then solo baritone on D4; imitative entrances by
solo soprano 1 on G5, then solo tenor on G4, then solo soprano 2 on G5.
mm. 111-116  in an emphatic recapitulation of the text “You do our rites much
wrong…,” soprano melody moves rapidly up and down by perfect fourths and
major thirds over more static ATB parts.
mm. 117-127  an almost note-for-note recapitulation of mm. 75-85
mm. 128-129  dramatic climax with high pitches for soprano 1 (Bb5) and bass (C4)
m. 131-134  pitches stacked in staggered entrances from lowest to highest: Ab3, C4,
Eb4, G4, Bb4, D5, F5, and Bb5
mm 135-138  TTBB and soprano 1 repeat same pitches; soprano 2 and alto 1 & 2 move
chordally in ascending and descending thirds
mm. 138.2-140  penultimate chord to final chord: alto 1 and soprano 1 & 2 repeat same pitches, Bb4, D5, and F5; alto 2 and tenor 1 & 2 descend by a diatonic step, G4, Eb4, and C4 to F4, D4, and Bb3; basses descend a perfect fourth, Ab3-Eb3.

Harmonic characteristics

The key signature of this movement indicates the key of E-Flat Major.

mm. 1-16  fairly strongly in key of Eb, though seeming to stand on the dominant chord (Bb)
mm. 4-5  dominant seventh chord but with suspended fourth (Eb) mitigating the strong pull to tonic; this chord reoccurs in mm. 7 & 9
m. 14  the A natural in soprano 2 leads to modulation to Bb, originally the dominant
mm. 17-63  consistent use of accidentals indicates modulation to Gb major; however, the disjunct melodies in the solo parts, the avoidance of the tonic Gb chord and the non-traditional harmonies in the TTBB parts fail to provide a strong sense of the tonality
m. 31.2  the cadence at this, the end of a section, has an inversion of quartal harmony: bass 2 Db3, bass 1 Bb3, tenor 2 Eb4, tenor 1 Ab4; if the bass 2 pitch was two octaves higher, at Db5, there would be consistent perfect fourths from bottom to top
mm. 37-39.1  at cadence point, TTBB chord is ambiguous: bass 2 Bb2, bass 1 Ab3, tenor 2 C4, tenor 1 F4; with the Db in the solo melody, it could be construed as a Bbm9
mm. 41-44.1  same chord as m. 37, held longer this time
m. 49  TTBB parts cadence on Abm7 chord in third inversion
m. 51.2½  TTBB parts cadence on F⁷ in second inversion
mm. 54-63  consistent use of accidentals provides fairly strong identification of Cb chord, as subdominant function in Gb
mm. 63-64  an incomplete French augmented-sixth chord in function, albeit with an added pitch (Db in the alto), and missing the A that would make it complete, nevertheless resolves as expected to Bb, the dominant of the original Eb key.
m. 65  naturals cancelling previous accidentals reestablish Eb major tonality
mm. 67.3-68  Bb7 first-inversion chord cadences deceptively to Ab first inversion with added ninth, then basically returns, though seventh is replaced with added ninth
mm. 69.3-87  though no accidentals are used, indicating Eb major, a strong sense of tonality is avoided through deceptive cadences and avoidance of the tonic chord
mm. 75-81  imitative contrapuntal section
mm. 88-100 rather abrupt modulation to G major, mitigated somewhat by use of F naturals
m. 98.2 cadences on E-minor chord
mm. 100-110 contrapuntal section strongly in G major, due more to the melodic content than the resultant chords
mm. 111-116 rapidly changing harmonic rhythm includes some tonic Eb chords as well as many clusters of whole steps, though mitigated by octave displacements, e.g. m. 116 where the Ab, Bb, C, and D appear as bass Ab3, tenor C4, alto Bb4, and soprano D5
mm. 117-123 recapitulation of contrapuntal section at m. 75, holds true to pattern of Eb tonality by consistent non-use of accidentals, but avoids tonic chord
mm. 117-130 subdominant class chords (ii and IV) are used most in this section, cadencing on an Ab with added ninth in first inversion
mm. 131-134 what amounts to an extended penultimate chord is built by adding diatonic thirds from bottom to top in seven of the eight parts; the final soprano 1 pitch is a perfect fourth above the previous pitch in the series. It begins with bass 2 Ab3, adding parts one beat later, with bass 1 C4, tenor 2 Eb4, tenor 1 G4, alto 2 Bb4, alto 1 D5, soprano 2 F5, and soprano 1 starting with soprano 2 at F5 then moving up to Bb5; the resulting chord is ambiguous; again, with the octaves adjusted it would be a seven-note diatonic cluster, with every note of the Eb-major scale used; it could be analyzed in bitonal terms as an AbM7 with a Bb triad on top
mm. 135-138 the chord from 134 is repeated with slightly varying voicing
m. 139 the final chord has a tonic feel, though as has been the case throughout the song, it is not a strong Eb triad; the upper six voices have a Bb major triad, doubled at the octave; only the presence of the Eb in both bass parts helps us feel the tonality, but the lack of a G, the third of the Eb chord, gives it a sense of uncertainty

Rhythmic characteristics

The time signature at the beginning is cut time (2/2 or alla breve); the tempo is identified as Allegro moderato, with the half note at circa 92 beats per minute. There are no subsequent tempo changes marked. The piece is filled with syncopated rhythms, expressing agitation, alternating with more calm sections where the rhythm is more sedate, and not syncopated.
m. 1  alto 2 begins with a short, syncopated motive, which is reused in m. 6.2.5 by alto 1, soprano 1 & 2 (see Example 2.1)

Example 2.1. “O Know to End as to Begin” mm. 1-2, 6-7, alto 2 part, opening motive

![Example 2.1. “O Know to End as to Begin” mm. 1-2, 6-7, alto 2 part, opening motive](image)

m. 6  alto 2 starts with another short motive, which all voices (SSAA) sing homorhythmically in m. 9

mm. 10-13  SSAA sing together a combination of the first two motives, which becomes a signature motive, or motto, for the A section of the piece. This rhythmic motto is used for line 1 and line 2 of the text

m. 13  meter changes to 3/4
m. 14  meter changes back to cut time
m. 17  less syncopated, legato section sung by men

mm. 32-54.1  soli alto 1 and soprano 1 on syncopated opening motive in counterpoint with men on legato, less syncopated rhythm

m. 54.2  full choir in homorhythmic section featuring meter changes from cut time to 3/4 to 3/2, and returning to cut time

mm. 64-74.1  alternating phrases of static soprano and tenor versus alto and bass singing opening motive, followed by homophonic phrases

mm. 75-81  imitative polyphony in upper voices using syncopated rhythms against more sedate primarily half-note rhythm in bass

mm. 82-87  longer note values, homophonic

mm. 88-99  homophonic phrases with opening motive interspersed by alto

mm. 100-110  polyphonic section based on opening motive

mm. 111-116  homophonic with strong accents and syncopations

mm. 117-130  repetition of mm. 75-87, ending though with a longer note

mm. 131-134  offset entrances from bottom to top in eight parts;
m. 134  meter changes to 3/2
mm. 135-end  meter returns to cut time; homorhythmic and accented, but not syncopated

**Texture/Voicing**

mm. 1-16  four-part tutti women
mm.17-27  tutti basses 1 and 2
mm. 28-54.1  four-part men with soli alto 1 & soprano 1 interspersed
mm. 54.2-61 tutti choir, SATBB
mm. 62-74 tutti choir, SATB
m. 75 tutti TB
m. 76.2 add alto
m. 77 add soprano
mm. 82-87 tutti divisi, SSAATTBB
mm. 88-96.1 alternating phrases, SA with SSAATTBB
m. 96.2 reduce forces by half: S1 A1 T1 B1 only
mm. 100-110 soli voices in counterpoint, three-voice becomes four-voice, then five-voice, then back to four-voice
mm. 111-123 tutti choir SATB
mm. 124-end tutti choir divisi, SSAATTBB

**Formal characteristics**

The piece is cast in a loose rondo form, characterized by melodic and rhythmic similarities, but not holding to traditional rondo harmonic relationships. The two major sections are introduced by first the women’s voices in measures 1-16, then by the men’s voices in measures 17-31. The women introduce the primary theme, or A section, which is characterized by syncopated rhythms and accents, while the men introduce the secondary theme, or B section, which is characterized by legato, sustained phrases.

Between measures 32 and 54.1, primary thematic material is interspersed with secondary thematic material. In measures 54.2-63 is a short tutti passage using secondary thematic material, followed in measures 64-74 by a short tutti passage using primary thematic material. In measures 75-81 is a contrapuntal interlude that does not use material from either of the major sections, making a C section. This is followed by three short, nearly identical phrases forming a codetta marking a major cadence point a bit more than halfway through the piece.

A short motive from the primary thematic material is followed by an answer from the secondary material, then the procedure is repeated, with the secondary material
“answer” extended. This leads into the fugue-like soli section at measures 100-110, using primary thematic material. This in turn is answered by tutti choir singing a diminution of the secondary thematic material. The interlude and codetta material is repeated at measures 117-130, followed by a coda from measures 131 to the end.

Summary

This song alternates between two moods, the agitated syncopated mood heard at the very beginning of the song, and the more relaxed, tongue-in-cheek mood first heard at measure 17. The first is most often polyphonic, expressing agitation like several people talking at once. The second is homophonic, almost as if trying to calm down the first. The overlapping and rapid alternation of these two musical sections at times expresses this dichotomy of mood that gives the piece its distinctive character, as if two different people were speaking the text.

2. “Have You Seen the White Lily Grow”

“Have You Seen the White Lily Grow,” the second song in the cycle, is the most typical love song of the cycle, extolling the virtues, physical and otherwise, of the poet’s beloved. Starting simply, it grows in intensity of feeling. This is accomplished through adding textures, increasing dynamics, and widening of the distance of pitches between the parts. It then ends very tenderly and sweetly, though with a somewhat ambivalent feeling in its tonality, reflected by the minor-seventh final chord.
Text choice, setting, and analysis

“Have You Seen the White Lily Grow,” is probably the most sincere and touching of the poems, being a tribute to a woman deemed by the poet to be exceedingly beautiful, as exemplified by numerous metaphors derived from nature.

Have you seen the white bright lily grow
Before rude hands have touched it?
Have you felt but the fall of snow
Before the soil hath smutched it?
Have you felt the wool of beaver,
Or swan's down ever?
[Or have smelt o’ the bud o’ the brier,
Or the nard in the fire?]
[Or] have you tasted the bag of the bee?
O so white, O so soft, O so sweet is she!

The main idea in this poem is substantially delayed. Only when we get to line 10 do we understand that all of the previous questions are comparisons to the beauty of the woman the poet has in mind: She is as white as a lily; she is as soft as freshly fallen snow, the fur of a beaver, and the down of a swan; she is as sweet as honey. And, though Fine does not use line 7 and 8 of the text in this song, they imply that she smells like a rose and like perfume or incense.

The last text that the choir sings is a repetition of the first line of the poem. The sopranos sing the initial three words of the question but use the word “heard” instead of “seen.” This question is completed by the men, who sing “the white lily grow.” As this makes little sense, and has no basis in the original text, it may be inferred that this was a mistake, and that sopranos should substitute the word “seen.” The altos, in their final iteration of the initial question, sing, “Have you felt the white lily?” This is more easily justifiable as a deliberate mixing of portions of the text, and moreover makes more sense,
so no such substitution would be necessary. The very end has sopranos reiterating “Have you seen the white lily grow?” followed by the lower voices repeating the question in truncated form, “Have you seen?”

The composer set the text more syllabically than otherwise, but commonly used two-note slurs, and occasionally used longer slurs. The longer slurs in this song add to the sensuality.

**Melodic characteristics**

The first and most obvious melodic device employed by the composer is the ascending octave leap in the soprano line. It happens first on the text “Have you seen…” and is repeated at various times throughout the song. This will be referred to as the “question motive.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure(s)</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>m. 1</td>
<td>with pickup, opening ascending octave “question motive” D4 to D5 in soprano, echoed by a variation of it in the alto, spanning a major sixth G3 to E4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 2</td>
<td>men enter, with repeated tones followed by mostly stepwise movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 3</td>
<td>alto now does exactly the notes with which the soprano began, and soprano sings the previous ascending major sixth of the alto an octave higher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 4</td>
<td>rather sinuous melodic movement in soprano and alto parts, alternating between stepwise movement and triadic arpeggiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 5</td>
<td>men’s parts reenter, as before, with repeated notes followed mostly by steps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 7-8</td>
<td>full choir, with bass 2 moving in contrary motion with soprano 1, the former to the rather low F#2, the latter to the rather high A5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 8.4-9.1</td>
<td>all parts unison on the “question motive;” bass and tenor from E3 to E4, alto and soprano from E4 to E5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 9-10</td>
<td>soprano and tenor remain static while alto and bass move in octaves downward then back up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 10.2½-12</td>
<td>variation of previous two measures, but initial “question motive” only spans a perfect fifth, from F3 to C4 and F4 to C5 respectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 13</td>
<td>downward “sigh” on “O so fair”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 14</td>
<td>similar downward “sigh” beginning higher on “O so soft”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
mm. 15-16.1 abrupt, dramatic A5 in soprano as ATB move in upward arpeggios to climax

mm. 16.2½-17 upper three parts move predominantly downward, bass predominantly upward then downward: soprano in whole-step dyads and perfect fifths, ending with a descending minor seventh; alto and tenor in steps; and bass in steps interspersed with a descending major sixth and a major third

m. 18 with pickup, soprano sings opening “question motive” D4 to D5; men respond as at beginning

m. 19 with pickup, alto sings “question motive” at same pitch as soprano, D4 to D5; soprano does so again, then men answer essentially as before

m. 20 men and alto out, soprano descends and rebounds, finishing on a held G4

m. 21 men and alto reenter with three repeated notes to end the song

Harmonic characteristics

m. 1 begins in G major with a C# giving a brief Lydian-mode twist, followed by a hint at F major on beat 4

mm. 2-3 tonality returns to G major, then planes downward through F major to E minor

mm. 4-5 planes between A major and G major chords; the absence of G# suggests D major, but is ambiguous

m. 6 bitonal cadence: G major in bass and tenor, A major in alto and soprano

mm. 7-8 planing chord movement between F#, G, and A chords of varying qualities and with varying extensions

mm. 8.4-10 E major to G (implied major, but no third)

mm. 11-12 F major to Eb major/C minor

m. 13 F major to D minor to G major to C major; much more rapid harmonic rhythm than thus far in the song

mm. 14-15 Bb major to A minor

mm. 16-17 climactic cadence on D major, then rapid harmonic rhythm through mostly adjacent chords ending with an ambiguous B minor with an added fourth (E)

mm. 18-20 a recapitulation of the beginning, planing between G major and F major

m. 21 final cadence on an unsettled feeling E minor seventh chord

Rhythmic characteristics

The composer’s alternating between rhythmic subdivisions of two and three notes per beat (which occurs at many places) adds to the sensuality of this song. The example
below (Example 2.2) shows the second time it happens, in measures 4 and 5.

Example 2.2. “Have You Seen the White Lily Grow” mm. 4-5, soprano and alto parts, triplets becoming eighth notes

Other rhythmic ideas that are used often are the two sixteenth-note pickups to a longer note value on the previously identified “question motive.” This also happens throughout the piece, and in all of the voice parts.

The time signature is common time, and the tempo is marked *Andante* (Freely), with the quarter note at circa 60 beats per minute.

m. 1 two sixteenth notes followed by a longer note on the “question motive,” first in the soprano, then one beat later in the alto
m. 2 men enter together on the second half of beat 1
m. 3 staggered entrances on the “question motive”
mm. 4-5 women together on triplets then even eighth notes
m. 5 men reenter on beat 3½
mm. 6-8 all parts together homorhythmically, beginning at pickups to m. 7
mm. 9-12 soprano and tenor together on long notes while alto and bass together on moving part using predominantly eighth note triplets
mm. 13-17 predominantly homorhythmic
mm. 18-19 “question motive” in soprano, then alto, then again in soprano, answered by men with eighth note triplets
mm. 20-21 concluding phrase with eighth note triplets in soprano, answered by other parts on two eighth note triplets with *ritardando*, all followed with a concluding long note
Texture/Voicing

The texture is alternately thin and thick; when it is thin, it is the women who sing alone for a time, sometimes just one part, sometimes two. They are then joined or rejoined by the men. The men are often divided into three parts, with the Bass part divided.

m. 1  soprano then alto begin
m. 2  men in three parts enter under sustained notes by the women
m. 4  women in two then three parts
m. 5  men reenter in three parts under sustained notes of women
mm. 6-8  homophonic in 6-8 parts
mm. 9-12  soprano and tenor in octaves, alto and bass in octaves
mm. 13-17  SATB mostly homophonic
m. 18  soprano sustained over three-part men
m. 19  alto and soprano sustained over three-part men
m. 20  soprano alone
m. 21  ATBB reenter

Formal characteristics

The construction of this composition follows the construction of the poem in its divisions. It can be represented as AA\textsuperscript{1}BCA\textsuperscript{2}. The first section corresponds with lines 1 and 2 of the text, the second with lines 3 and 4. The third section is somewhat longer, utilizing lines 5, 6, 9, and 10. The fourth section is a more significant contrast, using the part of the text that is not metaphorical and that summarizes the reasons for the previous metaphors. The final section is a recapitulation of sorts of the first section, though it has a harmonically ambiguous ending.
Summary

In this movement, the sinuous rhythmic variety and the tonal ambiguity, especially at the end, provide this song with a sense of wonder that the voice of the poet expresses at the awe-inspiring presence of the woman he is describing. It is essentially a straightforward love song, albeit a bit shallow, as the poet mostly praises his beloved’s physical beauty. The delicate beauty of the music underlines the beauties described in the text. Achieving a balance between this delicacy and the implied fervor is the trickiest aspect of this song for the conductor and choir to accomplish.

3. “O Do Not Wanton with Those Eyes”

The third song of the cycle, “O Do Not Wanton with Those Eyes,” is more similar to the first movement than to the second. It is at a faster tempo, with syncopated rhythms and contrasts in texture accomplished by the alternating use of tutti and soli. The text is by turns flirtatious and almost painfully shy. Each phrase has an admonition and an anticipated response.

Text choice, setting, and analysis

The original title of this poem is “A Song.” It was a poem written by itself, included in a collection with other freestanding poems, all having no other obvious connection.

1 Oh do [doe] not wanton with those eyes,
2 Lest I be sick with seeing;
3 Nor cast them downe, but let them rise,
4 Lest shame destroy their being:
O, be not angry with those fires,
For then their threats will kill me;
Nor looke too kind on my desires,
For then my hopes will spill me;
O, do not steep them in thy tears,
For so will sorrow slay me;
Nor spread them as distract with fears,
Mine own enough betray me.

The text of this movement implies a man, the writer of the poem, speaking to a woman either directly or in his imagination. The woman is the object of his love, but he does not know how she feels about him. Each of the six couplets, though phrased as an imperative, is a request of the lady. The focus is always the lady’s eyes, metaphorically the windows to her heart. Lines 1 and 2 ask that the lady not look about wantonly at other men, as seeing that would make the writer sick with longing or jealousy. Lines 3 and 4 ask that the lady not look down as if in shame, as that would destroy the liveliness of her eyes and her being. Lines 5 and 6 characterize her eyes as fires, which, if angry at him, would burn the writer to death. Lines 7 and 8 ask that the lady not look too kindly at the writer unless she is sincere, because then he would hope for more than she intends. Lines 9 and 10 ask that the lady not weep, for seeing her sorrow would kill the writer. Lines 11 and 12 ask that the lady not react to him with wild-eyed terror, because his own fear of her rejection is so evident that she need not fear anything from him.

The text setting in this song is primarily syllabic, with the main exceptions being two-note slurs. All of the chorus parts have one three-note slur, in measure 21, and the alto soloist has one four-note slur. The word “angry” in measures 17 and 18 is awkward because the second syllable, which should be unaccented, is a higher pitch than the first. While this occurs in all four parts, it is most noticeable in the soprano because the
ascending interval is larger. There are likewise a few awkward single-syllable words that, in the context of the sentence, should be less accented, but are higher in pitch. Again, these are most evident in the soprano, as in the words “kill me” in measures 21 and 22, where the second word is up a perfect fifth from the last note of the first word.

**Melodic characteristics**

Throughout the piece, the inner harmony parts, alto and tenor, move almost exclusively by scalar steps, while the outer parts, soprano and bass, move more disjunctly and in contrary motion to each other. Each of the three solo parts, for soprano, mezzo soprano, and alto, also has its own individual melodic identity. The soprano moves with more intervallic leaps than the others; the mezzo uses almost entirely scalar steps; and the alto has more leaps than the mezzo, but fewer than the soprano.

- **mm. 1-4** chorale tutti; melody in soprano, moving predominantly in perfect fourths between B4 and F#4; bass moves in contrary motion with soprano, in thirds and fourths; tenor and alto have narrower range, using stepwise motion throughout
- **mm. 5-8** soli soprano, mezzo, and alto, with soprano singing the widest intervals and encompassing the widest range of the three
- **mm. 9-12** similar to mm. 1-4
- **mm. 13-16** similar to mm. 5-8
- **mm. 17-25** chorale tutti; wider range in soprano, reaching to A5, with intervals expanding to fifths and sixths; bass range also wider, moving lower, with intervals expanding to sixths; alto and tenor have thirds mixed in with their stepwise movements
- **mm. 17-22** climactic area of piece, corresponding with lines 5 & 6 of text
- **mm. 22.2-25** post-climactic winding down, ranges less extreme, corresponding with lines 7 & 8 of text
- **mm. 26-29** soli; a three-voice version of mm. 1-4
- **mm. 30-31** chorale tutti; similar to mm. 1-2; this phrase is divided between the chorus and the soli, below
- **mm. 32-34** soli; slightly augmented version of mm. 3-4
Harmonic characteristics

This movement is nominally in the key of B minor, though it has atonal elements mitigating this tonality.

mm. 1-4  B minor, cadencing on a B-minor-seventh chord
mm. 5-8  D major, cadencing on an incomplete G-major-seventh chord: F#-G-B
mm. 9-12 B minor, but cadencing with a IV-I in D major
mm. 13-16 D major, closing with a half-cadence on A major
mm. 17-18 B natural minor; ambiguous tonality due to lack of raised leading tone (A#)
mm. 19-22 modulates to C major/A natural minor
mm. 23-25 tonally ambiguous, closest to G minor, then cadences to B-minor-seventh chord in third inversion: A2, F#3, D4, B4
mm. 26-29 continues in B minor, cadencing on a cluster-like A#-A, B4
mm. 30-31 continues in B, ambiguously both major and minor due to D sharps in the alto in opposition with D naturals in the Bass; cadences on a G major triad over an added second (A2-A3) in the bass
mm. 32-35 D major, with the final chord an E major triad: E, G#, B in soli

Rhythmic characteristics

This movement begins in 4/4 time, Allegretto with the quarter note at about 108 beats per minute. It changes meter occasionally, but no meter other than 4/4 lasts for more than one measure at a time. The 4/4 time, however, does not have a strong metrical feel, but rather is often subdivided into eighth notes with a 3+3+2 feel, which fits the syllabic stresses of the text. The rhythmic aspect is the most consistent distinguishing factor in the antecedent and consequent phrases (see Examples 2.3 and 2.4).
Example 2.3. “O Do Not Wanton with Those Eyes” mm. 1-4, soprano part, antecedent

Example 2.4. “O Do Not Wanton with Those Eyes” mm. 5-8, solo soprano, consequent

mm. 1-4 chorus, antecedent phrase; begins on beat two with an anacrusis feel, followed by eighth note subdivided feel of 3+3+2 (see Example 2.3)
mm. 5-8 soli, consequent phrase; begins with eighth note pick-up; (see Example 2.4); meter changes at m. 6 to 3/4, then back to 4/4 at m. 7
mm. 9-12 chorus, antecedent phrase; meter changes at m. 10 to 2/4, then back to 4/4 at m. 11
mm. 13-16 soli, consequent phrase; meter changes to 3/4 at m. 14, then back to 4/4 at m. 16
mm. 17-18 chorus sopranos maintain antecedent phrase rhythm, while ATB are offset by half a beat, rejoining homorhythmically on the second half of beat 1 in m. 18
mm. 19-22 unprecedented rhythm, with quarter notes and eighth notes; bass has some dotted quarter notes;
m. 19 meter changes to 3/4
m. 20 meter changes to 2/4
m. 21 meter changes to 3/8
m. 22 meter changes to 2/4
mm. 23-25 meter returns to 4/4; bass has antecedent phrase rhythm, with other parts contrapuntal until m. 24 when part become homorhythmic again
mm. 26-29 soli have antecedent phrase for the first time
mm. 30-31 chorus with first two measures of antecedent phrase
mm. 32-34 soli finishes with variation of consequent phrase
Texture/Voicing

There is an antiphonal effect between the choir and the soloists throughout, never overlapping. When the choir sings, it is always with all four parts and almost entirely homophonic. When the soloists are singing, all three sing simultaneously with the upper two voices moving together and the third in counterpoint. There is only one exception to this, as noted below, when the three voices are homophonic.

mm. 1-4 SATB choir homophonic
mm. 5-8 soprano, mezzo, and alto soli, alto in counterpoint to other two parts
mm. 9-12 SATB choir homophonic
mm. 13-16 soprano, mezzo, and alto soli, alto in counterpoint to other two parts
mm. 17-25 SATB choir mostly homophonic
mm. 26-29 soprano, mezzo, and alto soli, homophonic
mm. 29.4 -31 SATB choir homophonic
mm. 31-34 soprano, mezzo, and alto soli, alto in counterpoint to other two parts

Formal characteristics

The form is AABA, almost exactly fitting the 32-bar song form with which Fine must have been familiar due to its use in much of the popular music of his day. The A sections are divided into two four-measure phrases, identified here as antecedent and consequent. In the final A section, however, the consequent phrase is extended to five measures. The B section, or bridge, has an extra measure because of the use of a 3/8 measure and a 2/4 measure inserted into the predominantly 4/4 meter. In this way it maintains the symmetry of the eight-measure sections.

mm. 1-4 antecedent phrase of A section by choir
mm. 5-8 consequent phrase of A section by soli
mm. 9-12 antecedent phrase of A section with slight variation by choir
mm. 13-16 consequent phrase of A section with slight variation by soli
mm. 17-25 bridge, or contrasting section, by choir
Summary

This song is a long, drawn-out question of a suitor to his potential love, quite possibly more as a soliloquy than as a dialogue. The answering back of the three soloists, all female, may be seen as actual or imagined mocking of the suitor’s insecurity. The predominantly homophonic texture aids the audience in understanding the words, if not the meaning, of the text. The ending implies an unsatisfying, or at least an ambiguous, result for the suitor.

4. “Against Jealousy”

The fourth song of the cycle, “Against Jealousy,” is a diatribe against the often-found negative consequence of passionate love, jealousy. The strong accents and harsh dissonances seem to underscore the discord the poet feels about his own feelings. In terms of the number of measures (279) and pages (24), it is the longest song of the set. At the prescribed tempo, however, it goes by quickly, lasting just about three minutes. The use of a small semi-chorus, both by itself and in conjunction with the larger tutti chorus, provides dynamic and textural contrast.

Text choice, setting, and analysis

This poem is another with no specific story or contextual relationship to the others of the set, nor to any others.
Wretched and foolish Jealousy,
How cam'st thou thus to enter me?
I ne'er was of thy kind:
Nor have I yet the narrow mind
To vent that poor desire,
That others should not warm them at my fire:
I wish the sun should shine
On all men's fruit, and flowers, as well as mine.
But under the disguise of love,
Thou say'st, thou only cam'st to prove
What my affections were.
Think'st thou that love is help'd by fear?
Go[e], get thee quickly forth,
Love's sickness[e], and his noted want of worth.
Seek[e] doubting men to please;
I ne'er will owe my health to a disease.

The text indicates an internal conflict of the poet with his own emotions. It keeps
to one-note-per-syllable most of the time, the only deviations being two-note slurs. The
musical accents, however, often do not agree with the word accents. For example, the
words “wretched” and “foolish” often have higher pitches or crescendos on the second
syllable, which should be the unaccented syllable if the words were spoken. While there
is not a great deal of text repetition, the first line is often recapitulated throughout the
piece; the second line is also reused, though not as often.

**Melodic characteristics**

The vocal lines of this movement are characterized by intermittent wide skips and
frequent repeated notes. The skips often span a sixth, a seventh, or an octave, and on one
occasion, an ascending minor tenth. These represent significant challenges for any choir
in the rehearsal phase of preparation. Other tricky melodic intervals include visually
confusing augmented seconds and a few tritones.
mm. 1-3  opening statement notes repeated, soprano and alto on E5, tenor and bass on E4
mm. 5-11 dramatic octave leap upward followed by minor sixth and half-step downward; soprano and tenor then ascend a major sixth, while alto and bass ascend a perfect fourth; parts continue independently (see Example 2.5)

Example 2.5. “Against Jealousy” mm. 5-11, dramatic unison leaps

mm. 14-21 similar to previous phrase, with the addition of another octave jump up then back down in the soprano and tenor parts at the beginning of the phrase
mm. 24-28 steps and repeated notes in medium-high range
“Small Chorus” parts move with very few repeated notes and a greater number of leaps, increasing the disjunct quality of the melodic movement; corresponding with lines 3-6 of the text, this section has three of the four parts using a limited number of pitches, in various octaves: alto focuses on C, Bb, and Ab; tenor uses mostly E, G, and F; bass sings predominantly F, Ab, and Db (see Example 2.6); soprano is the exception, using all of the notes in the F natural minor scale; though none of the four phrases are repeated note-for-note in any of the parts, the shape of the four phrases are consistent within each part.

Example 2.6. “Against Jealousy” mm. 29-41, bass part, using notes of Db chord

On lines 7 and 8 of the text, these phrases both start low and end high, the second (mm. 58-66) more dramatically so, ending with all parts in their upper ranges: soprano on G5, alto on Eb5, tenor on F4, and bass on Db4

Unison-like, in octaves; repetition of lines 1 and 2 of the text, moving generally from high to low, spanning a perfect eleventh (F5 to C4 in soprano and alto)

Parts divided into “Full Chorus” and “Small Chorus;” full chorus parts move with repeated notes and small intervals; lines 9-12 of text

Small chorus sing a short phrase with repeated notes and major sixths

Small chorus phrase similar to mm. 89-91

Full chorus soprano and bass higher in pitch; alto and tenor remain about the same as mm. 85-97

Small chorus phrase similar to mm. 89-91, now with minor sixth

Small chorus phrase similar to mm. 104-106

Small chorus and full chorus rejoin and sing tutti

Repeated notes and large intervals, similar to mm. 5-11

Bass alone on disjunct melody

Tenor joins with contrasting static melody

Alto joins with melody imitative of bass at m. 126
mm. 137 soprano joins with more static melody, imitative of tenor at m. 128
mm. 139-147 imitative melodies continue in all parts
mm. 147.2-151 soprano repeats high Gb5; alto and tenor move mostly stepwise upward; bass moves stepwise downward until m. 151.2, when an ascending octave occurs, from Gb2 to Gb3
mm. 152-154 soprano and alto move downward, soprano from Ab5; tenor and bass move upward
mm. 155-156 soprano 1, soprano 2, and alto hold Ab5, Db5, and Gb4; tenor and bass contrasting part with narrow range
mm. 157-159 all parts move downward; soprano 1 similar to mm. 152-154
mm. 160-162 STB hold note; alto narrow contrasting melody
mm. 163-191 static feeling with mostly repeated notes in soprano and bass, mostly stepwise movement in alto and tenor (see Example 2.7); soprano limited to C5 and E5; alto limited to F4, G4, B4, and C4; tenor limited to Ab3, Bb3, and B3 until m. 167, then C4 and D4 from 168-191; bass limited to C3, C4, and Bb3

Example 2.7. “Against Jealousy” mm. 163-171, SB static, AT conjunct movement

mm. 187-191 long note on “please” with fff followed by crescendo; on final tied note, tenor and bass move down (slur) a whole step, while all parts accent (sfz)
mm. 193-197 SAT move stepwise and bass moves by chordal skips until unison halfway through the phrase; unison (octaves) melody is more disjunct
mm. 197-201 similar to previous phrase
mm. 201-209 begins like previous two phrases, but unison section is drawn out longer
mm. 211-235 chorus all sings very long notes that, when they move, do so by step down or minor third up (the only exception to this is m. 231, when the tenor moves up a perfect fourth)
mm. 213-218 solo soprano melody based on Gb4-Db5-Eb5-F motive, with repeated and held final note
mm. 221-225 solo soprano melody, essentially as before
mm. 229-239 solo soprano melody based on motive from mm. 213-218, but elongated
mm. 236-239 soprano and bass move up a perfect fifth and a major sixth, respectively; alto and tenor move as before; all parts hold this chord
mm. 241-247 soprano 1 repeats F5; soprano 2 and tenor move by step; alto and bass
move by perfect fourths in opposite direction
mm. 248-249 on the second syllable of the word “wretched,” sopranos and altos, divisi, move upward by step or third; tenor repeats same note; basses, divisi, move downward by third (see Example 2.8)

Example 2.8. “Against Jealousy” mm. 248-249, “‘wretched’ motive,” all parts

mm. 250-252 repetition of mm. 245-247
mm. 253-254 repetition of “‘wretched’ motive”
mm. 255-257 repetition of “‘wretched’ motive,” beginning on beat 2
mm. 258-263 repetition of mm. 241-247
mm. 264-266 repetition of “‘wretched’ motive,” beginning on beat 2
mm. 267-268 repetition of “‘wretched’ motive,” but on the word “foolish”
mm. 269-271 repetition of “‘wretched’ motive,” beginning on beat 2
mm. 272-279 solo alto sings “jealousy” on Gb4-Gb4-Ab4; the last note is held for 6½ measures, diminishing from piano to pianissimo

Harmonic characteristics

The key signature of this movement is four flats, tending more often toward F minor than Ab major. The tonality is, however, often ambiguous. The composer uses both diatonic and chromatic clusters of dissonant pitches, but these are often voiced in such a way that the dissonance is less pronounced, with adjacent parts having consonant intervals (see Example 2.5, m. 8).
mm. 1-6 unisons focus on E, major then minor briefly indicated in m. 6 with G# followed by G

mm. 7-11 brief C major, followed by atonal cluster (see Example 2.5); while the pitches (C, C#, E, and F) provide dissonance, the character of this and other clusters is mitigated by the distance between the pitches (C#4, E4, C5, and F5)

mm. 14-21 more solidly C major, followed again by clusters at phrase end

m. 24 cluster of C4, E4, Db5, and F5

mm. 25-28 Bb3, Db4, E4, C5, and G5: functionally a V7 with added b9 in F minor

mm. 29-62 F minor, though without traditional harmonic progressions

mm. 63-64 dissonant cluster; alto moves through consonances and dissonances

mm. 65-66 diatonic cluster (Db4, F4, Eb5, G5)

mm. 67-84 unison (octaves) melodically outlining key of F minor

mm. 85-97 dyads of G# and B, supported by melody, indicate E major despite missing root

mm. 98-103 moves from no tonal center to F minor at m. 102

mm. 104-115.1 continues in F minor

mm. 115.2-125 C major, dominant of F minor

mm. 126-139 continues in F minor/Ab major, with no accidentals, but without strong sense of tonality

mm. 140-151 Gb accidentals pull tonality toward Db major

mm. 152-162 Db major

mm. 163-186 F minor, with strong dominant-function C major, the dominant quality mitigated by B naturals in CM7 and CM9 chords (see Example 2.7)

mm. 187-191 cluster (C4, D4, B4, E5); bass and tenor each move down a whole step at m. 191.2

mm. 193-209 more emphatically F minor

mm. 211-239 ambiguously Bb minor/Gb major

mm. 241-247 F minor

mm. 248-249 “wretched’ motive” GbM7-GbM9, in weak second inversion to first inversion movement (see Example 2.8)

mm. 250-252 F minor, truncated version of mm. 241-247

mm. 253-257 “wretched’ motive” reiterated twice

mm. 258-263 same as mm. 241-247

mm. 264-271 “wretched’ motive” reiterated three times

mm. 272-279 tonally ambiguous monophony by solo alto

Rhythmic characteristics

The time signature at the beginning is 2/2; the tempo is identified as Allegro agitato, with the half note at circa 176 beats per minute. The shortest note values used are
quarter notes. The agitation implied in the tempo marking is the rhythmic hallmark of this
movement. Along with the fast tempo, this is accomplished with many accents,
homorhythmic text setting for the most part, and interruptions of the flow with rests of
one, two, and even three full measures. Contrasting this rhythmic character is the use of
very long notes, tied over several measures, usually with either a crescendo or a
decrescendo to keep the phrases from feeling static.

mm. 1-3  a foreshadowing of the “‘wretched’ motive” with its long-short pattern,
            (see Example 2.8), heavily accented though not harmonized
mm. 3.2-5.1 rests
mm. 5-11 phrase pattern established that is used frequently throughout the piece:
            short notes at beginning of phrase, including one measure (m. 6) of half-
            note triplets, then ending the phrase with a long held note, in this case, 3½
            measures (see Example 2.5); marked with accents
mm. 12-14.2½ rests
mm. 14-15  marked sempre marcato;
mm. 14-21 rhythmically similar to previous phrase
mm. 22-23 rests
mm. 24-28 two half notes, two quarter notes, followed by a long notes, on “foolish
            jealousy” (Line 2)
mm. 29-55  “Small Chorus” only: marked espressivo ma molto ritmico; change in
            character: rhythm becomes syncopated, occluding the meter; still
            homorhythmic
mm. 56-62 shorter note values used to provide more rhythmic drive
mm. 63-66 STB hold long notes, while alto has contrasting syncopated rhythm
mm. 67-84 less active, less syncopated, ending with short notes on “to enter me”
mm. 85 double chorus begins, “Small Chorus” and “Full Chorus”
mm. 85-115 full chorus sings long note values, holding their phrase ends as the small
            chorus sings short, syncopated answering phrases, with rests in between
mm. 115.2-125 both choruses sing together (from here to end); rhythm is similar to
            beginning
mm. 126 marked piu animato
mm. 126-151 contrapuntal section, beginning with bass, then tenor, then alto in imitation
            of the bass, then soprano in imitation of the tenor, becoming gradually
            more homorhythmic; somewhat syncopated, with meter obscured by half
            notes tied over bar lines
mm. 152-156 short phrases
mm. 157-162 phrase begun together, then at m. 159 STB hold while alto has contrasting
            moving part
mm. 163-186 short notes interspersed with short rests (see Example 2.7)
mm. 187-191  long notes on “please” (Line 15)
m. 192-193.1  rests
mm. 193.2-204  half-note rhythms, with some half notes tied over the bar line (equaling whole notes)
mm. 205-209  quarter notes also used, adding to the agitation
m. 210  rest
mm. 211-239  chorus sustains very long notes under somewhat syncopated soprano solo; each phrase the soloist sings ends with long note, the last being longest (mm. 234.2-239)
m. 240  rest with fermata
mm. 241-247  chorus sings half notes, in sets of four, then two, then four, interspersed with half rests
mm. 248-249  “‘wretched’ motive” (see Example 2.8) of a long note followed by a short note
mm. 250-252  repeat of mm. 245-247
mm. 253-254  repetition of “‘wretched’ motive”
mm. 255-257  repetition of “‘wretched’ motive,” beginning on beat 2
mm. 258-263  repetition of mm. 241-247
mm. 264-266  repetition of “‘wretched’ motive,” beginning on beat 2
mm. 267-268  repetition of “‘wretched’ motive,” but on the word “foolish”
mm. 269-271  repetition of “‘wretched’ motive,” beginning on beat 2
mm. 272-279  solo alto sings “jealousy” on a half note, two tied half notes, then a half note tied to six whole notes

Texture/Voicing

The main textural contrasts in this song are accomplished through the use of full chorus versus small chorus. When this first occurs, the shift is from full SATB chorus to small SATB chorus, so the texture does not literally change, but the aural effect is obvious and significant. Later, the small chorus and the “full chorus” (more accurately, the larger remainder of the chorus) sing together, effectively doubling the thickness of the texture. When the soprano soloist is employed, she sings against the backdrop of the full chorus. The alto soloist sings alone.

mm. 1-24  full SATB chorus
mm. 25-28  basses divide, resulting in five-part texture (SATBB)
mm. 29-84  small chorus in four parts (SATB)
Formal characteristics

This movement contains no large-scale repetitions, and is therefore through-composed. It can be divided stylistically into eight different sections, with two brief transitions between the third and fourth sections, between the fourth and fifth sections, and a codetta at the end.

mm. 1-28  1st section: opening, declamatory
mm. 29-84  2nd section: contrasting, contemplative, ending emphatically
mm. 85-115.1  3rd section: double choir, questioning with increasing fervor
mm. 115.2-125  transition: similar to opening
mm. 126-151  4th section: polyphonic, quasi double fugue
mm. 152-162  transition: emphatic
mm. 163-191  5th section: phrases include short notes and rests (see Example 2.7), enigmatic
mm. 193-209  6th section: increasingly agitated
mm. 211-239  7th section: resignation; solo soprano more emphatic
mm. 241-271  8th section: agitated, resolute
mm. 272-end  codetta: solo alto, resigned again
Summary

The lightning-quick changes of mood in this movement indicate a certain amount of schizophrenia in the text that is not necessarily evident from reading or speaking the text alone. In this way, Fine highlighted the subliminal meanings implied in the text. This dramatic interpretation should be attended to with meticulous adherence to the dynamics and accents, and precise diction to make sure that the words are clearly understood. The music then emphasizes the meaning of the text.

5. “Lament”

“Lament,” the fifth movement in the cycle, is straightforward in its original context as part of the story of Echo and Narcissus. However, the audience does not need to know the back-story to appreciate this song as a lament of a lover mourning the loss of his or her beloved. At just 21 measures long, it is on paper one of the two shortest songs of the set. At the prescribed tempo, however, it lasts longer than one might expect. The soprano section is featured in this movement, with melodies often supported by more accompanimental figures sung by the lower three voices.

Text choice, setting, and analysis

In the anthology Ben Jonson and the Cavalier Poets, this poem bears the title “Echo’s Song.”1 It is from the play Cynthia’s Revels, and is found in Act I, Scene ii. The

“Cynthia” of the play’s title is another name for Diana, goddess of the moon in Roman mythology. The character Echo is mourning her beloved Narcissus, who, because of his vanity, has been turned into a flower. The “fount” in line 1 refers to the enchanted spring that plays a part in the tragic story. Outside of this specific context, the poem is still a melancholy lament of a lover who has lost his/her beloved.

The text is set almost entirely syllabically, with the few exceptions being two- and three-note slurs. There are some occurrences of non-accented syllables getting either tonic or agogic accents. An example of the former is on the word “gentle” (line 2, m. 6), in which soprano, tenor and bass all sing a higher pitch on the second syllable. The tenor and bass parts are not much of an issue, because they only ascend by a step, but the soprano ascends a major sixth. An agogic accent is found in all four parts on the last note of the song, which puts a long note value on the third syllable of the word “daffodil.”

Singers should be reminded to sing that syllable softer than the first syllable in that word.

```
1  Slow, slow, fresh fount, keep time with my salt tears;
2  Yet slower, yet; O faintly gentle streams. [springs]
3  List to the heavy part the music bears,
4  Woe weeps out her division, when she sings.
5  Droop herbs and flowers;
6  Fall grief in showers;
7  Our beauties are not ours;
8  O, that I could still,
9  Like melting snow upon some craggy hill,
10 Drop, drop, drop, drop,
11 Since nature's pride is, now, a withered daffodil.
```

**Melodic characteristics**

As with the previous movements, Fine in this song did not shy away from challenging melodic intervals. There are several tritones, sixths, and minor sevenths,
most occurring in the soprano part. All parts except altos have octave leaps at some point.

The range is most challenging for basses, whose non-divisi part extends down to Eb2.

Tenors and sopranos both have one high Ab (Ab4 and Ab5, respectively).

**mm. 1-3** soprano on sustained melody on G4; AT move upward by step, bass downward by thirds; then ATB move back and forth on steps (see Example 2.9)

**Example 2.9. “Lament” mm. 1-3, ATB movement**

**mm. 4-5** SA have arch-shaped phrases; TB phrases more oblique; alto and tenor parts cross briefly

**m. 6** soprano disjunct melody with ascending tritone, descending minor seventh, and ascending major sixth; TB stepwise, downward then upward

**mm. 7-8** soprano sustains G4; AT move by steps in parallel motion; bass moves by chordal leaps, with initial note a low Eb2

**mm. 9-12** soprano on sustained high G5, moving down at m. 10.4; AT move mostly stepwise within a narrow range, in a notably high tessitura for tenor; bass movement is by perfect fourths when not repeating tones

**mm. 13-14** on “Droop, herbs and flowers,” SA move downward with brief text-painting motives; TB move contrarily upward; similarly on “fall, grief, in showers; alto and tenor parts cross briefly

**mm. 14½-15** soprano melody disjunct; ATB mostly stepwise, tenor notably has ascending octave leap to G4; bass descends to Eb2
mm. 16-17: soprano sustained note (F#4) followed by steps and skips up to a perfect fifth; AT move stepwise, descending then returning upward twice, predominantly parallel; bass moves by octave leaps between Eb2 and Eb3 (see Example 2.10)

Example 2.10. “Lament” mm. 16-17, parallel movement in AT, and bass octave leaps

mm. 18-19: SA disjunct, in text-painting of “craggy;” tenor more conjunct; bass continues with one final octave leap, then moves by chordal skips

mm. 20-21: soprano narrow melody mostly by steps; AT move in parallel thirds by steps; bass ascends twice from Eb2, by chordal skips, spanning an octave in m. 20, then a major tenth in m. 21

Harmonic characteristics

The key signature indicates E-flat major or C minor. The latter is most strongly in evidence. The middle section (mm. 9-18) pulls away from the C-minor tonality, but returns for the conclusion. The final measure has a half cadence in C minor, concluding on G major, and leads attacca to the next movement. The soprano part is always melodic, with the other three parts generally act together as accompaniment.

mm. 1-8: C minor, often with dissonant non-chord tones in alto and tenor (see Figure 2.9)

mm. 9-10: ATB move through G major and Ab major, settling on Db major; soprano melody contains an augmented 11th and augmented 9th (G5 and E5) which
mitigates the tonality

mm. 11-12 bass movement between Ab and Db simulates V-I; tenor lends to this, albeit with an augmented fifth (E4) above the bass’s Ab3; alto alternates between fitting this profile and creating dissonance at the augmented 4th or the major 7th; soprano’s Cbs add minor 7ths to the Db chords but these chords do not resolve with a dominant functionality

mm. 13-14 Cb major
m. 15 returns to C minor
mm. 16-17 ATB in C minor; bass pedal tone on Eb, forming a first inversion when the tonic chord is sounding, producing an unsettled quality; soprano doesn’t fit tonality, hinting at B minor or B Phrygian mode (see Example 2.10)
m.18 chords progress through C⁰-F⁷-C⁰-B⁷ (with the third spelled Eb, in the bass)
mm. 19-21 returns to C minor, half-cadencing to a G major final chord

Rhythmic characteristics

The rhythm in this movement can be likened to the slow flow of the water described in the poetry. The tempo is marked Lento con moto, with the quarter note at circa 48 beats per minute. The predominant rhythmic movement is by eighth notes, though the soprano part is often assigned long notes while the other parts move beneath. Sixteenth notes are rare, and eighth-note triplets more so, occurring twice in the soprano part and once in the other three parts. The tempo has no written changes until the last measure, though text setting and phrase structure imply that rubato would be appropriate throughout. The meter, because of the slow tempo and the rhythmic writing, is never overt. It begins in 4/4 time, and changes occasionally and briefly to 3/4 and 5/4.

mm. 1-3 soprano sustains while ATB move with short motives beneath; m. 3 changes to 3/4 time
mm. 4-5 changes back to 4/4; AT move together on quarter notes and eighth notes; soprano has eighth-note triplets on beat 4 of m. 4; bass and soprano dotted quarter-eighth note rhythm in m. 5
m. 6 changes to 5/4; STB move mostly on eighth notes
mm. 7-8 changes back to 4/4; soprano sustains; ATB together on eighth notes, dotted eighth notes with sixteenth notes, and quarter notes
mm. 9-10  soprano mostly sustains; ATB together on syncopated rhythms and eighth-note triplets on beat 2 of m. 10
mm. 11-12  more sixteenth notes used, adding to the intensity
m. 13  changes to 5/4; gently syncopated
mm. 14-15  nearly all eighth notes; m. 14 in 3/4; m. 15 returns to 4/4
mm. 16-17  soprano sustained note followed by a few shorter notes, twice; AT move together on mostly eighth notes; bass part less active
mm. 18-19  all parts more active, agitated
mm. 20-21  soprano sustained note, a few short notes, the coming to rest on whole note before the others; ATB move beneath on mostly eighth notes until final half note; m. 21 in 5/4 time

Texture/Voicing

The texture of this movement is nearly always four-part, varying from polyphonic, when the soprano sustains above the other three moving parts, to homophonic. The parts do not divide, and there is only one measure, m. 6, where a part lays out, leaving a three-voice texture.

Formal characteristics

This movement is through-composed, with the subsections either one or two phrases long. There are no musical repetitions or recapitulations, and very few textual repetitions.

mm. 1-5  first section, line 1 of text
mm. 6-8  second section, lines 2-3 of text
mm. 9-12  third section, characterized by the sudden forte, accented setting of the word “woe;” this section has the most text repetition in the piece, line 4
mm. 13-15  fourth section; mournful, lines 5-7
mm. 16-21  fifth and final section, lines 8-11 of text; arch-shaped both melodically and dynamically, with apex in m. 19
Summary

In a relatively short number of measures of music, this song moves through the various stages of grief implied by the poet, and made more explicit by the music. The song starts out with numb acceptance, then a pleading resignation. The musical contrast of the dramatic “woe” section bears more anger than the text necessarily implies. Quieter mourning follows, acknowledging the fate of the human condition. The final is a hopeless observation that the singer could do nothing to change the sad circumstance in which the beloved became trapped. The marriage of text and music provides a particularly poignant and effective expression of grief.

6. “The Hour-Glass”

Irving Fine chose the final song of the cycle to define the overarching theme by using its title as the title for the entire group. “The Hour-Glass,” while on the surface being about a specific person’s unhappy result in a love relationship, in a broader sense expresses resignation to the fate of all lovers. Beginning *attacca* following the previous movement, it retains much of the mood of the predecessor. It, however, has the point of view of an outsider, and therefore lacks the vitriol of “Lament.”

Text choice, setting, and analysis

Here again Jonson addresses the subject of love, commenting on its futility for the specific person that is the subject of the poem, and also, by extension, to all persons unlucky enough to fall in love. The poet’s analogy is of the body, and by extension, the
soul, of the unfortunate lover with the sands in an hourglass. As a result of his unfortunate love, he remains unable to rest, continually running through the hourglass.

The words are set straightforwardly, almost entirely syllabically, with the few exceptions being two- or three-note slurs. Unlike some of the previous movements, the natural rhythm of the words seems to inform the rhythms Fine chose for the music in this song, resulting in very little awkwardness in the accented and unaccented syllables.

1  Do but consider this small dust,
2    here running in the glass,
3  By atoms moved:
4  Could you believe that this
5  the body was
6  Of one that loved?
7  And in his mistress' flame playing like a fly,
8  Burned [Turned] into [to] cinders by her eye?
9  Yes; and in death, as life, unblest,
10 To have it [have't] express,
11 Even ashes of lovers find no rest.

**Melodic characteristics**

The individual lines in this movement are more easily singable than some of the others. While the soprano has one ascending octave leap, the tenor a descending octave leap, and the bass 2 a descending major ninth, the melodic intervals used in this song rarely span more than a fifth. The song does, however, contain some range issues. The soprano 1 and tenor have the highest pitches of the cycle, Bb5 and Bb4 respectively. The alto, on the other hand, extends to a rather low Gb3.

| mm. 1-4 | soprano and tenor fairly narrow range, moving predominantly by steps and thirds; alto range wider, including a fifth and a fourth; bass enters in m. 2, and utilizes only steps and thirds |
| mm. 5-7.1 | soprano and bass divide: soprano 1 and bass 2 move in mostly contrary motion toward each other; soprano remains divided for only two notes; |
AT move upward parallel to bass 2, then downward parallel to soprano; bass 1 begins parallel to bass 2, but then moves independently

m. 7.2-7.3 short motive on “here running,” in which soprano moves downward while ATB move upward

mm. 8-9 ST similar, with range spanning a major ninth; alto mostly stepwise movement, with fairly narrow range; bass all stepwise movement, essentially downward

mm. 10-13 soprano moves by chordal leaps, with an ascending octave at m. 10.4½ to m. 11.1, and high Bb5 at m. 12.1; AT move predominantly parallel in m. 11, and cross then re-cross in m. 13, with tenor moving to high Bb4; bass has steps and small chordal leaps with the exception of an ascending octave leap at m. 11.2

mm. 14-16 TB only, moving with repeated notes, steps, and a few chordal leaps, mostly in similar motion

mm. 17-19 SAT narrower range, nearly static, on text “Yes; and in death, as life, unblest,” (line 9); bass arpeggiates a G minor chord (G2-Bb2-D3-Bb3)

m. 20 SSATB mostly repeated notes

mm. 21-23.1 soprano 1 melody moves dramatically with minor sixth up to Ab5, then moves contrary to other parts; S2ATBB in predominantly parallel or similar motion upward (soprano 2 rejoins soprano 1 at m. 22.1½)

mm. 23.2-25.1 two identical two-note motives: soprano moves downward by half step, alto moves upward by whole step; tenor and bass 1 move upward by half step; bass 2 repeats note, offset from others by one beat (see Example 2.11)

Example 2.11. “The Hour-Glass” mm. 23-25.1, offset two-note motives

mm. 25.2-29 final phrase fairly narrow range: soprano and tenor within a perfect fifth (Eb to Ab in respective ranges), alto within a perfect fourth (F4 to Bb4), bass moves from G3 a half step up, then returns to repeat G3 for final four measures
Harmonic characteristics

The written key signature of this final movement is the same as the previous one, three flats. This helps to facilitate the attacca from one to the other. While “Lament” ends on a G-major chord, however, “The Hour-Glass” begins on a G-minor-seventh chord lacking a fifth (G3-F4-Bb4), so the transition will require some explanation and rehearsal if the conductor wants to avoid playing a fresh pitch (or pitches) for this last movement. The tonality of G Phrygian mode is present in the beginning and at the end, though Fine modulates, typically, through several other tonal areas in between.

mm. 1-7 begins in G Phrygian, but shortly centers more on Eb major; chord extensions and added dissonances are frequent
mm. 8-9 Gb major
mm. 10-13 Db major, cadencing on Ab major
mm. 14-16 tenor and bass only; Ab major and Bb major chords used, in IV and V function of Eb major; cadence is Bb major, mitigated when bass moves off root to third
mm. 17-23.1 returns to G Phrygian
mm. 23.2-25 tonally ambiguous
mm. 26-29 returns to G Phrygian; Gm7 chord at m. 27.2, resolves to Gm at m. 28.2, then is held

Rhythmic characteristics

The rhythmic flow of this piece is gentle and not strongly metrical. The time signatures alternate irregularly between 4/4 and 3/4, with two individual 5/4 measures occurring at measures 16 and 20. Eighth-note and quarter-note movement is typical, with little longer than a half note occurring anywhere except at the very end. The tempo is Andante, semplice, with the quarter note at circa 72. There are no indicated changes of tempo; the increasing note values at the end build into the piece a natural ritardando,
which, accompanied by the diminishing dynamics, dies away in an expression of futility and resignation.

mm. 1-4 SAT homorhythmic on flowing rhythm; bass begins later, in m. 2, with more active rhythm; m. 2 changes to 3/4 time; m. 3 returns to 4/4 time

mm. 5-7 all parts homorhythmic; m. 5 changes to 3/4 time, and is metrically ambiguous due to half note followed by quarter note tied over the bar line to an eighth note (see Example 2.12); m. 6 in 4/4 time, changing back to 3/4 time in m. 7; m. 6-7 more flowing eighth-note rhythm

Example 2.12. “The Hour-Glass” mm. 5-7, ties mitigating metric feel

mm. 8-9 ST together, mostly eighth notes; alto less active, mostly quarter notes; rhythmically balanced with eighth notes and quarter notes; m. 8 returns to 4/4 time

mm. 10-11 soprano independent, with eighth notes and dotted quarter notes; ATB rest for 2½ beats, then together on all eighth notes; m. 11 in 3/4 time

mm. 12-13 tutti, somewhat contrapuntal, predominantly eighth notes; soprano rests all of m. 13; bass rests second half of m. 13; m. 12 returns to 4/4 time

mm. 14-16 tenor and bass together, soprano and alto resting; eighth-note triplets, dotted eighth notes with sixteenth notes, and one set of four sixteenth notes set this section apart with its contrasting rhythm; m. 16 in 5/4 time

mm. 17-19 all parts homorhythmic in more sedate rhythm, mostly quarter notes; m. 17 in 4/4 time, m. 18 in 3/4 time, and m. 19 in 4/4 time

mm. 20 in 5/4 time; all parts together on eighth notes and eighth-note triplets

mm. 21-23.1 returns to 4/4 time; parts together with the exception of the first two beats, when SA have dotted-quarter-and-eighth-note rhythm against even quarter notes in TB

mm. 23.2-25.1 SATB1 together; bass 2 rhythmically echoes the other four parts (see Figure 2.11)

mm. 25.2-26 predominantly eighth notes and eighth-note triplets; m. 25 to the end in 3/4 time
mm. 27-29 note values increased, effecting a slowing down without a marked tempo change; SB hold tied dotted half notes throughout; tenor moves on quarter notes in m. 27, then hold until the end; alto holds in m. 27, then is the last to move, on beat 2 of m. 28

Texture/Voicing

The texture in this relatively short piece changes often. Fine made these changes by having one or more voice lay out for half a measure to three measures, and by dividing the soprano and bass parts at specific places where added harmonic richness was desired. The overall texture is homophonic, with only brief bits of polyphony in contrast.

m. 1 three parts, SAT
mm. 2-4 bass joins halfway through m. 2
mm. 5-6.1 six parts, SSATBB
mm. 6.1-7.1 five parts, SATBB
mm. 7.2-9 four parts, SATB
mm. 10-12 soprano alone for two beats, then four parts; more contrapuntal
m. 13 soprano drops out, leaving three parts, then bass drops out, leaving two
mm. 14-16 two-part texture, TB
mm. 17-19 four parts, SATB
m. 20 five parts, SSATB
m. 21 six parts, SSATBB
m. 22 five parts, SATBB
mm. 23-25.1 short echo section, with bass 2 answering the two-note motives of SATB1
mm. 25.2-29 four parts, SATB, homophonic

Formal characteristics

This piece has some repetitive elements that, while not note-for-note repeats, are recognizably similar, and give the song more solidity and a more satisfying ending than some of the others. The form can be represented as ABCDA\textsuperscript{1}B\textsuperscript{1}Codetta.

mm. 1-4 A section
mm. 5-9 B section, blossoming with thicker texture and widely spaced pitches
mm. 10-13 C section, more agitated, includes dynamic and pitch climaxes
mm. 14-16  D section, somewhat subdued, with two-part men only
mm. 17-20  variant of A section
mm. 21-25  variant of B section, with similarly widely spaced six-voice texture, gradually thinning to four parts
mm. 26-29  an extension of the B section which becomes a satisfyingly final ending for the song and for the cycle

Summary

By placing this song last in the set, the composer has vested it with the summative last word. It is a pronouncement about the futility of romantic love, and while it expresses unhappiness and frustration, ultimately it ends with resignation, and without the angst of some of the earlier songs. Indeed Fine, by ending on a simple G-minor chord, implies an acceptance that the poet did not seem to imply.

Summary of Cycle

Irving Fine’s choice of texts for his cycle The Hour-Glass reflects the romantic person’s affection for the kind of story or poem that portrays unrequited love or love followed by loss. This was a common theme in Elizabethan and Jacobean England, the era in which the poet, Ben Jonson, lived. For evidence that people still enjoy this sort of narrative, one only needs to consider how popular the plays of William Shakespeare remain. The use of poems by a single poet is one of the most basic unifying factors in this cycle. The subject matter of all of the poems, that is, love in its various permutations, strengthens this unity further.

The key relationships between movements are not likely to be obvious to the listener. Movements 1, 5, and 6 share the common key signature of three flats, but with
three different tonal centers: “O, Know to End as to Begin” is in E-flat major, “Lament” in C minor, and “The Hour-Glass” is in G Phrygian mode. “Have You Seen the White Lily Grow” begins in G major, but ends in E minor. “O Do Not Wanton with Those Eyes” begins in B minor, and ends in E major. “Against Jealousy” is more F minor than anything, though as is the case with all of the songs, some tonal ambiguity is present throughout much of the piece. The practical offshoot of this is that most choirs will need to have a pitch or chord sounded at the beginning of each movement. Of the first five songs, the fourth and fifth are marked *attacca* at the end. The transition after the fourth is likely to be the more difficult of the two, but if the choir holds pitch well, it is not insurmountable. In “Against Jealousy,” the alto solo ends on an Ab4, and the sopranos begin “Lament” on a G4, with the other three parts entering a beat and a half later on a G-major triad. “Lament” ends like it begins, in G major, and “The Hour-Glass” begins with a G-minor-seventh chord, albeit incomplete. The altos beginning on the seventh, an F, is the most problematic part here, though the sopranos on the third will need to know the difference between major and minor.

Fine’s choice of rhythms in most of the songs flow from the natural speaking rhythms of the text. Sometimes, particularly in the dramatic, declamatory phrases, syllables and words are held unnaturally long, but this is minimal. It is with pitch that the composer veers drastically away from patterns found in speaking the text. He seems to choose musical emphasis over literary correctness, as if to say that the music tells what the text cannot. It is with the jagged lines, the brief dissonances, and the accented articulations that we get Irving Fine’s vision into the meaning of these centuries-old texts.
This set is a powerful, dramatic, and often beautiful expression of the many aspects of romantic love.
Chapter 3: *American Madrigals* by Kirke Mechem

Brief Biographical Sketch and Introduction to the Cycle

Kirke Mechem has made a name for himself as a composer in many genres, and as of 2010 lives in San Francisco, where he has spent most of his career. Although he has written two symphonies, he is best known for his operas and choral works. Born in Kansas in 1925, he was educated on both American coasts, spending time at Harvard and at Stanford. *American Madrigals* is one of many choral cycles he has composed. Not only has Mechem been an important composer of choral cycles, his scholarly work, mentioned previously in Chapter 1, has helped to define and further the choral cycle as a genre. Among his other choral cycles are *The Winged Joy: A Love Story by Women Poets* for women’s voices, and *English Girls* for men’s voices. A humorous addition to the choral cycle genre is his *Tourist Time*, a group of songs about various tourist destinations, such as Boston “where the Cabots speak only to Lowells, and the Lowells speak only to God,” and Texas, “where God speaks only to Texans, and He talks like a native, y’all.” Additionally, Mechem wrote the cycle *Earth My Song: A Choral Cycle for Chorus (SATB) and Piano*. The three songs in this cycle, all included in one octavo, are “I Could Hear the Least Bird Sing,” “Isle of the Dead,” and “Rebirth.” The composer’s father, Kirke F. Mechem (1889-1985), wrote the poems for this set. *Winging Wildly: A Choral Cycle* was scored for unaccompanied mixed choir, and the three songs, included under
one cover, are “Birds At Dusk” (with text by Sara Teasdale), “The Caged Bird” (with text by Paul Dunbar), and “Everyone Sang” (with text by Siegfried Sassoon). The madrigal cycle *Five Centuries of Spring* for unaccompanied voices also fits the description of a choral cycle; in it the composer set texts by five different poets from five different centuries, all having the common theme of Spring.

Mechem became a champion of choral cycles because, as he puts it, cycles have “a built-in unity and scope which make it easier to involve singers and audiences for a longer period of time. This, together with the great flexibility in program building which the cycle offers, is of tremendous advantage to the choral conductor.”

Mechem’s aforementioned choral cycle *American Madrigals* is a set of five compositions, published separately, based on American folk songs but exhibiting a nod to Elizabethan madrigal style. As the composer explained on the inside cover of each of these pieces,

> the texts of Elizabethan vocal music often hark back to folk themes, and popular melodies were freely borrowed by the madrigal composers of that period. But while the classic English and Italian madrigals were written for social singing by individuals, part singing in America – particularly in this century – has been done chiefly by choral groups, with a view toward public performance. These “American Madrigals” are, therefore, intended for choruses; they may be sung *a cappella*, with piano, or with instrumental ensemble… They are based on American folk songs, but are not “settings” or “arrangements.” The folk material, both words and music, has been altered, added to and juxtaposed at will in an attempt to provide polyphonic, madrigal-like choral pieces with a specifically American flavor.


The genesis of the cycle was a commission by the Dallas Civic Chorus, under the direction of Lloyd Pfautsch, for the American Bicentennial in 1976. The pieces are suitable for college-level choirs as well as accomplished community choirs and high school choirs.

The performing forces specified for this set are SATB choir (with minimal divisi) and piano. This is the version analyzed in this study. According to the composer, however, these pieces may be performed a cappella, with piano accompaniment, or with a small instrumental ensemble of flute/piccolo, clarinet, bassoon, and strings. The instrumental parts are available for rent from the publisher, Carl Fischer.

1. “Kind Miss”

According to Carl Sandberg in his collection of American folk songs, the first song of that Mechem uses in the cycle, “Kind Miss,” is a Kentucky folk song. The song’s lyrics describe an unsuccessful proposal of marriage by a well-to-do but unattractive man. Mechem’s setting is light-hearted throughout, at a quick tempo, and with added rhythmic interest in the accompaniment. The voice parts often seem to be conversing back and forth with each other, especially in the third verse. The challenges for a choir preparing this piece are most likely to be rhythmic, with the polyphonic character of the song requiring independence and a high level of musicianship.

Performing forces

SATB choir, with minimal divisi, and piano

Text choice, setting, and analysis

1 Kind miss, kind miss, go ask your mother,
2 If you my bride shall ever be.
3 If she says “Yes,” come back and tell me.
4 If she says “No,” we’ll run away.
5 Kind miss, I have much gold and silver;
6 Kind miss, I have a house and land.
7 Kind miss, I have a world of pleasure,
8 And all of these at thy command.
9 What do I care for your gold and silver?
10 What do I care for your house and land?
11 Kind sir, what do I care for your world of leisure,
12 When all I want is a handsome man?

This song is a dialog between a man and a woman on the subject of marriage. The theme is familiar in folksong literature: A man wants to marry a woman, but the woman does not care for the man. The first two verses (lines 1-8) are the man’s proposal; the third verse (lines 9-12) is the woman’s reply. The composer did not choose to separate the voices by sex in the first two verses, but in the third, the women’s voices are used for the reply (beginning in m. 75) while the men reiterate parts of the second verse. Finally the tenors rejoin the women to sing the last phrase of the song (line 12), followed by the basses thrice repeating the title phrase, “kind miss,” the last time joined by the tenors. The composer added the words “kind sir” to the third verse (line 11) to emphasize the nature of the dialog.

The text is set primarily syllabically, with a few two-note slurs. There is one brief section, however, where the composer used Renaissance-style text painting with
melismas on the word “run” for the sopranos, altos, and basses, and on the second syllable of “away” for the tenors (line 4, mm. 39-40). Another nod to historical styles is the composer’s use of hocket, the distributing of a several different portions of a phrase of text to the different voice parts. This occurs at mm. 14.5-16 with the text “go ask if you my bride shall be” (from lines 1 and 2), and at mm. 64.5-67 with the text “and all of these at thy command” (from line 8). In both instances, each voice part sings two words or syllables in turn, holding the second until all have sung, beginning with altos, then sopranos, then basses, then tenors. To help make these phrases intelligible, the conductor should point out in rehearsal what is happening between the voice parts, and make sure that, when each part gets to their second note, they observe the written diminuendo to get out of the way for the next part to enter.

Melodic characteristics

While the melodic lines in this song often follow parts of the original melody, there is less stepwise movement and many arpeggiated triads in each part. Identifying these triads and rehearsing them in isolation will be necessary for all but the most advanced choirs. Frequent voice crossings, which occur between all the adjacent parts, are also potentially problematic, and are often difficult for most singers to notice because of the use of different clefs. Ranges are not extreme; even when the tenors ascend to G4, there is divisi so that second tenors are not as high.
mm. 1-4  piano right hand (RH) moves downward while left hand (LH) moves upward in contrary motion; the main accompanimental motive is established in the first five notes of the RH, and in inversion in the LH (see Example 3.1): this motive is never used in the vocal parts

Example 3.1 “Kind Miss” mm. 1-3, accompanimental motive

mm. 7-9  antecedent “kind miss” motive an ascending perfect fourth, the consequent “kind miss” motive a descending minor third, in tenor and alto (see Example 3.2)

Example 3.2 “Kind Miss” mm. 7-9, the “kind miss” antecedent and consequent motives

mm. 10-12  soprano and bass have “kind miss” motive, in slight variation in the soprano part, moving to G5

mm. 14.2-16  the phrase “go ask if you my bride shall be” in hocket, beginning with alto, then soprano, then bass, then tenor

mm. 18-24  predominantly stepwise movement in all parts; brief tenor divisi at m. 24

mm. 24.2-31  similar to mm. 7-14

mm. 38-41  melismatic, mostly stepwise section with text painting on “we’ll run away”
mm. 41-51  imitative, developmental section based on the consequent “kind miss” motive, with ascending sixths, an inversion of the descending third motive, mixed in

mm. 51.2-56.1  ascending perfect fourths the dominant melodic feature

mm. 56.2-64  descending thirds predominate, as many as four in a row (tenor, m. 56.2-58: G4-Eb4-C4-A3-F3)

mm. 64.2-67  hocketed melody in same order and same pitches as mm. 14.2-16

mm. 70.2½-74  ascending whole-tone scale steps in parallel motion, tenor with bass 1 and bass 2, soprano with alto (though these are not all whole tones); diminuendo, from forte to pianissimo, in relatively high range for men may cause registration problems (C4, E4, and G4), especially if a shift to falsetto is required

mm. 75-89  SA independent from TB; SA on third verse text, includes “what do I care” motive (see Example 3.3) in soprano at mm. 75-76, and in alto at mm. 80-81; TB, reiterating second verse text, again uses predominantly descending thirds

Example 3.3 “Kind Miss” mm. 75-77, “what do I care” motive

mm. 90-91  “what do I care” motive in soprano

mm. 92.2-94  bass on antecedent “kind miss” motive, followed by tenor on consequent “kind miss” motive

mm. 98-100  soprano sings “what do I care motive” with text “when all I want”

Harmonic characteristics

“Kind Miss” has a C-major key signature, and much of the time this remains the tonality. Sometimes the song appears to be in Mixolydian mode, with B flats added, and other times the tonality veers strongly away from C major, but ultimately finishes with an unambiguous C-major final chord. Along with tonality shifts within the piece, there are
several places where the composer mitigates the traditional tonality with clusters in place of traditional chords. Even where traditional triads are evident, some major seventh and ninth chords add flavor to the harmony.

mm. 1-4 instrumental introduction harmonically ambiguous
mm. 5-14 C major established, with hints at Mixolydian mode through the use of Bb in accompaniment (m. 10) and bass and accompaniment (m. 15)
mm. 15-17.1 briefly bitonal, with SA and piano RH in A minor, and TB and piano LH in G minor; the most difficult tuning aspect here will be the A4 in the soprano against the Bb3 in the bass
mm. 17-19 SA parallel with each other, as are TB; contrary motion between SA and TB creates, in turn, triads and dissonances
mm. 19-25 harmonies move smoothly through D-G-C-G-D-A, all major, then rather abruptly returns to C major at m. 25
mm. 25-30 C major/Mixolydian, as before
mm. 31-37 tonally ambiguous
mm. 38-42 returns to C major
mm. 43-58 rapid modulations, giving an unsettled feeling of the tonality: mm. 43-46, Gm-Cm-Dm; mm. 47-52, A-D-G; mm. 53-58, Gm-C-Eb-Cm-Fm;
mm. 59-64 tonality more stable, in G minor
mm. 65-68 briefly bitonal, similar to mm. 15-17.1
mm. 68-70 similar to mm. 17-19
mm. 70.2½-72 major triads in TB1B2 ascending by whole steps, D-E-F#-G#/Ab-Bb-C; some notes doubled at the octave in SA and piano; the voicing at the end of this sequence changes to T1T2B: balance would probably be best achieved by dividing all men into three equal parts, with the middle part some tenor 2 and some bass 1
mm. 72.2-77 C major/Mixolydian, as before
mm. 78-82 G minor
mm. 83-86 G major
mm. 87-95 modulates through A-D-G
mm. 96-100 tonally ambiguous
mm. 101-103 ends emphatically in C major

Rhythmic characteristics

The rhythmic character of this song is underpinned by the strong metrical feeling of two and the quick tempo. Both of these aspects are sporadically mitigated, but only for brief passages. The primary motives, as shown in Examples 3.1 – 3.3, have a rhythmic
component in addition to their melodic structure. There are very few eighth notes in the vocal parts; in the accompaniment, they are used most often as a part of the accompanimental motive shown in Example 3.1. The initial tempo is *allegro vivo*, with the half note at about 126 beats per minute. The time signature is cut time (*alla breve*).

mm. 1-3 piano both hands (BH) introduces the motivic four eighth notes-half note rhythm that is frequently employed throughout the piece

mm. 4-7.1 rhythm becomes less active

mm. 7.2-14 voice parts enter contrapuntally and imitatively; piano continues, combining motivic rhythm with less active rhythm with the accompanimental motive alternating between RH and LH

mm. 15-17.1 less active, as parts enter then hold long notes

mm. 17.1-19.1 Renaissance-style microrhythm, in quasi-3/4 time (see Example 3.4 and 3.5)

Example 3.4 “Kind Miss” mm. 17-20, microrhythms area in original format

Example 3.5 “Kind Miss” mm. 17-20, microrhythms as performed
mm. 24-31 similar to mm. 7-14
mm. 32-37 less active, with longer average note values and tempo changes: rallentando at m. 32 and poco ritenuto at m. 36; accompaniment more active than voice parts at mm. 32-34, then doubling voices
mm. 39-40 vocal melismas mostly eighth notes
mm. 41-44 tenor and soprano on half-note syncopations, contrary to alto and bass moving on the beat
mm. 47-52 alto now syncopated, contrary to other three parts
mm. 59-64 alto, bass, and soprano intersperse the consequent “kind miss” motive with more important tenor melody, which is subsequently picked up by bass
mm. 65-68 similar to mm. 15-16, in augmentation
mm. 68.2-70 quasi-3/4 microrhythm, similar to mm. 17-20
mm. 72.2-75 held notes with diminuendo for TB and accompaniment
mm. 75-80 syncopations with quarter note-half note (or two tied quarter notes)-quarter note
mm. 81-88 accompanimental motive in RH every two measures
mm. 89-90 TB and piano RH hold
mm. 90-97 melodic phrases sung by each part in turn, followed by long held note: soprano, first, then alto, bass, tenor, then soprano again; accompanimental motive in piano mm. 91-92, then doubled (eight eighth notes followed by a whole note) in mm. 93-94
mm. 98-100 tempo changes to lento molto, quarter note = ca. 63; mostly half notes
mm. 101-103 Tempo I without change until final chord, which has fermata

Texture/Voicing

The texture of this piece presents its most significant challenges. It is, like the Renaissance madrigals that it imitates, almost entirely polyphonic. There is little divisi; the soprano part does not divide, and the tenor and bass parts do not divide simultaneously. Therefore, in order to balance the parts, a conductor may want to rebalance by using some second sopranos on the alto 1 part, and put some second tenors and some first basses on the middle men’s part. Much of the accompaniment is lightly textured, with one to three notes at a time.

mm. 1-7 piano only, in two-part texture
mm. 8-9 tenor and alto are added to accompaniment; polyphonic
mm. 10-16 soprano and bass enter; polyphony thickens
mm. 17-19 voice parts homophonic over sustained accompaniment
mm. 19.2-40 SATB with piano, polyphonically; m. 24 tenor *divisi* for half a beat
mm. 41-42 texture thins to AT and piano
mm. 43-54 SB rejoin; polyphony continues
mm. 55-68 voice parts from four-part to three-part as each part takes one or two measures of rest
mm. 68.2-74 predominantly homophonic; three-part men from m. 70.2, with basses *divisi* first, then returning to unison as tenors divide at m. 72.2
mm. 75-90 voice parts from four-part to three-part as each part takes one or two measures of rest
mm. 91-92 texture thins: SA with piano; alto *divisi* at m. 92.1
mm. 93-97 bass then tenor re-enter; SA1A2TB with piano
mm. 98-100 homophonic, with accompaniment doubling voices in four-part texture, SA1A2T, to five-part texture as tenors divide at m. 100
mm. 101-103 starts homophonic, SAT; piano adds counterpoint as tenor divides; bass re-enters at m. 102; piano releases as voices hold final chord

**Formal characteristics**

This movement is organized in strophic form, with three verses. The verses are musically similar, but are not interchangeable, so the resultant form is AA₁A². After a seven-measure introduction, verse one begins and continues until measure 41. Verse two starts, overlapping the end of verse one, and continues until measure 75. Verse three likewise overlaps the end of verse two, and continues until the end of the song.

**Summary**

The somewhat humorous character of the text of “Kind Miss” is emphasized by the playful interplay between the voices, particularly between the women’s voices and the men’s voices. The accompaniment is light, often nearly transparent. As the first song of the cycle, “Kind Miss” sets a light-hearted mood for the listening audience. It also
exhibits, with its Renaissance-style idioms, the reason that these pieces are called madrigals.

2. “He’s Gone Away”

A touching love song, “He’s Gone Away” provides immediate contrast to the first movement of the cycle. Moving slowly throughout, it is a dialogue between a young woman and the young man she loves.

Performing forces

SATB choir with minimal divisi and piano

Text choice, setting, and analysis

1. He’s gone away for to stay a little while Farewell, fair thee well
2. But he’s/I’m coming back if he/I goes/go ten thousand miles
3. But who will tie my shoes? Your father will tie your shoes
4. And who will glove my hand? Your mother will glove your hand
5. And who will kiss these ruby lips when he is gone?
6. And I will kiss those ruby lips when I come back
7. Look away, look away over Yandro.

According to Carl Sandberg, Yandro is the name of a mountain in North Carolina, and therefore this song has a more specific provenance than many folk songs.4 It is a lament by a young woman in love with a man who is traveling away from her, but the answer to her questions is voiced by the man, who promises to come back. Mechem has

set both the question and the answer in close proximity, rather than dedicking a verse for each, the way the original folk song is set down in Sandberg’s book. In setting the text, Mechem gave the questions, the “girl’s part” of the song, to the sopranos and altos, and gave the answers, the “boy’s part,” to the tenors and basses. The women’s parts are set more simply, with the sopranos entirely syllabic and the altos having three two-note slurs and one three-note slur. The men’s parts are just slightly more elaborately set, having two-, three-, and four-note slurs.

As a practical consideration, in order to make the interwoven questions and answers in the text more easily understandable, it would be a good idea to have the choir arranged in column formation so that women are all together and men are likewise all together. This is contrary to the practice of having all the men in between the two women’s parts, having the men in back of the women, or of having a completely mixed choir.

**Melodic characteristics**

The melodic line of “He’s Gone Away” is characterized by chordal leaps, particularly ascending leaps. The sopranos’ climactic major-seventh arpeggio on the text “and who will kiss…?” (measures 21.2-24) is the high point in both pitch and emotion of the original melody. Mechem’s variants move only a half step higher, but with the softer dynamic level, these places are more ethereal, atmospheric gestures (measures 5 and 31). Conductors should instruct their choirs to treat each line as a melody, in the fashion of polyphonic Renaissance madrigals. It is also important to notice the many instances of
voice crossing, which occur between all of the adjacent parts. Ranges are not extreme: on
the low end, basses have one F2, and altos have one G3.

mm. 1-4 introduction by piano: melody in RH upper notes, should be clearly
delineated from accompanimental chords underneath

mm. 4.3-10 melody in alto; soprano and tenor have independent countermelodies; bass
echoes the melody, but on the lyrics “Farewell, farewell” (see Example 3.6)

Example 3.6 “He’s Gone Away” mm. 4-8, voice parts

mm. 10.2-12 alto retains the traditional melody; all parts have ascending triadic
arpeggio, beginning with tenor (D3-F3-A3), then alto (F4-A4-C5), then
soprano (E4-G4-Bb4), and finally bass (Bb2-D3-F3)

mm. 13-15 parts move predominantly downward; ATB have some part crossings

mm. 16-29 melody in soprano; three arch-shaped phrases, the first begins on C4, and
is the lowest and shortest (mm. 16-17); the second is higher and longer
(mm. 18.4-21); the third is highest and longest (mm. 21.4-29), and returns
all the way back to C4

mm. 29.2-38 TB begin with the final phrase of the traditional melody on “look away,”
then they and SA diverge with original Mechem material; soprano sings
melody of the second half of the final phrase from the folk song at mm.
35.3-38
Harmonic characteristics

“He’s Gone Away” is essentially in the key of F major, but Mechem set it with some ambiguity, as the key tends to vacillate to D minor much of the time. The D-minor portions are, with one exception, the more modal-sounding D natural minor lacking the raised leading tone, C sharp. The exception occurs in m. 13, where the alto and the accompaniment both have a C#4; however, the resultant A-major chord does not resolve to D minor, but instead meanders with some chromaticism until finally resolving to the dominant of F major, C major, at slightly less than halfway through the piece. The tonal ambiguity is especially notable in the penultimate measure, which seems to end in F major, then gently shifts to D minor in the final measure.

mm. 1-4    accompaniment introduction in D natural minor
mm. 5-12   voices enter; more strongly in F major, though some D minor tendencies persist, albeit lacking a C# leading tone
mm. 13-16.2 more rapid harmonic rhythm: A-Bbm-Gb-Fsus-Fm-Bbm7-Csus w/b9-Csus7-C
mm. 16.3-18 return to F major/D minor
m. 19      accidental Eb in the melody, from the original folk song, gives a brief Mixolydian mode feel
mm. 20-21  rapidly undulating harmonies move through Ab-DbM9-Gb-C7 w/m9-Ab-Fm-Bbm
mm. 23-25  return to F major/D minor
mm. 26-27  A-Db (bass C#3, enharmonically Db3)-Gb, resolving to F major
mm. 28-38  continues in F major/D minor

Rhythmic characteristics

“He’s Gone Away” has a time signature of 4/4. At the marked tempo of Lento, with the quarter note at about 40 beats per minute, the most notable rhythmic characteristic of the song is the slow tempo. A small ensemble, especially a young one,
may have a difficult time maintaining this tempo, and may therefore have to speed it up slightly. If, however, there is too much increase, the mood of the piece will be altered irreparably. Much of the rhythm is in quarter notes and half notes, though eighth notes are not uncommon. Longer note values, from dotted half notes to one instance of three whole notes tied together, will often necessitate the use of subtle staggered breathing. At no time in this song do more than two parts move with the same rhythm, so the singers’ rhythmic independence is a required skill for this piece.

mm. 1-4 introduction begins with pick-up note on beat three; melody in dotted rhythm; accompaniment in mostly quarter notes separated by rests (see Example 3.7)

Example 3.7 “He’s Gone Away” mm. 1-4, introduction

mm. 4.3-9 calm rhythm in all parts; accompaniment doubles rhythms from voice parts

mm. 10-15 more active rhythms, using more eighth notes; tenor syncopation at m. 12

mm. 16-21 SA move predominantly homorhythmically; TB do likewise, in answer to the questions in the SA parts; gentle syncopations in TB and accompaniment

mm. 22-29 augmentation of rhythm, with quarter notes now the shortest note value; fermata at m. 24; soprano has three tied whole notes, mm. 27-29
mm. 29.2-35  dotted rhythm in “look away” motive (see Example 3.8) in TB; SA more sustained rhythms until m. 33, alto variant on “look away” motive; soprano dotted rhythm at m. 35

Example 3.8 “He’s Gone Away” mm. 29-30, “look away” motive

mm. 36-38  calmer rhythm to end

Texture/Voicing

The texture of this song is polyphonic throughout, with the four voice parts entering and exiting independently. The voices have rests as long as six beats interspersed between the sung phrases; the piano sometimes plays just one hand or even one note at a time. Both of these characteristics make the texture thin at times. There are only two places where the voices divide into five parts, at measure 13 in the soprano part, and at measure 19 in the alto part. The accompaniment often doubles the notes of the voice parts, either at the same pitch or with an octave displacement in either direction.

Formal characteristics

Mechem’s version of “He’s Gone Away” is through-composed, although the original folk song is strophic. The original verse one and verse two are combined in this composition; verse one was the questioning verse (“Oh who will tie my shoe?” etc.),
whereas verse two was the answering verse (“Oh it’s Daddy who’ll tie my/your shoes,” etc.). Mechem overlapped the women’s and men’s parts, and used rests between phrases, in order to place the question and the answer in much closer proximity than in the original; this negates the need for a complete second verse. There are three distinct sections in the song, the second being the longest, and the third the shortest.

mm. 1-4 introduction
mm. 5-16 first section, mournful, then hopeful
mm. 16.2-29 second section: women with questions, men with answers
mm. 29.2-38 third section: simultaneously hopeful and melancholy

Summary

Of the five folk songs used in the cycle *American Madrigals*, “He’s Gone Away” is the most familiar. It is easily available in several different arrangements for choirs in various voicings, as well as arrangements for orchestras, concert bands, vocal duet, and solo voice. The pieces of the traditional melody that Mechem used, however, are not the only important parts of this song. While the melody progresses in a linear fashion, it is not always present, and the Neo-Renaissance compositional technique, which suggests that each voice part should be treated as a melody, is the most significant aspect to understand when preparing and performing this song.

3. “Kansas Boys”

In terms of length of text, number of measures, and number of pages, “Kansas Boys” is the second longest of the five songs in the cycle *American Madrigals*; only “New York Girls” has more measures and pages. However, the fast tempo keeps this
song under two-and-a-half minutes. From a practical standpoint, the fast tempo requires that enunciation must be clear and forward-placed.

**Performing forces**

SATB choir with minimal *divisi* and piano

**Text choice, setting, and analysis**

The lyrics of this song have a fun-loving, rollicking spirit that is mirrored in the original tune, and Mechem supplied even more humor when he juxtaposed the original melody with portions of “Home On the Range” and “Turkey in the Straw.” Part of the inside joke here is that Mechem was himself a Kansas boy. The text is set overwhelmingly syllabically. The only slurs are of the two-note variety, and they occur in soprano and tenor in the final phrase of the song, and in soprano and alto when they are singing the “Kansas Boys” text to the tune of “Turkey in the Straw” at measures 63 through 67. In the text below, the italics are used for lyrics that do not belong to the original folk song of “Kansas Boys.” Each verse of the original is four lines long, spanning eight measures of music.

1. Hello girls, listen to my voice
2. Don’t you fall in love with no Kansas boys,
3. For if you do, your fortune it will be
4. Hoecake, hominy, and sassafras tea.
5. They’ll take you out on a jet-black hill,
6. Take you there so much against your will,
7. Leave you there to perish on the plain,
8. That’s the way with the Kansas range.
9. *Give me a home where the buffalo roam*
10. Home is a cabin with a big log wall
11. Nary a window in it at all
Where the deer and the antelope play
Smoky chimney and a shaky floor,
Where seldom is heard a discouraging word
Clapboard roof and a broken-down door,
Where the cyclones are blowin’ all day
That’s the way with the Kansas boys.
Swing that pretty girl, ‘round we go,
Sashay right and dobedo,
Hey ho, diddledum day,
When they go dancing the clothes that they wear,
Is an old brown coat all picked and bare,
And an old white hat more rim than crown,
A pair of cotton socks that they wore the week around.
If Kansas boys ever fall in love
First it’s “honey,” then it’s “turtle dove,”
After they’re married, it’s no such thing,
“Get up and get my breakfast, you no good thing!”

Melodic characteristics

The original melody of “Kansas Boys” has a very narrow range. In seven of its eight measures, it only uses three notes, the ^1, ^2, and ^3 of the major scale on which it is based. In the fifth measure, the only measure that deviates from these three pitches, the melody uses the ^5 and \(^4\).

mm. 1-5 introduction consists of each voice part singing “hello” in turn; starts with bass on D3, alto on F4, tenor on C4, and soprano on A4; piano mostly doubles voices at same pitch or with an octave displacement

________________________

mm. 10-12 melody in imitative entrances, first alto, then soprano, and then bass (see Example 3.9)

Example 3.9 “Kansas Boys” mm. 10-12, voice parts in imitation

Example 3.10 “Kansas Boys” mm. 30-33, soprano descending sevenths

mm. 13-18 melody in soprano; all parts narrow range; mm. 15-16: tenor on “sassafras” motive (from soprano melody at 14) on B3-G3-A3, with bass harmony C3-C3-F3, four times getting progressively softer

m. 19 soprano on “sassafras motive, G4-Eb4-F4, three times, harmonized by alto on G3-G3-Bb3, Ab3-Ab3-C4, and Bb3-Bb3-D4

mm. 20-23 melody in bass; SAT countermelodies

mm. 24-27 new melodic material in bass and tenor

mm. 29-30 “sassafras” motive in tenor; piano doubles 8va in m. 29

m. 31 minor variant of “sassafras” motive in bass

mm. 30-32 descending sevenths in soprano: two minor sevenths, then one major seventh (see Example 3.10)
mm. 34-35 unison voices on last phrase of second verse (line 8); piano doubles in m. 34
mm. 38-52 bass sings “Home on the Range” melody; SAT sing third verse of “Kansas Boys” words, with variant of melody in soprano: mm. 40-41, mm. 43-44, mm. 46-47, and 49-50
mm. 52-55 SAT and bass switch roles: SAT sing last phrase of “Home on the Range,” with alternate lyrics (line 16), while bass reiterates the final phrase of the second verse of “Kansas Boys” (line 8)
mm. 57-71 square dance melodies, first in TB, then in SA beginning at m. 62.2½; borrowed melodies from “Skip to My Lou” (tenor, mm. 57-58) and “Turkey in the Straw” (soprano and alto in unison mm. 62.2½-71)
mm. 70.2-72 tenors repeat line 8, fortissimo, holding noses in response to line 24
mm. 73-84 wider melodies, imitative and contrapuntal, marked dolcissimo
mm. 85-88 humorous again; soprano again has three descending sevenths, minor, minor, then major
mm. 89-91 unison voices, doubled by piano in m. 90, on final phrase of last verse (line 28), on traditional melody
mm. 92-96 bass holds from previous phrase; alto “hello” like beginning, but becomes part of hocketed phrase, which continues in tenor then soprano, reiterating line 1 of the text, though not in the traditional tune
mm. 98-101 extended version of traditional second phrase, on line 2; accompaniment finishes with three iterations of the “sassafras” motive

**Harmonic characteristics**

The traditional folk melody used in “Kansas Boys” uses only degrees 1-5 of a major scale. Where Mechem used the traditional melody, it is generally cast in a Mixolydian mode, which doesn’t conflict with the traditional melody due to the lack of the ^7 within that melody. The song begins and ends in G Mixolydian, with no sharps or flats in the key signature, but passes through other tonal centers of significant enough length to warrant changes in the key signature.

mm. 1-5 introduction builds then sustains a D-minor seventh chord, functioning as a dominant seventh chord in G Mixolydian
mm. 6-16  G Mixolydian mode; mm. 12-13 are furthest from this tonality with accidentals Bb and Eb; mm. 6-7: I-vi-VII-I, the major VII chord being a characteristic of Mixolydian mode (see Example 3.11); accompaniment has dissonant diatonic clusters in mm. 10-12

Example 3.11 “Kansas Boys” mm. 6-7, the characteristic VII chord in Mixolydian mode

![Example 3.11](image)

mm. 17-18  G major, with F# as accidental in bass and alto
m. 19  modulation to Eb major
mm. 20-23  Eb major; key signature changes to three flats at m. 20
m. 23  tenor leads transition to Ab major
mm. 24-33  Db accidentals establish Ab major
mm. 34-35  abrupt shift to E major
mm. 36-53  F major; key signature changes to one flat at m. 36,
mm. 54-56  modulates through F minor and E major
mm. 57-70  A major; key signature changes to three sharps at m. 57
mm. 70.2-88  F major/F Mixolydian; key signature changes to one flat at m. 72; Eb accidentals begin in m. 80
mm. 89-91  D major
mm. 92-94  Dm7 chord built and sustained, like at beginning
mm. 95-96  D7 sustained
mm. 98-101  returns to G Mixolydian mode

**Rhythmic characteristics**

Most of this song has a fast, driving tempo, which, along with the repeated eighth notes, makes it reminiscent of a country fiddle tune or a minstrel song. The time signature
is cut time (alla breve); however, there are meter changes interspersed throughout the piece, especially in the middle section.

- **mm. 1-5**: each voice part sings “hello” in turn, holding the second syllable.
- **mm. 6-9**: voice parts homorhythmic (see Example 3.11); accompaniment in bass note/chord pattern (sometimes informally called an “oompah pattern”).
- **mm. 10-12**: voice parts more contrapuntal (see Example 3.9);
- **mm. 13-14**: “sassafras” rhythmic motive of two eighth notes followed by one quarter note: m. 15 TB and piano RH; m. 16 TB; m. 17 piano BH; m. 18.1 all parts; m. 19 SA and piano BH; m. 19, time signature changes to 3/2
- **mm. 20-28**: rhythm less active in all parts except bass; tenor becomes more active at m. 23; accompaniment becomes more active at m 24, then reverts at m. 26;
- **mm. 29-30**: “sassafras” motive in TB and piano RH
- **m. 31**: “sassafras” motive continues in bass and piano RH
- **mm. 34-35**: voice parts homorhythmic, and accompaniment nearly so
- **mm. 38-52**: bass independent with less active rhythm; SAT interject four phrases from traditional tune, with more energetic rhythm, followed each time by one measure of rest; accompaniment is more active under SAT interjections, less active under bass melody
- **m. 42-54**: frequent time signature changes, to 3/4, cut time, 3/2, & 6/4
- **m. 52**: “sassafras” motive in piano BH
- **mm. 57-58**: TB homorhythmic, on active square dance rhythms; accompaniment “oompah”
- **mm. 59-62**: tenor and bass independent, accompaniment minimal
- **mm. 62.2-70**: SA together, in unison then homorhythmic; tenor and bass independent of each other and of SA; accompaniment “oompah” mm. 63-67, then “sassafras” motive at mm. 69-70.1
- **mm. 70.2-71**: tenor and piano BH active while other voice parts hold
- **mm. 72-73.1**: piano moves under held vocal parts; rallentando poco a poco marked at m. 72
- **mm. 73.2-88**: all parts more serene; Andante marked at m. 76; time signature changes to 3/2 at m. 81; time signature changes back to cut time at m. 82; time signature changes to 3/2 at m. 83; time signature changes back to cut time at m. 84
- **mm. 89-91**: voice parts homorhythmic, and accompaniment nearly so
- **mm. 92-96**: each voice part sings in turn, holding the second syllable, like beginning whole rest in all parts
- **mm. 98-101**: a tempo; voices active until long note at mm. 100-101.1: release with “button” from accompaniment on m. 101.2; “sassafras” motive in piano RH mm. 100-101.1
Texture/Voicing

The texture of “Kansas Boys” includes more homophony than the previous two movements, but it includes a significant amount of polyphony as well. The homophonic sections are where Mechem used the traditional “Kansas Boys” melody in a way that is most like the original. He also used another Renaissance compositional technique, the quodlibet, when he interspersed portions of other well-known songs resulting not only in counterpoint, but also humor.

There are a few places where the voice parts expand from four to five. The altos divide at measure 33. The tenors divide at measure 85, then basses at measures 86-88; the proximity of these would make it easy to rebalance the men into three equal parts to cover these divisions. Finally, the sopranos divide at mm. 95-96.

Formal characteristics

In “Kansas Boys,” Mechem again took a strophic song and made it seem less so. He accomplished this by adding original compositional elements to the traditional folk song, along with bits of other folk songs.

mm. 1-5     introduction
mm. 6-14    verse 1
mm. 15-18   verse 1 codetta
m. 19       transition
mm. 20-35   verse 2
mm. 36-38   transition
mm. 38.2-54 verse 3 quodlibet with “Home on the Range”
mm. 54-56   transition
mm. 57-62   square dance interlude
mm. 62.2-70 verse 4: “Kansas Boys” lyrics to “Turkey in the Straw” melody
mm. 70.2-72 transition
mm. 73-91   verse 5
mm. 92-101  coda

Summary

The serious portion of this song is found between falling in love and getting married. Mechem emphasized the romance in lines 25 and 26 with music that is sweet and tender. After the wedding, however, comes the cold-water-in-the-face realization that the girl has married a Kansas boy, and, true to form, he is a selfish lout. The rest of the song makes it clear that Kansas boys are rough around the edges, but the implication still is present that some girls, despite all the warnings, are going to fall in love with and marry Kansas boys, and that it may work out in the end after all. It is a fun text, which the music supports and expresses throughout.

4. “Adam’s Bride (A Marriage Lesson)”

The original source material for the lyrics and tune of “Adam’s Bride” sets it apart from the other four songs in the cycle. The tune is gleaned from nineteenth-century hymnody, specifically from the Sacred Harp tradition of printing music using shape notes. The tune is “Edmonds,” and it appeared for the first time in the 1869 edition of The Sacred Harp. It was composed by Elder Edmund Dumas, a Baptist minister involved in a revision of The Sacred Harp, and named in honor of Elder Troup Edmonds, who also aided in this revision. The text is older than the tune; it has been often misattributed to

Abraham Lincoln, because of evidence that he, in 1826, recited or sang it at his sister’s wedding, under the title “Adam and Eve’s Wedding Song.” However, closer scrutiny reveals that the poem existed before that time, that it was present in North America before the American Revolution. The text of this song also can be found under the titles of the other hymn-tunes with which it has been coupled. These are “Creation” and “Wedlock,” both of which can be found in shape-note publications from the mid-nineteenth century, “Creation” in The Sacred Harp of 1844, and “Wedlock” in The Social Harp of 1854.

Mechem again reaped from the fertile ground of Renaissance idioms to breathe new life into this happy but sober lesson. Imitation in the voice parts, sometimes to the extent of canon, is present throughout the piece. He also used text painting to underscore the meaning of the lyrics in a few places. As with much of the cycle, the independence of the vocal lines makes it challenging both to learn the music and subsequently to clearly communicate the text to the audience. Conductors should remind their choirs that, although the minor tonality and slow tempo give this piece a certain gloomy quality, it is not a sad song, but rather a solemn one.


Performing forces

SATB choir with minimal *divisi* and piano

Text choice, setting, and analysis

In setting this text, Mechem adapted the original fairly freely, and omitted portions that have to do with the subjugation of a wife to a husband. The important lesson to be gained from the text is that husband and wife should be side by side, with more contemporary context suggesting that they are equals. As this is contradicted by the omitted verses, it is understandable why they would not be used, and certainly makes the piece more palatable for most contemporary choirs and audiences. This is a happy story, but lacks the tongue-in-cheek humor of the up-tempo songs in this cycle. Indeed, the music lends a solemnity to the story, as in a sermon at a wedding ceremony.

As is the case in the original Sacred Harp setting, the words are set almost entirely syllabically or in two-note slurs. The notable exception to this is on the word “swarmed” (line 3), at which point the tenors and altos sing rather lengthy melismas in imitation of swarming insects. There are four-and-a-half verses, each verse being four lines long. The second verse has the extra lines, accomplished musically by repeating the third and fourth phrase of the melody.

1  When Adam was created, he dwelt in Eden’s shade,
2  As Moses has related, before a bride was made,
3  Ten thousand time ten thousand of creatures swarmed around,
4  Before a bride was forméd, or any mate was found.
5  He had no consolation, but seemed as one alone,
6  Till, to his admiration, he found he’d lost a bone,
7  This woman was not taken from Adam’s head, we know;
8  And she must not rule over him, ‘tis evidently so.
This woman was not taken from Adam’s feet, we see;
And she must not be abused, the meaning seems to be.
This woman she was taken from under Adam’s arm;
And she must be protected from injury and harm.
This woman she was taken from near to Adam’s heart,
By which we are directed that they should never part.
To you, most loving bridegroom, to you most loving bride,
Be sure you live a Christian and for your house provide.
Avoiding all discontent, don’t sow the seed of strife,
As is the solemn duty of every man and wife.

Melodic characteristics

The original melodic sections that Mechem used in much of “Adam’s Bride” are four phrases long, although he did much elaboration to expand on this original material. The melodic contour of the original is arch-shaped for the first phrase; this is repeated exactly for the second phrase. The third phrase contains two shorter arch-shaped half-phrases. The fourth phrase is based on the first, but starts higher, mitigating the arch shape on the front end. The voice ranges are not extreme: sopranos have a few high G5s, and altos end on a low G3. Basses have two low F#2s and one low E2, but these are doubled an octave higher as divisi bass 1 with bass 2, so any basses for whom those notes are too low could stay on the upper notes.

mm. 1-8 introduction, based on the third and fourth phrases of the original tune
mm. 8.2-18 canonic entrances on initial arch-shaped phrase (see Example 3.12), alto first, then bass, then soprano, then bass again: melody spans an octave, C-C

Example 3.12 “Adam’s Bride” mm. 8-12, initial arch-shaped phrase, voice parts

mm. 18-20 imitative entrances, STAB, beginning with ascending minor 6th G-Eb
mm. 20-24 stepwise melismas on “swarmed;” tenor longest, spanning a diminished octave
mm. 26-30 bass melody based on initial phrase
mm. 30.2-34 tenor on initial phrase followed by bass on variant of initial phrase, doubled with added octaves by piano
mm. 34-43 alto begins melody, then passes it off to soprano at m. 37; other parts have motivic descent by steps
mm. 42-44 tenor melody, minor 6th followed by descending steps
mm. 46-50 bass melody
mm. 49-61 soprano and alto melody in canon, one beat apart; piano doubles SA with added octaves, mm. 49-52, and again in RH, mm. 58-60
mm. 62-66 alto melody
mm. 67-79 melody in soprano, keeping original shape, but now from E-E, giving it a Phrygian modal character (see Example 3.13); mm. 74-79, piano RH doubles melody

Example 3.13 “Adam’s Bride” mm. 66-70, soprano melody in Phrygian mode

mm. 80-83 melody, still in soprano, returns to original range and tonality

**Harmonic characteristics**

“Adam’s Bride” begins with three flats in the key signature, and is composed in a fairly straightforward C-minor tonality. This is mitigated by the lack of a raised leading tone, which weakens the dominant function of the V chord when it is used. The key signature for the final verse changes to no flats or sharps; the Phrygian-mode melody is juxtaposed over harmonies that modulate with the use of accidentals before finally returning to the original C minor.

mm. 1-8 introduction establishes C minor
mm. 9-22 C minor continues; transparent accompaniment, much of the time on drone or pedal point Cs, with open-fifth Gs or alternating to Gs
mm. 23-26 briefly in C major, with some chromaticism and cross-relationships
mm. 26.2-30 Ab Lydian
mm. 30.2-38 returns to C minor; m. 36, B natural in tenor produces V chord, but resolution is delayed and thereby mitigated
mm. 39-50 vacillates between C major and C minor solely through the use of E naturals; m. 49, tenor B natural produces viio½-i cadence
mm. 50-66.1 C minor, though briefly Eb major at mm. 54.2-55 and 58
mm. 66.2-79 key signature changes at m. 67 to no flats or sharps; the ensuing section is the most active in terms of harmonic rhythm, moving through C, Am, G,
Em, A, C, Am, and Em

mm. 80-83 returns to C minor, but ends on a C-major chord

Rhythmic characteristics

The rhythmic character of “Adam’s Bride” is dictated mostly by the tempos, which are slow, and the seemingly contradictory time signature, cut time (alla breve).

The initial tempo is marked at a half note receiving about 40 beats per minute, and this is followed by the direction “(g)ently flowing without dragging.” This feeling of the half note as the pulse, rather than the quarter note at 80 beats per minute, better gives the feeling of rhythmic flow that the composer intended. For most of the song, the predominant movement is at the quarter-note and half-note level. The most rhythmically active parts are the eighth-note melismas on the word “swarm” and the nearly constant stream of eighth notes in the accompaniment during most of the third verse. The long sustained notes in the piano accompaniment, particularly in the first verse, will decay, and may have to be subtly repeated to keep the tone sounding (this is not an issue if the optional instrumental ensemble is used).

mm. 1-8 introduction rhythmic movement at mostly quarter-note level
mm. 9-17 canonic entrances (see Example 3.12) over long notes in accompaniment
mm. 18-25 rhythmically more active; vocal entrances strettto one beat apart; eighth-note melismas mm. 20-24; m. 18 poco accelerando; m. 21 rallentando poco a poco; m. 24 ritenuto
mm. 29-33 accompaniment more active, mostly homorhythmic with voices
mm. 37-39 piano doubles voices
mm. 40-42 piano drops out
mm. 42.2-51 piano re-enters, mostly doubling voices’ rhythms
mm. 52-62 bass rhythm less active; piano rhythm more active, with nearly constant eighth notes; m. 58 poco animato; m. 61 poco rallentando; m. 62 ritenuto
mm. 63-66 SB on held notes; AT move mostly on quarter notes; accompaniment rhythm calms; ST drop out at m. 65; m. 63 Tempo I; m. 64 rallentando; m. 66 has a fermata
Example 3.14 “Adam’s Bride” mm. 70.4-74.3, flowing eighth notes

Texture/Voicing

The primary textural concern in “Adam’s Bride” is the polyphony. This requires independence from the musicians as well as greater attention to diction when the text is not being sung simultaneously. The first three verses are almost entirely polyphonic; the
fourth is homophonic, giving the main point or moral of the story a better chance at being understood.

The voice parts in this song only rarely expand beyond the four. There is alto divisi at measures 23-25, and basses divide at measures 71-73 (see Example 3.14). With staggered contrapuntal entrances, there are often just two or three voice parts singing. But it is in the accompaniment that the most striking changes of texture are accomplished. The piano alternates between providing very sparse accompaniment between long rests, as in Example 3.14, and playing rich six-note chords, as in measures 75-76, adding to the already full choral texture there.

**Formal characteristics**

After an instrumental introduction, the overall form of “Adam’s Bride” is strophic, with no interludes between verses. On the contrary, the verses overlap slightly. Within each verse of the original tune is the inner form of aaba\(^1\); Mechem’s original material obscures this much of the time.

| mm. 1-8 | introduction            |
| mm. 8.2-27.1 | verse 1      |
| mm. 26.2-50   | verse 2, the inner form of which is aaba\(^1\)ba\(^1\) |
| mm. 49.2-66   | verse 3       |
| mm. 66.2-83   | verse 4       |

**Summary**

“Adam’s Bride” is the longest song of the *American Madrigals* cycle, more than twice as long as any of the up-tempo songs. It requires a sustained sound as well as sustained attention through the slow-moving parts. There are rhythmic challenges, mostly
due to staggered entrances and independent, contrapuntal part writing. Even more of a challenge is communicating the joyous solemnity of the song without allowing the slow tempo and natural-minor tonality to render the piece lugubrious. In order to achieve this, singers should be encouraged to sing with inner energy, or energy held back, rather than to allow themselves to relax the intensity of this song in comparison to the up-tempo songs before and after it.

5. “New York Girls”

In “New York Girls,” Mechem adapted the words and tune of a rollicking old sea shanty, keeping the flavor of the traditional folk song while adding newly composed “Fa la la” choruses in between the verses to transform it into a madrigal. The original tune is an Irish folk song called Larry Doolan. The sense of humor that Mechem frequently employs in his compositions is very much in evidence in this piece, but the conductor may need to point this out to the singers; encourage the singers to have a twinkle in their eyes when they sing about, for example, buying gold earrings for fifty cents.

Performing forces

SATB choir with some divisi and piano

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Text choice, setting, and analysis

The text for this piece is from a traditional English sea shanty, and it is sometimes otherwise titled “Can’t You Dance the Polka” or “Jack Tar Alone.”

1 As I came down the Bow’ry one ev’ning in July
2 I met a maid who asked my trade, and a sailor John said I
   REFRAIN
3 Then away you Santy, my dear Annie,
4 Then away you New York girls, can’t you dance the polka?
5 Fa la la, etc.
6 To Tiffany’s I took her, I did not mind expense
7 I bought her golden earrings, they cost me fifty cents
   REFRAIN
8 She said, “You lime-juice sailor, now see me home you may.”
9 But when we reached her cottage door, she unto me did say,
10 “Fa la la,” etc
   REFRAIN

Specific references to New York City are the Bowery (line 1) and Tiffany’s jewelry store (line 6). In line 8, “lime-juice sailor” refers to the practice in the English Navy of eating limes to ward off scurvy. “Santy” and “Annie” in the text are references to another shanty, Santiana or Santy Anna, which was a popular shanty about the Mexican general, Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna.12 Though the version Mechem used has only three verses included, others have as many as fourteen, telling a more sinister tale of the sailor being plied with liquor then robbed.

[As I walked out on South Street, a fair maid I did meet
Who asked me please to see her home, she lived on Bleecker Street
   And away, you Johnny, my dear honey

Oh you New York girls, you love us for our money]¹³

[Shanghaied in San Francisco, we fetched-up in Bombay,
They set us afloat in a leasehold boat that steered like a bale of hay.
Away you Santee, my dear Annie,
Oh, you New York girls, you love us for our money.]¹⁴

**Melodic characteristics**

There are two main characteristics of the melodic lines in “New York Boys,” the chordal skips used in the first half of the verse and the second half of the refrain, and the predominantly stepwise movement of the “fa la la” sections. The latter include a more specific three-note ascending scalar motive referred to as the “fa la la” motive. The range is moderately wide, with several exposed G4s for the tenors being the most likely concern. Also of concern are the voice crossings in adjacent parts; conductors should make sure the singers recognize these.

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mm. 1-6 introduction based on familiar “Sailor’s Hornpipe” tune, including “fa la la” motive (see Example 3.15): this foreshadows the use of the three-note ascending scalar motive on the “fa la la” text by the voices

Example 3.15 “New York Girls” mm. 2-4, “fa la la” motive in piano introduction

mm. 6.2-14 melody in soprano, chordal skips; bass ascending octave jump; tenor two descending and one ascending octave jumps (see Example 3.16); TB cross

Example 3.16 “New York Girls” mm. 6-10, chordal melody and octave jumps in voices

mm. 14.2-18 refrain: melody in bass, alto parallel at sixth; contrapuntal entrances by soprano in m. 15, then tenor in m. 16, each on an Eb arpeggio; “fa la la” motive in accompaniment; N.B. typographical error in soprano m. 17 – should be an Eb5, tied from the previous measure, not a C5 (in more recent printings the publisher may have corrected this)¹⁵

¹⁵ Kirke Mechem, e-mail message to author, October 1, 2010.
mm. 18.2-22 melody in tenor, to high G4 at m. 19
mm. 22.2-24 “fa la la” motive in soprano and alto (see Example 3.17)

Example 3.17 “New York Girls” first appearance of “fa la la” motive in each voice part

![Example 3.17](image)

mm. 24.2-27 variant of “fa la la” motive by tenor and bass (see Example 3.17)
mm. 27-35 second verse, melodically similar to first verse
mm. 35.2-43 refrain similar to mm. 14-22
mm. 43.2-46 similar to first “fa la la” section
mm. 47-54 “fa la las” extended
mm. 55-58 bass on ^1 & ^5, and “fa la la” motive  
mm. 58-65 melody in soprano, then bass, then soprano again, then tenor
mm. 66-70 melody in soprano, then bass, then soprano again, then tenor
mm. 71-85 alto similar to bass in mm. 55-58; soprano enters at m. 73, tenor at m. 76, bass at m. 78; all parts have a unique two-measure phrase on “fa la la” repeated several times; tenor part contains difficult tritone interval
mm. 85-93 melody passed around while other parts sing mostly stepwise “fa la las;” at mm. 92-93 melody is on “fa la la” instead of text
mm. 93-99 refrain in TB; mm. 93-95 bass melody above tenor; SA motivic “fa la las”
mm. 100-107 repeated part-specific melodic fragments: TB each have a one-measure pattern that they repeat several times; alto and soprano begin at mm. 101 & 102, respectively, each with a two-measure pattern repeated; the patterns devolve into shorter units
mm. 108-110 a flurry of steps back and forth (up and down)
mm. 110-114 climactic arpeggios to high notes, then final phrase

**Harmonic characteristics**

The harmonic underpinnings of “New York Girls” are the most straightforward of any of the songs in the cycle. The key signature has three flats, and it hold to a strong feeling of E-flat major, without accidentals, for the majority of the song. Where it
deviates is in the middle, when it modulates to D major. It remains in D major between measures 54 and 65, when it begins to modulate back to E-flat major.

mm. 1-6 introduction establishes E-flat major
mm. 7-22 extensions in vocal and accompanimental parts, major seventh chords, sixth chords, and diatonic dissonances
mm. 23-31 accompaniment becomes slightly more dissonant
mm. 34-35 unison
mm. 36-43 strong root and ^5 presence in piano LH
mm. 48-49 A naturals start modulation
mm. 50-53 modulation continues
mm. 54-65 D major is established; key signature changes to two sharps at m. 55
mm. 66-70 modulation to return to Eb major; key changes to three flats at m. 68
mm. 71-96 Eb major continues; counterpoint and non-chord tones give fluidity to the tonality
mm. 97-112 accompaniment increasingly adds dissonances, both diatonic and chromatic; B flats in piano LH give a stand-on-dominant or pedal point character to the harmony; mm. 111-112, held chord is Bb13, with voices divided into eight parts and a diatonic cluster in piano RH
mm. 113-114 penultimate chord DØ7/Eb, resolving to straightforward Eb

Rhythmic characteristics

“New York Girls” is related, through text, tempo, and partially through accompaniment style, to the polka. The composer indicates “Polka tempo” at the beginning of the piece, after the Allegro moderato, and the metronome indication is of half note at about 112 beats per minute. The tempo and the excitement increase near the end of the song with accelerando poco a poco and stringendo. The time signature is cut time (alla breve); in a bit of comedy, the composer shifts to 3/2 for two measures in each of the second and third verse sections, giving an off-kilter, clumsy feeling to the poor naïve boy portrayed in this song. The character of the rhythm, especially in the “fa la la” sections, should retain a madrigal-like lightness, as indicated by the composer’s poco staccato directions.
mm. 1-6    jaunty tempo with a lightness to the rhythm established
mm. 7-14   homorhythmic, predominantly in quarter notes; accompaniment has
            intermittent bass note/chord pattern typical of a polka
mm. 14.2-22 voices in imitative counterpoint; accompaniment more active, with eighth
            notes including, but not limited to, the “fa la la” motive
mm. 22.2-27 “fa la la” motives and variants, mostly eighth notes in SA, somewhat
            augmented in TB; accompaniment plays quarter notes interspersed with
            quarter rests
mm. 28-35  similar to mm. 7-14, except with time signature changing between cut
time and 3/2
mm. 35.2-43 similar to mm. 14.2-22
mm. 43.2-47 similar to mm. 22.2-27
mm. 48-52  increasingly active rhythms
mm. 53-54  voices become homorhythmic, with accompaniment still in counterpoint
mm. 55-63  bass ostinato, doubled by piano LH; piano RH mostly off-beats; imitative
            entrances by SAT
mm. 64-70  voices in smaller homorhythmic groups: m. 65 alto and tenor; m. 66
            soprano, alto and tenor; mm. 67-70 soprano with alto, tenor with bass
mm. 71-82  ostinatos in all parts; m. 71 alto starts; m. 73 soprano starts; m. 76 tenor
            starts; m. 78 bass starts; piano doubles alto, then bass
mm. 83-86  ostinatos degenerate via diminution
mm. 86-93  melody mostly in quarter notes; counterpoint on “fa la las” in eighth and
            quarter notes; accompaniment rests at mm. 87.2-89
mm. 93.2-99 TB on refrain rhythms, overlaid by SA on “fa la la” rhythms
mm. 100-105 ostinatos in all parts: m. 100 TB start; m. 101 alto starts; m. 102 soprano
            starts; m. 104 accelerando poco a poco
mm. 106-109 rhythm increasingly agitated, more active; m. 107 stringendo
mm. 110-112 offset penultimate phrase, SA first, then TB
mm. 112.2-114 accompaniment more active, with eighth notes under SATB half note;
            final tutti quarter note followed by two accented quarter notes in
            accompaniment

Texture/Voicing

The texture of “New York Girls” varies between homophonic and polyphonic,
and the voicing varies from one note to eight-part divisi voices with piano playing eleven
notes. The homophonic sections are the first two verses. The rest of the song is
polyphonic, and, as with the other songs in the cycle, the polyphonic sections add
significantly to the skill level required to perform this piece.
Formal characteristics

The piece is constructed in a modified verse/refrain form, really an ABC form, with the C section, the “fa la la” syllables, usually tacked onto the end of the refrain. The exception to this is after the third verse, at m. 71, where the “fa la la” section follows the verse in an expanded form, then is mixed together with verse material at mm. 86-93, and is mixed with refrain material at mm. 93.3-98. The ending is a codetta based on material from the refrain.

mm. 1-6 introduction
mm. 7-14 verse 1
mm. 14.2-22 refrain
mm. 22.2-27 “fa la la” section
mm. 28-35 verse 2
mm. 35.2-43 refrain
Summary

With “New York Girls,” the composer closed the cycle with a rollicking, energetic song certain to bring a smile and get the audience’s collective toes tapping. It requires a different sort of energy than the slower pieces, including forward-placed diction and clear enunciation. The choir is aided in these by the homophonic setting of the first two verses and the repeated refrain. The most musically challenging parts are the “fa la la” sections, which have the easiest text.

Summary of Cycle

As a cycle, these five pieces are tied together by their origins as American folk songs, as well as by the stylistic characteristics of Renaissance-era madrigals that the composer weaves into the texture of each piece. The order of the songs shows that Mechem has common sense in terms of programming, as the tempos alternate between fast and slow. This is helpful for the audience, to keep their interest with the frequent changes of mood; it is also beneficial to the performing ensemble, in order to give all their minds and voices respite and refreshment as the character of each piece changes.
The ever-present challenge in polyphonic choral works is making the text understandable to an audience. Mechem composed this cycle in a way that is at once sensitive to the needs of the audience to understand the text while also displaying his creative compositional skills. His creativity with the Renaissance idioms that he skillfully interweaves added new life and interest to the old traditional songs that he used as the foundation for *American Madrigals*.

Tonally the pieces move from C major to F major/D minor, to G Mixolydian mode, to C minor/C major, and ending with E-flat major. The close proximity of these tonalities help to provide a smooth transition from one piece to the next where keys more remote from each other would be aurally jarring.

The relationships between the subject matter of these pieces, and even some of the titles, helps to sustain the level of concentration needed by both audiences and performers for a longer piece of music. The song “Kansas Boys” relates to the song “New York Girls” simply by the similarity in their titles. More than that, these are all songs dealing with some aspect of male/female relationships, and in only one, “Adam’s Bride,” is the relationship that is described an ideal circumstance. They each represent a slice of life, a depiction of an aspect of the American experience, or really of the human experience.

Kirke Mechem knows how to write singable music, and is creative and successful in making larger forms out of smaller pieces. *American Madrigals* is a skillfully and artfully composed choral cycle, and choral conductors willing to work through its challenges will reap the rewards that it has to offer.
Chapter 4: *Voices* by Stephen Paulus

Brief Biographical Sketch and Introduction to the Cycle

Stephen Paulus is a prolific composer of choral cycles as well as other musical genres. He is a former student of Dominick Argento and also of Paul Fetler at the University of Minnesota. He also has written many operas, solo song cycles, and non-cyclic choral works. To date Mr. Paulus has composed and published 28 multi-movement works that can be categorized as choral cycles. Most are for mixed chorus, that is, sopranos, altos, tenors, and basses, but some are for treble chorus, and one, *To Be Certain of the Dawn*, is composed for mixed chorus and children’s chorus. A few of these cycles, for example, *Prairie Songs*, are unaccompanied. Most, however, have some instrumental accompaniment, either provided by just a few instruments or a full orchestra. His choice of texts is imaginative, including a set by eighth-century Chinese poets, and another with texts by thirteenth-century female mystics. In his cycle *Personals*, he drew his text from the personal-ad section of a Greenwich Village newspaper, with titles like “Seeking Mr. Right,” and “Good Looking Male.”

For his cycle *Voices*, Paulus set varied texts by Rainer Maria Rilke, a poet whose life straddled the turn of the twentieth century. Rilke wrote mostly in German, but he also wrote a significant number of poems in French. The poems Paulus chose for this nine-movement cycle were originally in German, but are set in English translation.
Movements 1-6 are from Rilke’s *Die Stimmen (The Voices)*, a set of ten poems first published in 1906. Movement 7 and 8 are from individual poems, and movement 9 is adapted from *The Duino Elegies* numbers 1 and 10. Translations are by Albert Flemming (movements 1-6) and Stephen Mitchell (movements 7-9).

In an e-mail communication with the author on December 6, 2010, Paulus said that he did not consider *Voices* to be a choral cycle, but he did not specify an alternate genre name. He indicated that he simply considers this and other similar compositions as multi-movement choral works. He conceded that others may see *Voices* as a choral cycle, and did not object to this designation. He indicated that the lengths of many of his compositions were determined by the persons or organizations that made the commissions and by the structure suggested by the texts.

The Association for Clinical Pastoral Education and the Minnesota Orchestral Association commissioned *Voices* for presentation at a 1988 conference on ministry in specialized situations. The overall subject is mental illness, and while that is an important subject and this is an important work, the topic limits the appropriateness of the cycle for many concert settings, as performers and audiences may feel that the subject is too depressing. However, with a choir that chooses to explore the darker side of human psychoses, and an audience that is mature enough to handle the emotional content of the piece, *Voices* can provide a powerful, moving experience. The level of musical difficulty is also a limiting factor, as *Voices* should be attempted only by accomplished college or community groups, or by professional choirs. It is an illustration of a choral cycle on a larger scale than the others profiled in this dissertation, as it is longer, lasting nearly 40 minutes. *Voices* also is fully orchestrated, with piccolo, 3 flutes, 3 oboes, 3 clarinets, 3
bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets (in C), 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, 3 additional percussion, harp, piano/celeste (one player for both), and a full complement of strings, at least forty to balance the winds and percussion. The choir divides often into seven or eight parts; on occasion each voice section divides into as many as four parts. In the second movement, however, the choir is reduced in size as only the men sing. There are two solos, the first for tenor, in the first movement, and the second for mezzo-soprano, in the seventh movement. Neither solo is sufficiently long to warrant hiring a soloist, so it probably would be best if they were chosen from within the choir. The cycle is published as a unit: that is, all nine movements are included under one cover, and as such, singing individual movements without singing the whole work is not likely to be practical due to the cost; additionally, three of the movements, numbers 2-4, are connected by *attacca*, making performance of any of these movements as written dependent on performance of all three, in the proper order. *Voices* is a big, challenging work, worthy of a choir and an orchestra looking to meet the challenge.

1. “Opening”

The first movement of *Voices* is unobtrusively titled “Opening,” and it sets the tone for the work to come. It begins powerfully and somewhat accusingly, with a dissonant pedal point in the orchestra clashing against the chords of the choir, providing an uncomfortable, unsettled mood from the outset. The middle of the song is more lyrical in approach, providing contrast and relief. Toward the end, the music becomes more agitated as the voices are asked to make “mob sounds,” speaking at random any of the
last five lines of the text. This music is not going to be sweet, but it will challenge the audience to recognize an unpleasant aspect of what it means to be human.

Performing forces

SATB chorus with divisi to SSSAAATTBB, semi-chorus, tenor solo, and full orchestra

Text choice, setting, and analysis

The text for “Opening” highlights those people in society who need attention, the blind, the sickly, the maimed. Because of their unfortunate conditions, society tends to ignore them, preferring not to hear from or about them. Originally called Titelblatt, or “Title Page,” this text was the first part of Rilke’s poetic cycle Die Stimmen (“The Voices”).

1 The rich and fortunate do well to keep silent,
2 for no one cares to know who or what they are.
3 But those in need must reveal themselves,
4 must say: I am blind,
5 or: on the verge of going blind,
6 or: nothing goes well with me on earth,
7 or: I have a sickly child,
8 or: I have little to hold me together...
9 And chances are this is not nearly enough
10 And because people try to ignore them as they pass them by:
11 these unfortunate ones have to sing!
12 And at times one hears some excellent singing.
13 Of course, people differ in their tastes:
14 some would prefer to listen to choirs of boy castrati.
15 But God Himself comes often and stays long,
16 when the castrati’s singing disturbs Him.

The text is set almost entirely syllabically. There is just one rather long melismatic passage from measure 64 to measure 72, all on the word “sing.”
Melodic characteristics

The melodic movement by the voices in “Opening” is consistent within each of the sections. In certain sections the voices have emphatic repeated pitches mixed in with some stepwise movement, and in the other, contrasting sections they perform wide, dramatic leaps.

mm. 1-4  divisi chorus (SSAATBB) with repeated notes and stepwise motion over sustained orchestra (see Example 4.1)

Example 4.1 “Opening” mm. 1-5, opening statement with dissonance between instruments and voices

mm. 5-8  unison strings

mm. 9-14.1 similar to mm. 1-4; mm. 11-13 orchestra punctuates rather than sustains strings unison, mostly stepwise; voices re-enter at m. 18.3 in unison, then ST move upward while AB move downward

mm. 14.2-23 unison melody by TB: repeated tones, then large ascending intervals answered by smaller descending intervals; mm. 25-31 mostly stepwise sixteenth notes by violas

mm. 25-35 soprano melody moves generally upward while alto moves down in contrary motion eventually dividing to five parts (SSAAA)

mm. 36-46 voices mostly unison, with ascending octave leaps from D3/D4-D4/D5 at phrases beginning at mm. 52, 55, and 56

mm. 47-60
| mm. 61-72 | unison voices abruptly divide to 8-part (SSAATTBB), with soprano 1 ascending by octave from A4-A5, and bass 2 descending by augmented octave from A3-Ab2; mm. 67-72, outer voices move in contrary motion toward each other, inner voices more static |
| mm. 73-80 | semi-chorus |
| mm. 79-83 | solo violin in upper register |
| mm. 84-89 | SA in unison |
| mm. 90-95 | SSA to three parts, mostly stepwise movement |
| mm. 95-98 | ascending flourish in upper strings |
| mm. 99-110 | orchestra in low register; basses low, tenors midrange (see Example 4.2); SA on repeated notes; solo tenor enters at m. 103, reaches high A4 at m. 106 |
Example 4.2 “Opening” mm. 101-104, strings and bass 2 in low register, layering on of higher parts providing gradually thickening texture

These un-for-tun-ate ones have to sing, and chances are this is not near-ly e-nough,

But God Him-self comes re-veal,
mm. 111-118 in speaking voice, “mob sounds” of choir speaking at random any of lines 12-16; TB begin at m. 11; SA begin at m. 113; crescendo over repeated notes in orchestra; choir finishes at m. 117

**Harmonic characteristics**

The harmonic structure of “Opening” is ambiguous, moving from tonality to bitonality to atonality. As is the case in all of the subsequent movements, there are no sharps or flats in the key signature. The composer uses accidentals in the score when they are needed, and the implication is of atonality or rapidly shifting tonal centers. Harmonies are often complex, the composer favoring quartal and quintal harmonies and dissonances over triads. This harmonic approach adds to the overall difficulty of the piece, and conductors may need to call attention to intentional dissonance in rehearsal. In this study, the specification of unisons throughout the piece, in both vocal and instrumental parts, should be understood to be not purely unison because of added octaves above or below. For example, when both men and women are described as singing in unison, it will often mean that each will be in their own octave. True unisons, at the same pitch, will be specified as such.

mm. 1-4 orchestra Cs in octaves under E-major chord in voices gives bitonal character to the sound, albeit incomplete
mm. 5-8 orchestra only in unison
mm. 9-13 E major in voices over unison Cs in orchestra becomes Eb major, over unison E, then A, in orchestra
mm. 14-23 orchestra in unison; choir starts in unison at m. 18, then expands outward in quartal/quintal variation
mm. 25-35 unison men over dissonant low strings; rapid running sixteenth notes in viola add to the unsettled feeling; low brass double men at mm. 32-34
mm. 36-46 Es in accompaniment give a more stable tonal center approximating E minor or E Phrygian mode
mm. 47-53 two-part counterpoint of voices in unison over cellos and contrabasses in different unison, atonal
mm. 54-60 voices centered on D, ambiguously neither major or minor (lacking a third); orchestra continues atonally
mm. 61-63 dominant-sounding unison As, as dominant of D, in voices and low strings; bitonal Eb chords in middle and upper orchestral parts
mm. 64-66 bitonal, with Ab major in lower voices and instruments, D major in upper voices; becomes polytonal in m. 65.2 with G major in upper instruments
mm. 67-72 predominantly E major; orchestra rests at mm. 68-70
mm. 73-80 bitonal effect, with SSA in major triads over TB on dyads of perfect fourths, fifths, and major sixths, dissonant with the women’s parts; orchestra mostly rests, but punctuates with E-major chord with added augmented fourth
mm. 79-83 solo violin on atonal melody
mm. 84-94 G minor/Bb major; SSA voices mm. 90-94, cadencing on Fsus
mm. 95-98 violins 1 and 2 and violas in parallel triads in E Dorian, cadencing on F# major
mm. 99-111 quasi-polytonal, beginning with F#-C# open fifths, adding G, C, and E; SA alternate between C4-F4 and E4-A4; tenor solo atonal (see Example 4.2)
mm. 112-118 orchestra adds Bs and Bbs (see Example 4.3)

Example 4.3 “Opening” mm. 115-118, orchestra building to end

![Example 4.3](image)

**Rhythmic characteristics**

The strong accents that drive the piece forward are among the most significant rhythmic aspects of this song. Meter changes and tempo changes are plentiful. The rhythms, however, are straightforward and not difficult. The piece begins in 3/4 time,
with the quarter note at 104 beats per minute. It is additionally marked “Force-full; energetic.”

mm. 1-4 voices begin with quarter notes over sustained orchestra (see Example 4.1)
mm. 4-5 *molto accelerando* to 144-152 bpm
mm. 5-8 orchestral interlude on mostly eighth notes; m. 7.3 *ritardando*
mm. 9-13 similar to mm. 1-4; *a tempo* at m. 9; mm. 11-12 *poco a poco accelerando*
mm. 14-23 orchestra on eighth notes; choir re-enters at m. 18, mostly quarter notes
mm. 25-31 TB rhythm in eighth notes to half notes; viola in running sixteenth notes; lower strings on staccato quarter notes
mm. 32-33 TB and low brass with quarter notes on the beat; low strings eighth notes off the beat (with eighth rests on the beat)
mm. 36-46 violins with sixteenth-note tremolo; SA melody mostly quarter notes until long note at mm. 43.2-46; m. 37 pressing forward
mm. 47-50 homorhythmic quarter notes in voices and orchestra; *pesante*
mm. 51-60 rolls in percussion, first on snare drum, then on high hat; triplets in orchestra as voices hold longer notes
mm. 61-63 voices with quarter notes tied over bar lines; orchestra plays only on beat one in each measure; m. 62 time signature changes to 4/4
m. 61-64 *meno mosso; allargando; a tempo*
mm. 64-72 less active rhythm
mm. 77-84 *ritardando* at m. 77.3; *poco meno mosso* at m. 84
mm. 86-88 triplets by celeste and flute; m. 86 *piu mosso*; m. 88 *ritardando*
mm. 89-94 SSA on predominantly quarter notes; m. 90 *piu mosso*; m. 93 *ritardando*
mm. 95-98 sixteenth-note flourish by violins and violas, ending on tied dotted-half notes; m. 95 *a tempo*; m. 97 *ritardando*
m. 99 tempo at 72 bpm
mm. 99-110 sustained notes in orchestra; sixteenth-note anacrusis followed by sustained notes in TB; SA begin at m. 103 with eighth-note and sixteenth-note triplets; solo tenor on less active rhythm beginning at m. 103.4
mm. 111-118 voices aleatoric, TB beginning at 111, SA beginning at 113; m. 112-113 orchestra on homorhythmic sixteenth-note triplets, then quarter notes; m. 114 tempo more than doubles, to 160 bpm; high instruments add eighth notes (see Example 4.3); final measure just orchestra

**Texture/Voicing**

The texture of “Opening” is varied. The voices move homophonically until measure 101, at which point they become contrapuntal. While sometimes there is true unison singing with men only, or unison in octaves with all of the voices singing, there is
also regular use of *divisi* up to eight parts. The accompaniment always adds some measure of polyphony, except when it drops out, which it does for two to five measures at a time. The thinnest texture is during the violin solo, from measure 79 to measure 83. The thickest texture is the build-up near the end of the piece, where the voices are speaking randomly as the orchestra adds instruments.

**Formal characteristics**

“Opening” is, in a formal sense, through-composed, without any recapitulations of any sections. It follows the metrical constraints of the original poem, which also does not have an overarching form.

**Summary**

What must be communicated through “Opening” is the entire reason for the cycle’s existence: there should be agitation, a small measure of hope, and ultimately frustration at the unfortunate conditions in which many humans find themselves.

2. “Song of the Beggar”

“Song of the Beggar” is morose and dark, kept in that mood throughout much of the piece by the exclusive use of men’s voices and low-pitched accompanying instruments, along with slow tempo and somewhat static rhythm. The exception is in the middle, which Paulus makes agitated through the use of much more active rhythms.
Performing forces

TB chorus with divisi to TTTBBB and full orchestra

Text choice, setting, and analysis

The text for “Song of the Beggar” is the poem of the same name (“Das Lied des Bettlers” in the original German), the second poem from Rilke’s set, The Voices. More narrative than the previous poem, it describes what a beggar does from the point of view of the beggar himself. The text setting is almost entirely syllabic, the exceptions being a few two- or three-note slurs.

1. I am always going from door to door, whether in rain or heat,
2. and sometimes I will lay my right ear in the palm of my right hand.
3. And as I speak, my voice seems strange, as if it were alien to me,
4. For I’m not certain whose voice is crying: mine or someone else’s.
5. I cry for a pittance to sustain me.
6. The poets cry for more.
7. In the end I conceal my entire face and cover both my eyes;
8. there it lies, in my hands with all its weight and looks as if at rest,
9. so no one may think I had no place whereupon to lay my head.

Melodic characteristics

The most noticeable aspect of the vocal lines in “Song of the Beggar” is that they were composed only for men’s voices. This personifies the beggar as a man, a limitation that Paulus did not impose in subsequent movements. In divided parts, the bass 2 drops to F2 and the tenor 1 extends up to Ab4. The other parts do not require extreme ranges or tessituras. Melodic intervals of a tritone abound in the low string parts. Tricky intervals,
such as printed diminished fourths, should be pointed out to the singers and explained as sounding like major thirds (e.g. in measures 5 and 9).

mm. 1-8 introduction by cellos and contrabasses, moving parallel by melodic tritones, continuing after voices enter; TB in unison begin at m. 2.2½
mm. 9-13 orchestra out; voices divide to TTBB, with a few TTTBB, moving by small intervals, never larger than a tritone
mm. 14-23 Vc and Cb resume, as before; voices unison, then to TB
mm. 24-31 instrumental interlude: piano joins at m. 27, horns and flutes in m. 28
mm. 32-36 voices re-enter, TTTBBB, unaccompanied, in mostly repeated tones and steps
mm. 37-41 strings sustain E4, while harp repeats E4; tenors on unison melody that ascends from E3-Eb4
mm. 43-49 violins arpeggios up and down; flutes mostly repeated notes, beginning at m. 46; voices in two to three parts (TB-TTB)
mm. 50-54 instrumental interlude
mm. 55-58 TTTBBB voices, with outer parts moving in contrary motion
mm. 59-67 Vc and Cb similar to beginning; TB with movement no larger than thirds
mm. 68-71 TTTBBB in mostly repeated notes and stepwise movement, unaccompanied
mm. 75-81 TB in unison; at m. 77 Vc and Cb similar to beginning
mm. 83-85 harp and suspended cymbal only

**Harmonic characteristics**

As in the first movement, Paulus constructed this movement with brief sections of tonality, but with an overall feeling of atonality, that is, a lack of tonal center or traditional harmonic progressions. There are fairly long sections, particularly the beginning, when the harmonic movement seems rather static.
mm. 1-8  Vc and Cb undulate between C#-F# and F-C (see Example 4.4), giving an underpinning, if not a full-fledged tonality, of F#-F; voices independent of this

Example 4.4 “Song of the Beggar” mm. 1-5, cello and bass ostinato

Rhythmic characteristics

The rhythmic characteristics of “Song of the Beggar” include a very slow tempo, quarter-note ostinatos in the low strings, long-held pedal points, also in the low strings,
and sudden flurries of rhythmic activity in the violins and flutes. The rhythms in the vocal parts are not difficult; the shifts from 2/4 to 3/8 time occur mostly where the voices sing unaccompanied, and the speed of the eighth note remains constant. Other time-signature changes are frequent, mostly to 2/4, 3/4, and 4/4. The initial tempo is marked for quarter note at 40/50 beats per minute, with the additional directions “Funereal, mournful.”

mm. 1-23 Vc and Cb on quarter notes (though resting from 9-13); voices on mostly eighth notes, with a few sixteenth notes and longer-held notes in the mix; mm. 26-29 sustained pedal point in low strings; piano melody decorated with grace notes; flutes on sixteenth-note-triplets m. 26 accelerando to quarter note = 60 bpm mm. 30.2-31 doted-quarter and eighth note rhythms m. 34 poco ritardando m. 37 a tempo at quarter note = 52 bpm mm. 37-41 violins sustain while harp plays same pitch with eighth-quarter-eighth syncopation as ostinato m. 42 accelerando to 60 bpm mm. 43-51 sustained pedal point in low strings; mm. 43-49 sixteenth-note-triplets in violins; mm. 46-49 sixteenth-note-triplets in flutes; mm. 50-51 32nd notes in violins and violas, flutes with syncopated rhythm, and remaining woodwinds sustained mm. 48-49 ritardando m. 52 quarter note = 52 bpm m. 54 ritardando to 48 bpm m. 56 ritardando mm. 59-67 44 bpm; Vc and Cb again on ostinato quarter notes mm. 68-81 voices on mostly eighth notes, with longer tied notes at mm. 72-74 and mm. 79.2-81.1 m. 85 poco accelerando on suspended cymbal roll, attacca to next movement

Texture/Voicing

Two textures predominate in “Song of the Beggar:” unison or two-part men’s voices over cello and contrabass accompaniment, and unaccompanied men’s voices in four to six parts. In both cases, the resultant texture is homophonic. When the other
instruments are incorporated, the resulting texture becomes more polyphonic, and the voices at these times are either holding long notes or are resting.

The voicing may cause some issues of balance and dynamics. Choirs should take care to counteract the natural tendency to sing unisons and two-part sections significantly louder than the more divided parts, but they should carefully follow the written dynamics. In dividing the voices into six parts, the lowest bass part may benefit from more singers in order to balance the low notes against other voices that have a natural advantage of projecting in the middle and upper ranges. The opposite is true of the high tenors, depending on the voices a particular choir has; the tenor 1 part may well overwhelm the other parts if the numbers are not creatively divided. In the six-part divided sections, the top tenor lies fairly high while the low bass is fairly low (see Example 4.5), creating a potential problem of tenor 1 being too loud while bass 3 may not be heard.

Example 4.5 “Song of the Beggar” mm. 32-36, balance issues with tenor 1 and bass 3 range
Formal characteristics

The sections and repetitions in this piece are not exact, but they do follow an ABA₁B₁CB₂A²B³A³ pattern, with an introduction, interludes, and a codetta.

- mm. 1-2.2½ introduction by low strings
- mm. 2.2½-8 A section: unison men with Vc and Cb ostinato
- mm. 9-13 B section: unaccompanied four-part men
- mm. 14-23 A¹ section: two-part men with Vc and Cb ostinato
- mm. 24-31 instrumental interlude, with quasi stand-on-dominant function
- mm. 32-36 B¹ section: unaccompanied six-part men
- mm. 37-54 C section: men in 1-3 parts; more active orchestra
- mm. 55-58 B² section: unaccompanied six-part men
- mm. 59-67 A² section: two-part men with Vc and Cb ostinato
- mm. 68-74 B³ section: unaccompanied six-part men
- mm. 72-74 overlapping interlude: piano and contrabass
- mm. 75-81 A³ section: unison men with Vc and Cb ostinato
- mm. 82-85 codetta: becomes a transition to the attacca next movement

Summary

“Song of the Beggar” is dark and brooding, these characteristics accomplished by the sole use of men’s voices and the predominant use of low-sounding instruments, particularly the cello and contrabass. There is nothing of redemption in either the music or the text; the beggar’s lot is, in this case, seen as a permanent condition. The implied message is that society ought to positively respond to the beggar’s situation, rather than ignore it.

3. “Song of the Drunkard”

The third movement of Voices is “Song of the Drunkard.” It begins fast, in stark contrast to its predecessor, and holds this tempo until the end. In terms of actual
performance time, as well as number of measures (68), it is the shortest of the nine
movements, requiring about a minute and a half to perform. This is less noticeable,
however, since the \textit{attacca} directives at both the beginning and the end tie it to the
previous and subsequent movements.

\textbf{Performing forces}

SATB chorus with \textit{divisi} to SSAATTBB and full orchestra

\textbf{Text choice, setting, and analysis}

“Song of the Drunkard” is the fourth poem in the Rilke set, originally “Das Lied
des Trinkers” (Paulus did not use the third poem, “Song of the Blind Man”). It was
written from the point of view of an alcoholic, describing in a surreal narrative the
process by which he became an alcoholic. He then compares his life to a card game
between Wine and Death, and in his self-loathing, he fully expects Death to win in the
near future.

In setting the text, Paulus stays almost entirely with one-note-to-one-syllable
composing. He takes care to set unaccented words or syllables on unaccented beats, and
often changes the meter to facilitate this.

1 It was not in me. It moved in and out.
2 When I dared to stop it, the wine won out.
3 (What it was, I no longer remember.)
4 The wine then offered this and offered that,
5 till I became dependent on him,
6 I, fool!
7 Now I am part of his game,
8 as he throws me around in utter contempt,
9 and surely he will lose me this day to that scavenger: Death.
When Death wins me, soiled card that I am,
he will use me only to scratch his sordid scabs
and toss me away into the mire.

Melodic characteristics

Melodically, the difficulties in this piece are created by diminished or augmented intervals, as well as scalar passages built on an octatonic scale. The only concerns about range are that both the basses and altos reach fairly high, to F4 and F5 respectively. These occur in unisons with tenors and sopranos, however, so that the extremity will not be as noticeable.

mm. 3-6 staggered entrances, soprano, then alto, then bass, and then tenors in two parts; all parts except bass move mostly by step
mm. 7-10 SA in unison, tenor below, all stepwise
mm. 11-12 eight-part divisi
m. 13 short flourish with low strings moving downward while high strings move upward
mm. 15-16 ST ascending fourths and thirds in unison
mm. 16.3-20 SATB unisons, moving obliquely or down, producing clusters
mm. 21-24 voices in unison, unaccompanied, to F4 and F5; m. 24 descending octaves, C#5-C#4 and C#4-C#3
mm. 25-28 larger intervals of ascending diminished seventh and descending major sixth
mm. 29-31 low instruments ascend mostly by steps, then return downward also mostly by steps
mm. 32-38 melody moves gradually upward
m. 39 short flourish with low strings moving downward while high strings move upward
mm. 44-49 orchestra repeating notes against mostly descending stepwise moving part; mm. 47-48, ascending tritone in voice parts
mm. 45-57 vocal phrases begin in unison, then move to two, four, and seven parts (see Example 4.6)

Example 4.6 “Song of the Drunkard” mm. 53-56, unison expanding to seven parts

mm. 59-60 approaching final chord, bass has tricky augmented third from G#3-Eb3, the latter of which is doubled by the low strings (at 8vb and 15vb) and timpani

mm. 60-66 voices and low strings hold final note (actually several tied notes) over percussion punctuations

**Harmonic characteristics**

In this movement Paulus again moved freely from tonality to a sort of bitonality to atonality. Paulus used bichords, or two simultaneous triadic chords, to briefly simulate bitonality, but did not follow two simultaneous traditional harmonic progressions. The result is an unsettled mood, analogous to the drunken state that he depicted in the marriage of music and text. Portions of the piece in the following analysis are identified as based on an octatonic scale. The most pervasive issue that this kind of tonality presents is the ^1 to the ^5, which will be a diminished fifth. As choirs often have difficulty singing tritones, these should be highlighted and rehearsed. As in previous movements, there are phrases in this movement that begin in unison and then become divided into
parts. Conductors should take care not to allow the unisons to be too loud, making the subsequent harmonies seem suddenly less loud.

mm. 1-2  unpitched percussion instruments only
mm. 3-12  atonal, with hints of A major and G minor, then cadencing on bitonal G major/Eb minor (see Example 4.7)

Example 4.7 “Song of the Drunkard” mm. 11-12 and mm. 42-44, bitonality at cadences

mm. 15-20  unisons dividing to clusters
mm. 21-24  unison unaccompanied voices
mm. 25-30  ST melody, in octaves; AB harmony in octaves; mm. 29-30 SSATTB cadential chord: E3-Bb3-Eb4-A4-D5-F5
mm. 31-42  E minor/E octatonic
mm. 42.4-44  bitonal cadence, similar to mm. 11-12 (see Example 4.7)
mm. 45-49  mostly D octatonic
mm. 50-52  voices cadence on C#-minor chord
mm. 53-55  returns to D octatonic
mm. 56-59  polytonal: choir and upper orchestral instruments in C# minor
mm. 60-66  final chord E minor over Eb in three octaves (Eb3-Eb2-Eb1)

Rhythmic characteristics

The rhythm of “Song of the Drunkard” is driving and insistent. The initial tempo is slow, as it takes up *attacca* from the second movement, with the quarter note at 60 beats per minute. It changes immediately, as a *molto accelerando* is written into the first two measures, so that when the voices begin in measure 3, the new tempo has the quarter
note at 152 beats per minute. With the exception of one brief ritardando, this tempo remains steady throughout the movement. The predominant note values used are quarter notes and eighth notes, though longer notes are used at cadences.

mm. 1 time signature 3/4; molto accelerando
mm. 2 time signature changes to 4/4; molto accelerando continues
mm. 3-6 staggered entrances: soprano, then alto, then bass, and then tenor
m. 6-22 nine time signature changes, to 2/4, 5/4, 4/4, and 3/4
mm. 9.4-10 brief ritardando; m. 11 a tempo
mm. 26-30 voices on dotted half notes, the last two, at cadence, tied together
mm. 31-37 orchestra with ostinato for six of these seven measures: higher instruments syncopated over constant quarter notes in lower instruments (see Example 4.8)

Example 4.8 “Song of the Drunkard” mm. 31-35, orchestral ostinato

mm. 43-55 triplets: voices quarter-note triplets at mm. 43 and 48; orchestra with eighth-note triplets mm. 44-49, 53-55; m. 48, with the two contrasting values of triplets, may need clarification
mm. 56-66 quarter notes and longer, often tied, notes; mm. 61-65 crash cymbals and tamtam (gong) on dotted half notes
m. 67 chorus out; orchestra mostly dotted half notes, leading attacca to next movement
Texture/Voicing

In the first part of this movement, a bit less than half, there is an alternation of unaccompanied choir interspersed with brief instrumental phrases, with very little overlap. Then, from measure 29 until the end, the instruments more consistently accompany the choir, and do not completely drop out except for four beats at measure 42-44; the resulting texture is thicker. Most of the time the orchestra plays low pitches, giving the piece a dark quality.

Formal characteristics

This movement does not display sectional repetitions, and is, therefore, through-composed. The sections have, however, distinct characters or moods. The introduction is quite short and is really an attacca transition from the second movement.

mm. 1-3 introduction/transition from second movement
mm. 3-12 introspection, ending with “the wine won out” (line 2)
mm. 13-14 brief instrumental interlude
mm. 15-30 helplessness; substantially unison voices
mm. 31-38 syncopations pushing inexorably forward
mm. 39-44 hopelessness, resignation about impending death
mm. 44-55 agitated orchestral rhythms featuring eighth-note triplets, pushing ahead
mm. 56-67 ending section, loud and with long notes, grief-stricken

Summary

This rather short movement is packed with an emotion that depicts the experience of an alcoholic struggling, ultimately un成功fully, with his illness. The melodic and rhythmic gestures add to the dramatic and powerful portrayal of this condition, and the unsettled harmonies express the attendant turmoil.
4. “Song of the Suicide”

The fourth movement, “Song of the Suicide,” is driving and resolute, expressing the surety of the person committing suicide that this time he will be successful, and that this is what he wants. It is the third and final movement conjoined with the *attacca* directive, so it seems to grow out of the despair of “Song of the Beggar” and the agitation of “Song of the Drunkard.”

**Performing forces**

SATB chorus with *divisi* to SSSAATTTTBBB and full orchestra

**Text choice, setting, and analysis**

Far from the despair one would expect in a poem about suicide, this poem expresses a matter-of-fact certainty of mind, ("one final look around" in line 1), an expectation of eternity (in line 3 and 4), and even a hint at reincarnation (in line 15 and 16). The setting of the text is primarily syllabic, with syllables less often written with two-note slurs: for example, in measure 12 the sopranos sing the first syllable of the word “always” on two notes, F#4-B4. At a dramatic juncture, however, the composer writes longer slurs with three consecutive phrases: on the word “head” (line 12) is an eight-note slur; on the first syllable of “others” (line 13) is a seven-note slur; and on the word “sick” (line 13) is a six-note slur. These longer slurs seem to be text painting, underlining the feeling of being light-headed and sick as described in the text. Another significant aspect of this movement is the amount of repetition of text. Paulus repeated the text in lines 5-8.
as a seeming reinforcement of the single-mindedness and the insanity of the suicidal character speaking the words. This kind of repetition happens again, with increasing agitation, at line 11.

1 Well, then, one final look around.
2 How they have always managed to cut my rope!
3 Lately I was so well prepared that in my entrails
4 I sensed already something of eternity.
5 They keep on offering me the spoon:
6 this spoon containing life,
7 No, I want none of it, not now or ever,
8 let me go...
9 I know that life is altogether good,
10 the world itself a brimful pot
11 but my blood refuses to absorb it,
12 instead it goes right to my head.
13 What nourishes others makes me sick.
14 Do realize that I scorn life.
15 For at least a thousand years to come,
16 I will have to diet.

**Melodic characteristics**

In “Song of the Suicide,” Paulus tended toward more dramatic, wide melodic intervals when the voices are singing in unison, emphasizing the more dramatic portions of the text. He provided contrast by having the individual voices remain more static or in stepwise motion when they are in harmony. The ranges for sopranos and altos are not extreme; there are a few high A-flats for first sopranos. The ranges for the tenors and first basses aim high, though in just one place: the held chord at mm. 52-55 has the tenor 1 singing B4, tenor 2 on A#4, bass 1 on F#4, and bass 2 on D#4. This particular place will present balance issues with the women’s voices, as the latter are in their lower-middle
range. On the low end, the second basses have a few low E-flats that could be a balance issue, as the other parts have mid-range notes at a *forte* dynamic level.

mm. 1-5 strings on sustained tremolos, with horns inserting a brief fanfare-like figure at m. 5

mm. 6-9 tenor begins in unison with bass, sings intervals up to a tritone; bass repeats G3

mm. 11-12 entrances build from unison, TB, in m. 11, to three parts, then with SA entrance in m. 12, from four to six parts

mm. 15-19 strings with repeated arpeggio-like figure: high strings with eight-note repeated pattern, low strings with six-note repeated pattern (see Example 4.9 and 4.10)

Example 4.9 “Song of the Suicide” m. 15, strings’ repeated patterns

Example 4.10 “Song of the Suicide” mm. 15-19, strings’ repeated patterns
mm. 21-26 men begin in unison, gradually expand to TTBB
mm. 26.4-31 outer parts in contrary motion: soprano moves upward while bass moves downward; balance and pitch accuracy are likely to be issues when basses sing low F#2 while sopranos sing F5
mm. 33-40 repetitive strings and harp with narrow range gives feeling of stasis; mm. 35-40 SA unison melody is almost a twelve-tone row (see Example 4.11)

Example 4.11 “Song of the Suicide” mm. 35-39, quasi-twelve-tone row

mm. 41-46 SA repeat melody from mm. 35-40; TB with counter-melody mm. 42-44
mm. 46-49 TB repeat counter-melody from mm. 42-44; SA repeat first half of melody from mm. 36-40
mm. 52-60 pitches gradually ascending, except bass
mm. 61-64 pitches repeat or move by steps on “Let me go” text, repeated four times
mm. 65-68 voices in 5-7 parts, repeated pitches and steps, with limited range
mm. 69-70 all voice parts unison; repeated pitches in low strings
mm. 71-82 voices in 6-7 parts, mostly repeated pitches and steps, similar to mm. 65-68
mm. 83-84 unison; octave glissando in soprano and tenor, from F#4-F#5 and F#3-F#4, respectively; unison ends at m. 85
mm. 89-115 three phrases that begin in low unison and proceed to divided parts, the upper of which ascend more than an octave: this may present an awkward register shift for sopranos, especially at mm. 108-109, where a glissando begins on E4 and moves up to F5
mm. 117-125 final phrase, again beginning with unison, expanding to nine parts

**Harmonic characteristics**

The chaotic quasi-bimonality and atonality of this movement expresses the mental chaos assumed to be present in the mind of a suicidal person. It will be helpful for singers to focus on what brief bits of tonality occur, relying on the accompanying instruments to
provide a reference pitch. Isolating and rehearsing the clusters, most of which are
diatonic rather than chromatic, will be beneficial when preparing this movement. The
characteristic melodic pattern of beginning with unison and expanding to as much as
nine-part harmony has been previously noted, but bears reiteration in this section because
of the complexity of the resulting harmonies. In his e-mail communication with the
author on December 6, 2010, Paulus described this pattern as “giving the chorus a chance
to operate from a position of strength (unison) and then going to the multiple voices.” He
indicated that there was no conscious portrayal of the literal meanings in the texts
intended by this pattern, although it is tempting to imagine in this musical motive the
multiple voices implied by the title and by the various faces of schizophrenia that it
portrays.

mm. 1-4  E minor, with added Eb and F
mm. 6-9  voices begin on G: they should treat it as a tonic of sorts, pulling it from
the E minor of the introduction, and without being swayed by the G# in
m. 5
m. 10    E minor is hinted at again
mm. 11-14 quasi-tonic F, from which quartal harmonies in TBB, and then triadic
harmonies in SSA are gradually built
mm. 14.3-18 bichord, with E minor over Ab minor
mm. 21-31 quartal harmonies and diatonic clusters built on G, neither major nor
minor due to lack of a third; m. 28 modulation begins, culminating in
bichords, F# minor with D minor above
mm. 33-40  high strings and harp provide a repetitious but tonally ambiguous backdrop for the quasi-twelve-tone melody sung by the women (see Example 4.12)

Example 4.12 “Song of the Suicide” mm. 36-37, repetitive strings and harp

mm. 41-45  pedal-point F# under undulating upper strings
mm. 46-54  ambiguous harmonies
mm. 55-60  bass notes alternate between B and F; bitonal in voices and upper instrumental parts, B major and Db major
mm. 61-68  bichords continue
mm. 69-82  predominantly D, though both major and minor tonalities coexist
mm. 83-87  unison and two-part, tonally ambiguous
mm. 88-115 Eb predominates in low orchestral parts, while higher parts, including voices, gravitate toward E
mm. 116-121 orchestra sustains D1 and D2, Eb6 and Eb7 over clusters building in the voice parts
mm. 122-124 clusters continue
m. 125 voices in unison (octaves), E5-Eb4 and E4-Eb3
m. 126 orchestra finishes with Amb9/13

**Rhythmic characteristics**

The rhythmic character of this movement is aggressive, even violent at times. The time signature begins in 4/4, with the tempo at 144 beats per minute for the quarter note.

When the time signature is 3/4, 4/4, or 5/4, the voice parts move mostly on quarter notes and longer note values. Midway through the piece, there is a transition to eighth-note
movement, followed eventually by a time signature change to 6/8. When the time signature changes back to 3/4 time, the quarter note and longer note values are again used. There are tempo changes, both slowing down and speeding up, where conductors and choirs will have to take care in order to stay together. The vocal parts do not contain tricky rhythms, but the orchestra parts do, most of the harder ones involving partial triplets interspersed with rests.

mm. 5, 7 and 10 fanfare-like figure in horns, low brass and strings
mm. 6-31 voice parts homorhythmic
mm. 15-18 triplets in strings
mm. 21-28 orchestra has sporadic sixteenth-note punctuations during long choir notes
mm. 33-54 constant undulating eighth notes in upper strings, punctuated by sporadic low strings and percussion
mm. 41-57 SA voice parts contrapuntal with TB
mm. 52-60 long tied notes in voice parts, first TB, then SA, T, and B; mm. 55-56, eighth-note triplets in upper strings
mm. 61-115 voice parts homorhythmic
mm. 63-65 ritardando, then tempo changes to quarter note at 112
mm. 65-80 orchestra interjects when voice parts have rests or long notes
mm. 69-71 poco ritardando, then a tempo
m. 75 time signature changes to 6/8; eighth note remains at constant tempo
mm. 79-81 poco accelerando, then accelerando
mm. 81-82 percussion beat six, three, and then six
mm. 83-87 orchestra out
m. 88 time signature changes to 3/4; eighth note remains constant, with tempo marked at 132 bpm for quarter note
mm. 88-101 mostly long notes tied, quasi-pedal point, in contrabasses; cellos slightly more active
mm. 102-108 voices on dotted half notes; orchestra quarter notes on beat two, then, in mm. 107-108, on beats two and three
mm. 109-115 choir holds while orchestra has eighth-note triplet fanfare-like figures
m. 116 tempo increases suddenly to 160 bpm
m. 117 accelerando
mm. 117-126 voices staggered entrances low to high; strings hold tremolo until m. 121
m. 126 voices out
Texture/Voicing

The fluctuation of thin to thick textures is dramatic in this movement. The heavy use of percussion instruments adds power and drama to this very emotional song. The most common textural device that Paulus used is the unison start expanding to *divisi* in the voices. This can cause balance issues, as the voices in unison will be naturally stronger than the divided voices. Choirs should be coached to hold back on the unisons, and project more as more parts are added. The choral parts are primarily homophonic, though in one section (mm. 35-57) they are polyphonic in two parts.

mm. 6-9 men unison to two parts
mm. 11-18 in six successive beats the texture moves from unison men to 2-, 3-, 4-, 5-, then 6-part harmony; bass line doubled in orchestra; upper strings and horns added at m. 15
mm. 21-26 unison to four-part men over sustained mid-range orchestra; sporadic short motives by vibraphone and low strings
mm. 26.4-31 voice parts thicken to six then seven parts; orchestra thickens as well
mm. 33-49 light orchestra: upper strings and harp, with occasional lower strings on short motives, and occasional percussion punctuations; SA voices unison, then in counterpoint with TB
mm. 50-60 orchestra thickens; voices divide
mm. 61-64 voices in ten parts, SSAATTTBBB
mm. 65-83 voices in mostly six parts: rebalancing may be beneficial, with some altos singing S2, and some tenors singing B1
mm. 83-87 orchestra out; voices move from unison (octaves) to two-part harmony (also in octaves), SA and TB
mm. 88-101 orchestra mostly low strings; voices move from unison to five then six parts
mm. 102-115 texture again additive, with voices moving from unison to six parts, orchestra adding brass, percussion, then high strings and woodwinds
mm. 116-126 texture again additive, with voices starting with one part, moving to nine, then one final unison
Formal characteristics

This movement is organized in three main sections, ABA, based on the compositional technique of beginning with unison voices and expanding to many parts: the first and third sections do this, whereas the second does not. The similarities within the sections do not, however, extend beyond this compositional technique. The movement also includes an introduction, interludes, and a codetta. The sub-section most noticeable for its contrast is the polyphonic portion that begins the middle section, with its quasi-twelve-tone melody in the sopranos and altos, repeated like a fugue subject with the countersubject sung by the tenors and basses. The other part of the middle section has for its polyphony a rhythmic interplay between the voices and the orchestra.

mm. 1-5 introduction, emerging attacca from the previous movement
mm. 6-18 A section
mm. 19-20 orchestral interlude
mm. 21-31 A₁ section
mm. 32-35 orchestral interlude
mm. 35.4-60 B section, voices polyphonic
mm. 61-87 B₁ section, voices in counterpoint with orchestra
mm. 88-89 orchestral interlude
mm. 89.3-115 A₂ section
mm. 110-116 orchestral quasi-interlude
mm. 117-125 A₃ section
m. 126 codetta

Summary

The analogy of the physiological and psychological state of bipolarity in the mind and bichords, or quasi-bitonality, in the harmony is perhaps too fine a point to expect an audience to comprehend in one hearing. These are characteristics that a conductor may choose to explain in program notes, or even to demonstrate in a pre-concert or lecture.
recital venue. The chaos in the music of “Song of the Suicide” is, however, still obvious in its connection to the complicated emotional state of the suicidal voice of the poem’s subject. The repetitions that Paulus chose to employ bring out the manic feeling of the text in the middle section, as we sense the protagonist of the poem losing control of his emotions.

5. “Song of the Idiot”

Initially, the important thing a conductor must convey to his or her choir about this movement is to take the title in historical context, that is, not to think of the word “idiot” the way that contemporary society does. It was for many years the clinical term for the most profound level of developmental disability. A choir preparing the piece should be sensitive to this, knowing the stereotypes but not advancing them. The somewhat rollicking waltz that recurs throughout the piece is at odds with the serious nature of the disability, but when understood as a reflection of an old stereotype, it should help to express the significance of the cycle as a whole.

**Performing forces**

SATB chorus with *divisi* to SSSAATTBB and full orchestra

**Text choice, setting, and analysis**

Rilke deliberately made the text of “Song of the Idiot” obscure, helping the reader or the listener to understand the profound confusion and the simultaneous simplicity of a person with this disability. Every time the choir sings the text “How good,” there should
be a release of tension, as if this is the response that gives the singer sudden clarity and understanding in the midst of the everyday confusion that is part of his or her life.

1 They do not hinder me. They let me go.
2 They say, nothing could happen.
3 How good.
4 Nothing can happen.
5 Everything comes and circles uninterrupted around the Holy Ghost,
6 around that certain Ghost (you know) —,
7 how good.
8 No, one really must never think that there could be any danger involved in this.
9 There is, of course, the blood.
10 Blood is the heaviest. For blood is heavy.
11 Sometimes I believe, I can no longer —.
12 How good.
13 Ah, what a lovely ball that is:
14 red and round all over.
15 Good that you brought it.
16 I wonder would it come if I called it?
17 How odd everything behaves,
18 driving into each other, swimming away from each other: friendly, though a little confused;
19 how good.

Melodic characteristics

In this movement, much of the melodic material is light and lyrical. The contrast between this and the heavier sections within the movement, as well as the contrast between this and the other movements, will be best accomplished with a different vocal production model, a lighter, more bel canto style. The closest analogs in style are the Viennese operettas of Johann Strauss, Jr., and the American operettas of Victor Herbert. The vocal ranges are comparable to the other movements, with the exception of the soprano 1, which, in a three-part split, has an extended B5.

mm. 1-11 introduction in lilting waltz-style, playfully ornamented with grace notes
mm. 11-22 bass starts, then joined by tenor, in unison operetta-style melody
mm. 22.3-23  “How good” motive (see Example 4.13)

Example 4.13 “Song of the Idiot” mm. 20-23, including the “How good” motive

mm. 24-36  SA, joined by TB 8vb at m. 29, on mostly stepwise melody, ending again with “How good” motive
mm. 37-57  phrases start in unison, moving to six parts, with the outer voices moving contrarily; mm. 56-57 “How good” is again the end of the section, but this time with different pitches
mm. 60-77  lyrical, gentle phrases by voices, interspersed with brief agitated orchestral interludes; men only until m. 70
mm. 78-96 repeated notes, first in women, then all (see Example 4.14)

Example 4.14 “Song of the Idiot” mm. 77-84, repeated notes, from unison spreading outwards
mm. 83-86 men have text-painting: tenors have pitches moving together on “driving into each other,” and basses have pitches moving apart on “swimming away from each other” (see Example 4.15); these repeat in mm. 87-89

Example 4.15 “Song of the Idiot” mm. 83-86, text painting in tenor and bass parts

mm. 93-96 held notes, with high B5 in soprano 1; depending on the size of the group, three or four singers on this note may be enough to balance

mm. 97-101 unison (in three octaves); altos doubling sopranos, but some can double tenors if the part is uncomfortably high

mm. 102-109 orchestra like beginning, but with added oboe countermelody at mm. 105.3-109

mm. 110-111 unaccompanied voices on “How good” motive

**Harmonic characteristics**

This movement has a stronger sense of traditional harmony than the others, partially due to the waltz-like introduction and codetta. It begins with a key signature of three flats, and the opening has an E-flat major tonality until a few measures into the men’s melody. At that point (m. 13) Paulus changed the key signature to the now-familiar no-flats, no-sharps key signature used in the other movements thus far. The “How good” motive is a consistent cadence-point the first, second, and fourth times Paulus employed it. The third time the text is used, it has different pitches, reflecting less resolution or certainty in the mind of the person that is the poem’s subject.
mm. 1-11 orchestra introduction: Bb in bass provides strong dominant and second-inversion tonic in key of Eb major

mm. 12-23 harmonies are discernible and triadic, though not following traditional progressions; first “How good” motive at mm. 22-23 (see Example 4.13)

mm. 24-36 harmonies become increasingly polytonal; voices sing in thirds, first just SA, then doubled at the octave by TB, until second “How good” motive at mm. 35-36

mm. 37-59 tonally ambiguous; voices begin with unisons and expand to six or seven parts

mm. 60-69 four-part men in F major, interspersed with brief polytonal orchestral interludes

mm. 70-77 transitional area: modulating gradually upward

mm. 78-92 more harmonically static area, due to repeated pitches in SSSAA (see Example 4.14), then in all parts from m. 90

mm. 93-101 polytonal, though less thick at mm. 97-101

mm. 102-109 piano plays waltz-like part similar to introduction in Eb major; oboe enters at m. 105.3 on G major melody, similar to mm. 64-65

Rhythmic characteristics

In “Song of the Idiot,” the rhythmic feeling of the song changes often. Beginning with a traditional waltz tempo and rhythm (an “oom pah pah” pattern), the composer changed the mood of the piece by changing the meter, the tempo, and the predominant rhythms. The time signature changes frequently, and includes 2/4, 4/4, 3/8, and 5/8 along with the predominant 3/4 time. The voices are homorhythmic except for measures 83-89, when they are in counterpoint. The accompaniment always provides something rhythmically different than the voices. The song begins in 3/4 time with the quarter note receiving 112 beats per minute.

mm. 1-11 waltz-like feel; mm. 2-3 accelerando to dotted-half note at 72 bpm
m. 9-36 frequent tempo changes and fermatas
m. 37 a tempo; rhythms in voice parts more active, agitated
mm. 37-40 the orchestra has low parts play steady quarter notes, while mid-range instruments play on beat one and on the second half of beat two, giving a syncopated or 3/4 against 6/8 feel
mm. 44-47 orchestra resumes as in mm. 37-40
m. 53 orchestra triplets
m. 55-59 agitated interplay between voices and orchestra
m. 59 *ritardando*
mm. 60-73 three slow phrases by voices, with the quarter note at 96 bpm, and a *poco ritardando* at the end of each phrase; alternating with faster phrases by orchestra, at 160 bpm
mm. 78.2-93.2 orchestra out
m. 98 gradual *ritardando*
m. 102 waltz-like again, with quarter note at 132 bpm
m. 108 *ritardando*
mm. 110-111 unaccompanied voices; *fermata* on m. 111.3

**Texture/Voicing**

In “Song of the Idiot,” Paulus again demonstrated his penchant for alternating vocal with instrumental timbres; areas that include both voices and instruments simultaneously are less common. Another previously employed compositional technique that Paulus chose to use in this movement is the unison that gradually expands to multi-part harmony.

mm. 1-11 strings in waltz-like introduction
mm. 12-19 men in unison over low orchestra: low brass and horns, bassoons, contrabasses; violins and violas added at mm. 18-19, in low range
mm. 20-23 voices unaccompanied, first unison men, the SATB on “How good” motive
mm. 24-28 SA with orchestra “oom pah pahs”
mm. 29-36 SA doubled 8vb by TB; minimal orchestra
mm. 37-59 thickest texture: full orchestra, starting low; voices begin in unison, dividing to seven parts, SSAATBB
mm. 60-77 unaccompanied voices *divisi* alternating with brief orchestral interludes
mm. 78-92 unaccompanied voices SSSAATTBB; polyphonic from mm. 83-89; otherwise homophonic
mm. 93-96 orchestra re-enters as voices hold
mm. 97-99 two-part counterpoint, low instruments, doubled at the octave, moving contrary to unison voices (actually in three octaves)
mm. 100-101 unaccompanied unison voices
mm. 102-109 piano alone, then joined by oboe at m. 105.3
mm. 110-111 unaccompanied SATB voices on “How good” motive
Formal characteristics

“Song of the Idiot” is divided into five main sections, with an introduction and a codetta acting as bookends. The five sections do not, however, have enough repeated material to provide an easily identifiable form. The only repetitious element found throughout the song is the “How good” motive; this is used to close the first and second sections, is used in a varied form to close the third section, and is used at the very end of the piece after the instrumental codetta.

mm. 1-11 introduction
mm. 12-23 first section; heavy waltz style which degenerates as accompaniment winds down
mm. 24-36 second section; heavy waltz which degenerates as meter changes and orchestra thins
mm. 37-59 third section; thick texture, agitated rhythms
mm. 60-77 fourth section; calm vocal phrases interspersed with agitated orchestral replies
mm. 78-101 fifth section; agitated, mostly unaccompanied voices
mm. 102-111 codetta

Summary

“Song of the Idiot” gives the overall feeling of mindless activity interspersed with moments of considered thought, confusion, and eventual resignation or possibly the end of one’s limited attention span. Paulus accomplished this in the same manner that Rilke accomplished it: with sudden change of subject, as if something new has just caught the person’s attention.
6. “Song of the Leper”

The sixth movement is both strongly dissonant and richly harmonious. It moves from a mood of gentle sadness to agitated frustration. In it Paulus recapitulates portions of the first movement, bringing in a cyclical element that is based on more than the interrelatedness of the texts.

**Performing forces**

SATB chorus with *divisi* to SSSAAATTBBB (or …TTTBB) and full orchestra

**Text choice, setting, and analysis**

The text in “Song of the Leper” is set in straightforward syllabic fashion, with a few interesting twists. The first line is performed in hocket between the sopranos and divided altos (see Example 4.16). The only repetition of text is lines 4-6, which are first sung by the men, then answered, fugue.Subject-like, by the women, while the men sing the same text underneath in a countersubject. The rather long last note may pose a vowel

![Example 4.16 “Song of the Leper” mm. 17-20, line 1 in hocket between S and A1, A2](image)
production problem, being on the second syllable of the word “frighten.” The schwa
sound would typically be used, but sustaining this sound is awkward. The conductor may
choose to use a short “e” sound, as in the word “bed,” or may choose some variant in
between the two. No matter which vowel the conductor chooses, it may take practice to
produce a unified sound.

The tone of the text is bleak, representing the alienation that lepers have
historically suffered for the supposed good of the wider communities of which they were
a part. This is analogous to any population of people who find themselves alienated
because of disease, or social standing, or behaviors that do not fit with society’s norms.
The clapper, or rattle, referred to in lines 4 and 10, was an instrument that lepers in
Europe were required to carry to warn uninfected people of the disease, so they would
know to keep their distance. The analogous warning signals in contemporary society are
not nearly so overt, but are worth taking some time to discuss in order to further a choir’s
understanding of the message of the text and the implied message that society should
work to overcome the differences that alienate certain populations of people.

1 See, I am one everyone has deserted.
2 No one in the city knows me.
3 I have fallen victim to leprosy.
4 I beat my wooden clappers
5 and knock the pitiable sight of me
6 into the ears of everyone that passes near me.
7 And those who hear the wooden sound
8 avert their eyes, look elsewhere,
9 not wanting to know what has befallen me.
10 Where the sound of my rattle reaches,
11 I am at home; perhaps it is you
12 who makes it sound so loud,
13 that no one dares to be too far from me
14 who now avoids to come too close to me.
15 So now I can walk for ever so long
without encountering a girl, a woman or man, or even a child. Animals I do not frighten.

**Melodic characteristics**

The first melodic gestures in “Song of the Leper” start out as an aural warning signal like a fire alarm: sopranos and altos in a unison that is dissonant against the orchestra. The first challenge is a practical one, finding the pitch. The best way to find the pitch, a C#5 first sung in measure 7, is to base it on the low brass D2 and D3 from measures 1 and 2. Most of what occurs in between is unpitched percussion. The fugue-like melody occurs in first in the men’s voices at measures 40-47, and is repeated up a perfect fourth plus an octave by the women at measures 47-54. Ranges are moderate in all parts, but the final note lasts a total of 26 beats with men on Eb4 and women on Eb5.

- **mm. 1-16** orchestral introduction and “warning signal” C#5 in SA
- **mm. 17-20** S outlines Dø7; A1 outlines C#o7 (See Example 4.16); practice these out of context, perhaps as vocalises, to get them into the ears of the singers
- **mm. 30-35** tenor repeated notes; bass moves downward, then back up
- **mm. 40-47** fugue-subject-like melody in men
- **mm. 47-54** fugue-subject-like melody in women
- **mm. 62-66** unison men; women join at m. 66.3: unison splitting gradually to SSAATTBB
- **mm. 74-80** all voices unison (octaves)
- **mm. 81-91** recapitulates movement 1 opening in both voice parts and orchestra
- **mm. 92-102** unison and two-part, in octaves: rehearse soprano with tenor, alto with bass
- **mm. 107-120** voices end in unison with long note, out at m. 120

**Harmonic characteristics**

The harmonies in “Song of the Leper” move between atonality and quasi-polytonality, that is, polychords with no traditional harmonic progressions. There are
often sustained pedal-point like pitches that can act as reference pitches for the voices.

Practicing harmonic tritones, major sevenths, minor ninths, and both diatonic and chromatic clusters will help to accustom the choir to some of the difficult harmonies.

mm. 1-16  atonal; use D in mm. 1-2 as reference pitch
mm. 17-19  SA building tone clusters (see Example 4.16)
mm. 20-23  S-alto 2 major sevenths and minor ninths
mm. 24-29  open fifths in violin parts: use minimal vibrato
mm. 30-35  TB begins unison, then bass moves while tenor repeats notes: for rehearsal, identify each resulting interval and tune carefully (see Example 4.17)

Example 4.17 “Song of the Leper” mm. 30-35, static tenor part and moving bass part producing various intervals

mm. 36-39  quasi-polytonal: Dm/E/Gb-Dm/E/A; men must pull their pitch at m. 40 (D3) from this
mm. 40-47  fugue-subject-like melody, harmonized after initial unison (see Example 4.18)

Example 4.18 “Song of the Leper” mm. 40-47, fugue-subject-like melody in TB
mm. 47-54 fugue subject repeated in SA, up a perfect fourth plus an octave, starting on G4; counter-subject in three-part men

mm. 66-69 men move from unison B3 upward to cluster (bass 2 remains on same pitch); women move from unison B4 downward to cluster (soprano 1 remains on same pitch): practice men alone, starting with two parts, then three, then four; also, practice women alone, starting with two parts, then three, then four

mm. 70-73 Bb major, then bitonal Bb/A

mm. 74-79 quasi-polytonal: F/Bb/Eb-Em/Bb/Eb

mm. 80-88 similar to movement 1 opening: E major over C pedal point

mm. 89-91 SSAATBB voices in Eb-major; unison E (in octaves: E3, E2, and E1) in orchestra: singers need to consciously resist moving to E, especially those on Eb (B2, T, and S2)

mm. 92-101 sustained A in horns, mm. 92-93, then D in low brass, mm. 94-101, provides reference pitch for voices; voices in unison and two-part harmony in octaves

mm. 102-105 voices move from unison (octaves) A3 and A4 to eleven-part divisi cluster

mm. 107-119 voices on Eb4 and Eb5, over atonal orchestra; m. 112-119 timpani roll on A2; 116-119 violins and flutes repetitive sixteenth-note pattern on F#/G-Ab-A-G-Ab-A-Bb

m. 120 tutti orchestra on E-minor chord

**Rhythmic characteristics**

Driving rhythms return in “Song of the Leper,” and they are made more insistent with the use of many unpitched percussion instruments. The predominant time signature is 3/4, but the meter changes sporadically, mostly to accommodate accented and unaccented syllables in the text. The initial tempo has the quarter note at 120 beats per minute. Likely rhythmic challenges occur where there are isolated triplets or a few quintuplets in five-against-two or five-against-three configurations.

mm. 30-35 quarter-note triplets in between mostly quarter notes (see Example 4.17)
m. 51 sixteenth-note triplets in men’s parts
m. 71 sixteenth-note quintuplet in flute part, five-against-two, against even eighth notes in timpani

mm. 72-73 eighth-note triplets in all voices, homorhythmically, followed by even eighth notes: make sure the eighth notes do not rush

mm. 83-85 orchestra running eighth notes with one triplet inserted
m. 92  | quarter-note quintuplet in voices, five-against-three, against three quarter notes in low strings
mm. 94-101 | running eighth notes in orchestra under mostly quarter notes in voices
mm. 102-105 | running sixteenth notes under quarter notes and two tied dotted-half notes in voices
mm. 112-119 | voices hold 26 beats (8 2/3 measures); percussion rolls (timpani, bass drum, wood block, and tom-tom); violin and flute running sixteenth notes
m. 120  | full orchestra on dotted half note with \textit{fermata}

**Texture/Voicing**

The most obvious timbral element in “Song of the Leper” is the use of multiple unpitched percussion instruments. Some of these, the ratchet, slapstick, wood block, and castanets, are in imitation of the wooden clappers that lepers were required to use to warn the public of their infectious malady. Only a few measures are entirely unaccompanied: measures 17-23 are for unaccompanied women’s voices, and measures 32-35 are for unaccompanied men’s voices. There is much unison in the voice parts, but the divisi expands to as many as eleven parts: the women divide to six parts, presumably SSSAAA, but the men divide to five, so the conductor will need to assign parts in order to achieve balance. Fortunately when the voices divide, there are no extremely high or low parts to skew the balance.

**Formal characteristics**

The form of “Song of the Leper” is through-composed, without any formal repetitions, but distinct sections are evident, separated from one another by stylistic or musical changes.

mm. 1-16  | introduction
mm. 17-35  | first section, mostly unaccompanied, voices segregated SA and TB
mm. 36-39  transition
mm. 40-60  fugue-like imitative section
mm. 61-105 third section, with gradually more active contrapuntal accompaniment;
mm. 81-91 is the cyclic repetition of a portion of the first movement
mm. 106-120 coda

Summary

In “Song of the Leper,” Paulus expressed a wide gamut of emotions, from sadness and loneliness to anger and frustration. He evoked the harsh reality of the first movement by quoting from its music. He used almost literal representations of the lepers’ clappers with the percussion instruments he employed, particularly in the introduction, at the end of the third section, and in the coda.

7. “I Am, O Anxious One”

The seventh movement of the cycle, “I Am, O Anxious One,” is a respite from the despair and depression of the earlier movements. Much of the first half of the song is a solo by mezzo-soprano, the more lengthy of the two solos in the cycle.

Performing forces

SATB chorus with divisi to SSSAAATTTBBB, mezzo-soprano solo, and full orchestra

Text choice, setting, and analysis

In the printed score of Voices, Paulus explained that line 1 of these lyrics, excerpted from Rilke’s “Dedication,” serves as a prelude to the body of the piece. The
rest of the poem is Rilke’s “I Am, O Anxious One.” It is the most overtly spiritual of the
lyrics, being not so much a prayer as a conversation, with all but the first line being the
voice of God. The most important lines, 2 and 3, are repeated at the end of the piece. The
chorus parts are almost entirely syllabic, but the mezzo-soprano solo has many slurred
notes, including a relatively long melisma in measures 12-14 (see Example 4.19).

1 I have great faith in all things not yet spoken.
2 I am, O Anxious One. Don’t you hear my voice
3 surging forth with all my earthly feelings?
4 They yearn so high that they have sprouted wings
5 and whitely fly in circles around your face.
6 My soul, dressed in silence, rises up
7 and stands alone before you: can’t you see?
8 Don’t you know that my prayer is growing ripe
9 upon your vision, as upon a tree?
10 If you are the dreamer, I am what you dream.
11 But when you want to wake, I am your wish,
12 and I grow strong with all magnificence
13 and turn myself into a star’s vast silence
14 above the strange and distant city, Time.

**Melodic characteristics**

One of the potentially problematic aspects of “I Am, O Anxious One” is the range
required for the tenors. On the low end, the opening vocal melody begins on Ab2, but it is
aided by being doubled by basses. Those tenors who do not have the low range can subtly
lay out until the melody reaches a range in which they are able to sing. On the high end of
the spectrum, all tenors and sopranos (that is, not divisi) have rather exposed high A4 and
A5, respectively, at a forte dynamic level, with no other vocal support from altos and
basses. The range of the mezzo-soprano solo is B3 to F#5. The first phrase in the solo
part is the signature motive of the piece, containing the text of title.
mm. 2-8  TB unison melody begins rather low for tenors, on Ab2

mm. 9-52  mezzo-soprano solo (See Example 4.19); other voices tacet

Example 4.19 “I Am, O Anxious One” mm. 9-13, mezzo-soprano solo, first phrase with melisma

mm. 62-73  soprano and tenor in octaves on exposed, high-reaching melody (see Example 4.20)

Example 4.20 “I Am, O Anxious One” mm. 67-72, soprano and tenor unison melody in high range

mm. 81-84  mezzo-soprano solo, with variation of first solo melody, on “I am, O anxious one”

mm. 86-90  wide ranges in six-part *divisi* men may cause balance issues, with bass 3 on low F2, while tenor 1 is on G4 and, later, Ab4

mm. 91-95  women, divided into seven parts, have to find pitches C, D, E, F, G, A, and B from sustained Eb in strings and piano: the harp helps some, with grace notes on these same pitches just before the women sing
Harmonic characteristics

“I Am, O Anxious One” has longer stretches of tonality than the previous movements, though it is not strictly tonal. In the voices, Paulus included many diatonic clusters in all parts and parallel fourths in the women’s parts.

mm. 1-5 orchestra on sustained C-major chord; TB in unison, essentially in Ab
mm. 8-20 orchestra on sustained B7sus; solo moves back and forth, in and out of this tonality: atonal piano part mm. 14-17
mm. 21-35 bitonalities: D/Ab-Gm/Ab-Eb/F-Eb/Em
mm. 41-50 similar to mm. 8-20; m. 51 cadence on B-major chord
mm. 52-62 alternates between F and F#m; SA in mostly parallel fourths
mm. 63-67 essentially A minor, with extensions: choir should tune to bass notes in orchestra
mm. 68-70 essentially G major, with extensions: choir should tune to bass notes in orchestra
mm. 71-76 atonal transition: choir pitches in m. 76 are played by orchestra in m. 75
mm. 77-84 orchestra undulating atonal harmonies under SA in mm. 77-80; the pattern is then repeated under mezzo-soprano solo
mm. 86-90 bitonal divisi men, TTTBBB, unaccompanied
mm. 91-95 strings Eb1, Eb2, Eb6, and Eb7; SSSAAA, doubled by harp, on diatonic cluster based on a C-major scale

Rhythmic characteristics

Much of “I Am, O Anxious One” has a calm, nearly static rhythmic feel. The strings are required to play many measures at a time of long notes tied together, usually with a single melody line moving above. The initial tempo is 88 beats per minute. With the exception of one measure of 7/8, the quarter note is the unit of measurement, with 2/4, 3/4 and 5/4 periodically interspersed with the predominantly 4/4 time signature. The middle section is significantly faster than the opening, changing abruptly to 132 beats per minute. The final section changes more subtly, but to a much slower 60, then 44, and then
finally 56 beats per minute. Beyond the meter and tempo changes, there is little challenge in the rhythms of this movement.

mm. 1-7 quarter note at 88 bpm, reverently
mm. 9-17 tempo begins at 92 bpm, speeds up, slows, then speeds up again
mm. 18-51 a tempo
mm. 52 faster, at 104 bpm
mm. 60 accelerando
mm. 62 quarter note at 132 bpm
mm. 75-76 slowing; fermata on m. 76.2
mm. 77-95 slower: 60, then 44, and then 56 bpm
m. 86 men with eighth notes then triplets, should take care not to rush the triplets
mm. 93-95 women holding last chord at slow tempo and with a fermata, may need to stagger their breathing

Texture/Voicing

The overall texture of “I Am, O Anxious One” is influenced by the amount of solo and unison singing in the movement. Out of 95 total measures, only 20 have harmony in the voice parts.

mm. 1-53 orchestra with unison voices or solo voice
mm. 54-61 orchestra entirely in treble clef, with SA voices in two-part harmony
mm. 62-74 orchestra heavier, with strings tremolo punctuated with brass, accompanying ST melody in octaves
mm. 75-76 orchestra in close harmony, starting on F3, Bb3, C4, Eb4, F4, and A4; m. 76 all voices in six-part divisi on same pitches
mm. 77-85 strings with SA, then with mezzo-soprano solo
mm. 86-89 six-part men unaccompanied
mm. 89.3-95 strings re-enter, with harp and women in seven-part divisi

Formal characteristics

Paulus wrote this movement in a three-part form, ABA\(^1\), with the repeated elements in the last section having more to do with dynamics and general mood than melodic repetitions. The signature motive, used with the text “I am, o anxious one,” is the
exception, as it is recapitulated in the third section with only slightly varied rhythm and pitch. The contrast in the B section is accomplished with faster tempo and louder dynamics.

| mm. 1-51 | A section |
| mm. 52-61 | transition |
| mm. 62-74 | B section |
| mm. 75-76 | transition |
| mm. 77-95 | abbreviated A\textsuperscript{1} section, with variant of the signature motive repeated at mm. 81-83 |

**Summary**

The calm of the seventh movement, “I Am, O Anxious One,” is incomplete. The rather long first section maintains the serene mood, but when the transition to the second section begins, one senses the music becoming more agitated. This becomes more apparent during the second section, almost as if God is frustrated with the person to whom He is talking.

8. “As Once the Winged Energy of Delight”

The immediate mood that Paulus emulated in “As Once the Winged Energy of Delight” is that of the “winged energy” of the title and first line. It is fast, with sixteenth notes, tremolos, and trills evoking a buzzing energy through the first 31 measures. The music then slows and thins out before the powerful, hopeful ending.

**Performing forces**

SATB chorus with *divisi* to SSSAAATTBBB (or…TTTBB) and full orchestra
Text choice, setting, and analysis

The text of “As Once the Winged Energy of Delight” comes from Rilke’s poem of the same title. It reads like a commencement speech, full of affirmation and urging hope and ambition. It refers to a divine presence, though not The divine presence (“the god,” not God, in line 16). The setting of the text is fairly straightforward, being mostly syllabic with a few two- and three-note slurs. The penultimate phrase, however, is problematic. It requires some voices (specifically soprano 3, alto 1, bass 1, and bass 2) to drop out, then re-enter on the same held syllable that the other voices continue to hold, that is, the “oo” vowel in the word “you.” In an example of Paulus’s use of text painting, on “the pattern grows more intricate and subtle” (line 11), he layered the voices, beginning with altos, then sopranos, and then tenors, each with its own repeated pattern, along with a repeated pattern in the accompaniment.

1 As once the winged energy of delight
2 carried you over childhood’s dark abysses,
3 now beyond your own life build the great
4 arch of unimagined bridges.
5 Wonders happen if we can succeed
6 in pressing [passing] through the harshest danger;
7 [But only in a bright and purely granted
8 achievement can we realize the wonder.]
9 To work with Things in the indescribable
10 relationship is not too hard for us;
11 the pattern grows more intricate and subtle,
12 and being swept along is not enough.
13 Take your practiced powers and stretch them out
14 until they span the chasm between two
15 contradictions...
16 For the god wants to know himself in you.
Melodic characteristics

In “As Once the Winged Energy of Delight,” Paulus, once again, demands high skill level and extended range from the singers. In this case, the extreme range is in the soprano 1 part, in a three-part divisi. They are required, on two occasions, to sing a long high B-flat (Bb5). Low range will not be problematic for any voice parts in this movement. Because finding starting pitches is likely to be difficult on nearly all vocal entrances, the choir will have to learn which instrument and which pitch to listen for in order to start each phrase. Sometimes the exact pitch will be played, but within a cluster, so focusing on the lowest pitch of a chord may be a better strategy.

m. 3 soprano and alto will need to determine their opening pitch, F4, from the sustained Db4 and Eb4 in the strings from the previous measure
m. 13 bass and tenor will need to find their opening pitches, A3 and D4, from the clarinet B4
mm. 17-20 ST in octaves, beginning on Eb4 and Eb5: listen for C in orchestral basses as reference
mm. 22-23 staggered entrances: all starting pitches are doubled in the thick, clustered texture of the accompaniment; probably better to listen for the F# in the orchestral basses
mm. 29-30 on the text “danger,” unison voices on Eb-E (TB on Eb4-E4, SA on Eb5-E5): for any altos finding this too high, or just getting tired after the previous seven movements, doubling the men’s parts is an easy remedy
mm. 46-63 repeated melodic patterns in orchestra and voices (SAT)
mm. 64-95 mostly unison; divisi includes high Bb5 in S1, mm. 74-78 and 89-92: consider vowel modification
mm. 98-123 begin with melodic unisons, eventually becoming divisi

Harmonic characteristics

In this movement, Paulus once again employed the compositional technique of starting a phrase in unison, then moving the voices apart into as much as ten-part divisi. He also composed areas of tonality, which he then mitigated by bichords, polychords, and
atonality. The strongest tonality is at the very end of the piece, a fairly convincing B-flat major in brass and timpani, despite dissonant color from the strings and woodwinds.

mm. 1-15 atonal
mm. 16-22 quasi-polytonal in orchestra with unison voices
mm. 22-31 voices in Gm (TB) and D (SA), moving to A and Gm, respectively, matching orchestral underlayment; orchestra alternates Gm with G, mm. 27-31, while voices become unison
mm. 32-45 voices have frequent dissonances with accompaniment: TB mm. 32-38; SA mm. 38-43; SSATBB mm. 44-45
mm. 46-63 harmony becomes more static as orchestra has only F-sharps; voices added on, with alto first, with some two-part divisi, then soprano, with some three-part divisi, and then tenor, with some two-part divisi: parallel fourths and fifths in soprano, alto and tenor move from unisons to major seconds
mm. 69-78 all voices in unison, moving to SSSAAATTBB (see Example 4.21); orchestra is in unison while voices are in unison; once the Fm/Eb bichord is arrived at in choir, at m. 74, orchestra proceeds in unrelated tonalities and clusters

Example 4.21 “As Once the Winged Energy of Delight” mm. 69-75, unison to divisi

mm. 97-119 unisons in orchestra and voices become harmonies: voices divisi to SSATBB, doubled eventually in orchestra
mm. 119.2-123 voices divisi to SSSAAATTBB over unpitched percussion
mm. 124-127 voices out; orchestra finishes with Bb-major chord with added dissonances
Rhythmic characteristics

In this, the eighth movement of *Voices*, Paulus transferred the energy of the title into the piece primarily with rhythmic techniques. From the outset, sixteenth-note figuration along with trills and tremolos in the orchestra provide an almost beehive-like quality of frenetic activity. He did not, however, continue this quality in the voice parts. The most significant challenge for singers will be the many meter and tempo changes, along with a few duplets, triplets, quadruplets, and quintuplets. Most of these occur over sustained orchestral notes, but a few of the triplets will be problematic if the choir does not know what to expect from the contrasting rhythms in the orchestra. These can all be rehearsed and assimilated kinesthetically by patting one hand on a leg to the beat, and either patting with the other hand or saying the rhythm at the same time, either with the text of the song, with rhythm syllables, or with neutral syllables.

Most of the piece is in 3/4 time, with changes to 2/4, 4/4, and 5/4 occasionally interspersed. The ending, however, increases tempo by changing to *alla breve*, mixing meters between 2/2, 3/2, 3/4, and 6/4, always maintaining the constant speed of the quarter note. The piece begins in 3/4 time, with the quarter note at 144 beats per minute.

- mm. 5: SA have a quintuplet, five quarter notes in the time of three, over sustained notes in the orchestra
- mm. 13-14: TB have a quintuplet, five-against-three, and a quadruplet, four-against-three, over sustained notes in the orchestra
- mm. 22-23: staggered entrances, B, T, A, SS
- mm. 24-25: two quarter-note triplets, the first over four sixteenth notes and a quarter note in low strings, the second over sustained notes
- mm. 31-32: tempo slows to 126 bpm
- m. 37: TB have a quarter-note triplet over four sixteenth notes and a quarter note in low strings
- m. 42: SA have a quarter-note triplet
- mm. 45-46: tempo accelerates to 136 bpm
mm. 46-63  repetitive string part with eighth notes and eighth-note triplets; repeated patterns in voice parts: alto first, then soprano added, and then tenor added

mm. 63-68  tempo accelerates to 152 bpm

mm. 75-95  eighth-note triplets in orchestra under sustained notes by choir

mm. 100  quarter-note duplet, two-against-three

mm. 101-112  eighth-note triplets and sixteenth notes in orchestra under sustained notes by choir

mm. 113  tempo changes to quarter note=180 bpm, or half note=90; alla breve feel until end, m. 127

mm. 114-117  orchestra punctuates after longer note has begun in voices (see Example 4.22)

mm. 121-127  percussion rolls under final chord in choir; remainder of orchestra re-enters at m. 123.6; choir release on downbeat of m. 124; orchestra finishes

Example 4.22 “As Once the Winged Energy of Delight” mm. 113-117, orchestra moving in answer to voices

Texture/Voicing

Unlike the other movements of Voices, “As Once the Winged Energy of Delight” never gives up the instrumental timbres entirely. At its thinnest, it is a clarinet trill accompanying the tenors and basses in two-part harmony. The first 31 measures have an almost incessant tremolo from the high strings. Other instrumental parts feature drone notes with the voices moving in unison melody above. The ending choral chord is dense,
divided into eleven parts with unpitched percussion rolls underneath. The overall effect is one of unremitting energy, ebbing and flowing, but always present.

**Formal characteristics**

The form of “As Once the Winged Energy of Delight” is ABCDD\textsuperscript{1}EE\textsuperscript{1}F.

| mm. 1-31 | A section, characterized by the vibrating energy of tremolos and trills |
| mm. 32-45 | B section, distinguished by the use of sixteenth notes in the orchestra |
| mm. 46-63 | C section, with repeated patterns layering on top of one another |
| mm. 64-67 | transition, with drone in orchestra |
| mm. 68-78 | D section: long notes in voices moving from unison to ten-part divisi (see Example 4.21) |
| mm. 79-95 | D\textsuperscript{1} section: extended version of previous section |
| mm. 96-104 | E section: orchestra on held Es until choir gets to held chord |
| mm. 105-112 | E\textsuperscript{1} section: variation of previous section |
| mm. 113-123 | F section; orchestra mostly unison under voices |
| mm. 124-127 | orchestral codetta |

**Summary**

The kinds of energy that Paulus portrayed in this movement change, from frenetic to subdued, then to dynamic and forceful. Despite the positive text, it has dissonance, which makes the message of hope and belief somewhat obscure. The shimmer of the final orchestral salvo, however, should leave no doubt that this movement is intended as an antidote to the gloom, frustration, and helplessness of the first six movements of the cycle.

9. “Voices”

“Voices,” the final song in the cycle, is partially a summary of the previous movements, and partially a question about the future. It begins introspectively, repeating
the word “voices.” The first half continues to be about listening, to both literal and figurative voices, the latter being the more important. Then, when the music about listening is complete, the joyful response to that listening is extolled. The listener is now encouraged to make sounds of jubilation, again both literal and figurative; the fanciful “sounds” made, in this case, become the radiance from “my joyfully streaming face.” The music that Paulus wrote for “Voices” supports this expression of overwhelming joy.

**Performing forces**

SATB chorus with *divisi* to SSSAATTTTBBB, semi-chorus, and full orchestra

**Text choice, setting, and analysis**

The text of “Voices” comes from Rilke’s *Duino Elegies* #1 and #10. Paulus has skillfully paired portions of each in order to emphasize first listening, then expressing joy. The spirituality of Rilke is, in this text, not overt, but is definitely present. Listening to “the voice of the wind,” and “as only saints have listened,” implies listening for the voice of God. This can mean different things to different people with different belief systems; it is not important that every singer believe the same thing, but only that they acknowledge that some people, including the poet, have believed and continue to believe in a spiritual force in the world. This lyric, compiled from its various sources, expresses that belief.

Paulus, in this movement more than any other, used repetition to emphasize important aspects of the text, as well as to accomplish certain musical goals. In doing so, he maintained the style of syllabic text setting, with no slurs longer than two notes, for
most of the song. His only deviation from this pattern is on the word “face” (in line 12), which he placed on fairly long melismas in the alto and bass parts. There is some awkwardness that conductors will have to address when unaccented syllables are given rather long-held notes. The second syllable of the word “voices” is one of these. Because of the length of the notes, the conductor should carefully delineate the exact vowel color that he or she desires to have from the choir.

Melodic characteristics

The predominant melodic gesture in this movement is repetition. The first aspect of melodic repetition is when a phrase contains several repeated pitches by some or all of the voice parts. The second aspect of melodic repetition is the reuse of previously sung motives, often several times, and usually with added intensity. Range is only problematic in two parts. The first sopranos end with a sustained high A (A5), which should not be a concern, although it comes at the end of a long and demanding cycle. Conductors should remind singers to keep their shoulders, necks, and throats relaxed, in overall good singing technique, so that singers do not tire too much. If the choir has singers of advanced age,
for whom high range and stamina are more likely to be a problem, the conductor could
tactfully assign them the second soprano part at the end. The other notable range
challenge is in the lowest bass part, which has several notes on low D (D2); this occurs in
a two-part bass *divisi* and in a four-part bass *divisi*, the latter being at a louder dynamic
level, probably requiring judicious balancing of voices based on sound rather than on
numbers.

m. 1    SA begin on E₄ and F₄; they will have to use the Bb chord from the end
of the previous movement to find their pitches
mm. 1-19 repeated notes or notes within a narrow range
mm. 27-34 unison to *divisi*, with bass 2 on low D (D2)
mm. 35-61 repeated melodies, beginning with SA (on line 6 of text), then tenor (on
line 7), and then bass (on line 5)
mm. 62-68 unison, branching out to parts
mm. 70-77 jubilant, then repeated softer, with intensity
mm. 84-106 unison start; ST repeat pitches while AB move down, then return up to
unison (see Example 4.23)

Example 4.23 “Voices” mm. 84-93, oblique motion of soprano and tenor with alto and
bass
mm. 109-142 women repeated melodic pattern and text “listening;” tenors enter at m. 112 on independent melody on text from lines 1 and 5; basses enter at m. 118 on independent melody on text from lines 10, 11, and 9
mm. 143-163 SAT begin in unison; bass sings an independent melody, then alto at m. 148 begins to sing independent melody
mm. 164-180 unison (in three octaves); m. 171 added notes in tenor and soprano 2

Harmonic characteristics

Paulus composed the first part of this piece with the atonality that he has used off-and-on throughout the cycle. When the orchestra begins, it is with high-sounding instruments (violin, piano, celeste, and flutes) providing harmonies entirely above the pitches of the voices. There are triadic harmonies in discrete places; these, when pointed out, will be the reference pitches for a choir, the easier segments that lead logically into the more difficult ones.

mm. 1-14 atonal
mm. 15-19 Fm-Bb-Ab
mm. 20-27 repeated harmonic pattern in TTB (or TBB); Dm melody in SA
mm. 28-33 oriented toward F#, cadencing on D at m. 32
mm. 34-61 again oriented toward F#, vacillating between F#sus7 and F#m7
mm. 62-68 atonal
mm. 69-81 quasi-bontonal (A and C), then quasi-polytonal (with Am, Bb, C and D)
mm. 84-106 voices essentially in D Lydian mode, over polytonal orchestration
mm. 109-142 voices and orchestra in C/Am/D Dorian: no strong tonal center, but also no flats or sharps used; from m. 118, occasional Bb in bass; occasional C# in orchestra
mm. 143-163 similar to mm. 84-106; bass then alto become independent
mm. 164-180 A major

Rhythmic characteristics

Paulus used the orchestra in “Voices” in two dissimilar ways, accomplished primarily through rhythmic writing. First, they provide a wash of sound, somewhat
indistinct and ethereal, to the parts of the piece that are about listening. Second, they provide a driving insistence that accompanies the part of the piece where the listeners are now responding with great joy. The rhythmic characteristics of the vocal parts have less variety, often being ostinatos with several repetitions.

The piece begins slowly, in 2/4 time with the quarter note at 66 beats per minute. After the introduction, the meter changes to 6/8, interspersed irregularly with 5/8, 4/8, and 3/8. After this section, the tempos, time signatures, and rhythmic activity increase, pull back slightly, then press strongly to the climactic finish.

mm. 2-8    high orchestral wash
mm. 14-32  primarily 6/8 time, with rhythms having a gentle eighth-note motion
mm. 33-61  faster, at quarter note=104; voice parts independent; active rhythms in orchestra
mm. 62-68  faster, at 116 bpm
mm. 69-81  faster, at 132 bpm; syncopated rhythms in voice parts mm. 70 and 75
mm. 82-108 faster, in one (3/4 time signature), with dotted-half note at 66 bpm; duplets, two-against-three, at mm. 91 and 104
mm. 109-142 meter to alla breve; same pulse, at 66 bpm, but now for half note
mm. 143-167 return to 3/4 time, in one, faster, with dotted-half note at 66 bpm; several duplets, two-against-three, in all parts
m. 168     molto allargando
m. 171     quarter note at 132 bpm
m. 172     fermata
mm. 173-180 presto, with quarter note at 160 bpm; choir holds last chord, release on downbeat of m. 180; orchestra finishes, pesante

Texture/Voicing

In “Voices,” Paulus added parts to thicken the resultant harmony and to provide additional timbres. The beginning starts sparsely, with a semi-chorus of unaccompanied women’s voices, but to that is added the high wash of violin, flutes, piano in the upper range, and celeste. The women divide into more parts, and the men become the added
texture, as they join the women in an unaccompanied texture. In subsequent entrances, the orchestra becomes increasingly polyphonic. The voices progress through sections of polyphony, followed by homorhythmic sections. The most texturally complex section is followed by an emphatic unison, leading to the final chords of the song, and of the cycle.

mm. 1-8 semi-chorus of women and high orchestra
mm. 9-27 mostly unaccompanied, semi-chorus of mixed voices in up to seven-part divisi
mm. 27.3-34 full chorus
mm. 34-61 contrapuntal orchestra with semi-chorus, first SA, then T, and then B, also contrapuntal; full chorus again at m. 47
mm. 62-68 unison voices to SSATBBB; orchestra thinner, lower
mm. 69-82 flurries of orchestral activity alternating with sustained sounds under active choir
mm. 82-98 polyphonic accompaniment under homorhythmic choir
mm. 99-106 addition of instruments thickens instrumental texture
mm. 109-138 vocal parts dense with divisi and staggered entrances, SSSAA, then TTTT, then BBBB; orchestra begins thinner, then thickens with gradually added parts
mm. 139-163 thick polyphonic texture
mm. 164-172 mostly unisons/octaves
mm. 173-180 tutti choir and orchestra; choir out on downbeat of m. 180

**Formal characteristics**

The overarching form of this final movement is ABCDD'B'D'D', with an introduction and a coda.

mm. 1-14 introduction
mm. 15-33 A section, with unaccompanied voices at first, and compound meter
mm. 34-61 B section: staggered entrances of contrapuntal voices with contrapuntal accompaniment as well
mm. 62-81 C section, emphatically rhythmic
mm. 82-94 D section, polyphonic orchestra under oblique movement in voices
mm. 95-106 D section repeated, with only slight variation
mm. 107-142 B section, significantly varied, but retaining staggered entrances of contrapuntal voices and contrapuntal accompaniment, as well as overall mood of B section
mm. 143-153 D section variant, more complex
Summary

Through Paulus’s use of text repetition, he made this final movement the longest of the cycle, both in number of measures, 180, and in actual performance time, about six and a half minutes. Although the movement as a whole is about redemption and triumph, it also has moments of pathos and uncertainty. “Voices” is a complex mix of strong unison voices with mysterious, undulating clusters requiring the voice parts to divide for long spans of measures, repeating patterns in which the only change is that of growing intensity. The triumphant ending demonstrates the most significant aspect of this final movement, the jubilation and joy that can shine through the darkness of our sometimes dismal human existence.

Summary of Cycle

The choral cycle, Voices, is divided into six songs of despair followed by three songs of redemption. The most obvious unifying factor that ties them together as a cycle is the origin of the texts, all by the German poet Rainer Maria Rilke. Additionally, the subject matter of the texts, and how they relate to the human condition, give these nine songs collectively a cyclical quality. Obviously, those texts taken from the same set, The Voices, have a similar theme of persons marginalized by society; the other three songs are redemptive responses to the first six. Their texts are not so closely related, but the
composer’s choice to include them and to integrate them into the architecture of the piece as a whole makes them fit the criteria for being a part of a choral cycle.

Stephen Paulus wrote difficult music to accompany the difficult subject matter presented in Voices. This is music for mature singers and a mature audience, as much because of the subject matter as because of the musical language. Persons with little or no experience with atonality will not likely appreciate it, either as performers or as audience. The visceral responses to be expected from some of the musical gestures, however, can be very powerful and affecting.

The interrelationships between the songs are achieved primarily through the texts; they follow a logically conceived pattern. Though the order of numbers 2-6 are, by subject, more or less interchangeable, the first song obviously sets the tone and topic for the cycle, and the redemptive movements 7-9 would not be as powerful if they were to occur before or without the others. The musical relationships are more ambiguous. Numbers 2-4 move with an attacca directive from one to the next, with rhythmic and tonal segues providing smooth transitions and unity between the pieces. Numbers 1 and 6, “Opening” and “Song of the Leper,” use some of the same specific musical material, providing unity between those pieces. Overall, the subtler congruencies of Paulus’s compositional techniques further unify the nine songs as a cycle. These techniques include the use of ostinatos, pedal points, and oblique voice leading. The most widespread compositional technique in this cycle, however, is his use of vocal unisons (octaves, actually), which expand either toward each other to form clusters, or away from each other to form widely spread chords.
In terms of the harmony, the pieces might be said to be related because of the lack of harmonic relationships; that is, they all have atonal aspects, though none is completely atonal. There is significant dissonance, but also significant amounts of consonance. Traditional harmonic progressions are rare, whereas the use of both diatonic and chromatic tone clusters is common in all of the pieces.

The most difficult aspect of these songs from a singer’s standpoint is learning and tuning the difficult melodic and harmonic intervals. Finding starting pitches with little direct help from the orchestra can be a very daunting task. Of course, one can always sound a pitch between movements (those that are not *attacca*) if necessary, but this is amateurish, and presumably any choir capable of undertaking a performance of this cycle will be able to find pitches from disparate sources in the orchestral accompaniment.

Stephen Paulus’s *Voices* is a very challenging and very powerful choral cycle. A choir and conductor that have the requisite skills and an appreciation for the music, the message, and the way that one complements the other will find the hard work rewarding and even life-affirming.
Chapter 5 *Five Hebrew Love Songs*, by Eric Whitacre

Brief Biographical Sketch and Introduction to the Cycle

Eric Whitacre is one of the most performed and in-demand composers of choral music in the world in the early twenty-first century. Whitacre, who was born in 1970, was not active in traditional classical music until his college years at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, where he was recruited to sing in the choir. It was here that his life path dramatically changed direction as he began to study classical music and composition. He admittedly had some catching up to do in his musical skills, but after seven years he graduated with a bachelor’s degree in music.

He went on to The Juilliard School of Music in New York to study composition, where he studied with David Diamond and John Corigliano. After receiving his Master of Music degree in composition in 1997, he moved to Los Angeles. He quickly established a strong, positive reputation as a guest conductor and clinician in venues all over the world.

In addition to his *Five Hebrew Love Songs*, other cyclical works by Whitacre include *Three Flower Songs* (“I Hide Myself,” “With a Lily in Your Hand,” and “Go Lovely Rose”), *Three Songs of Faith* on texts by e.e. cummings (“i will wade out,” “hope, faith, life, love,” and “i thank You God for most this amazing day”), and *Animal Crackers*, settings of three poems by Ogden Nash (“The Panther,” “The Cow,” and “The Firefly”).
Whitacre’s *Five Hebrew Love Songs* provides a sometimes languorous, sometimes lively romantic choral cycle. With original Hebrew text written by Whitacre’s then girlfriend, now wife, Hila Plitmann, these songs are a glimpse into the composer’s feelings at that time. Existing in several different voicings and instrumental arrangements, the set began as a song cycle for solo voice (Ms. Plitmann’s) with piano and violin, composed in 1996. All subsequent changes in voicing and accompanying instruments were done by the composer. The version described herein was rearranged in 2001 for SATB choir with string quartet, though the choral parts are included in the solo violin and piano accompaniment version. All songs are included within one octavo.

The texts of all five of the poems are non-linear, non-narrative, and abound with figurative language. The order, determined by the composer, does not seem to follow a particular pattern; they are related only in subject matter. The translation of the texts are included on the inside cover of the printed octavo and are presumably by the poet. The texts are transliterated from the Hebrew alphabet into the Roman, but the only pronunciation clues are accents denoting stressed syllables and the underlined “ch,” which is a common reminder in transliterated Hebrew to use the somewhat sustained consonant sound similar to the German *ach-Laut*, which in the International Phonetic Alphabet is [x]. Further explanation and aural examples are given by the composer and lyricist at a YouTube clip titled “Eric Discusses the Five Hebrew Love Songs.”¹

The performing forces required for this cycle vary slightly from movement to

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movement, but are essentially SATB choir with string quartet or piano and violin. The first movement, “Temuná,” uses only women’s voices. “Kalá kallá” has minimal divisi in all parts except soprano, and adds a tambourine to the accompaniment. “Lárov” has no divisi; “Éyze shéleg!” has only the basses dividing into two parts, except for a piacere sections in which each singer is instructed to sing with independent tempo and rhythm. In the final movement, “Rakút,” all of the parts except for the tenors divide briefly.

1. “Temuná (A Picture)”

The first movement of the set establishes a languorous mood that is retained in many of the subsequent movements. Utilizing only the treble voices, it establishes a melodic diversity and range that continues in subsequent movements as well. The use of wide ranges also includes the instrumental parts, established here and continued throughout the cycle.

Text choice, setting, and analysis

1. *Temuná belibí charutá*  
   A picture is engraved in my heart
2. *Nodédet beyn ór uveyn ófel*  
   Moving between light and darkness
3. *Min dmamá shekazó et guféch kach otá*  
   A sort of silence envelopes your body
4. *Usaréch al paná ‘ich nófel*  
   And your hair falls upon your face just so

The setting of this first song in the cycle for just the women’s voices seems to indicate that the voice is that of the poet rather than the composer. There is a familiarity, an implied intimacy, in lines 3 and 4: this is not an unrequited love, but one that has been shared and has grown to the point of making this impression on the poet’s heart. The text
is set predominantly syllabically; the rare exceptions do not exceed three notes per syllable. Accented syllables are placed consistently on the strong beats (1 and 4 in 6/8 time.

**Melodic characteristics**

The melody that is alternately stated by the two violins in the first half of the piece becomes accompaniment in the second half, and sometimes is given to the viola.

The vocal parts do not enter until halfway through the piece, and their melodic lines are different than the earlier string melodies.

- **mm. 1-2**: stepwise melody in first violin in predominantly downward direction; other parts alternate steps with descending perfect fourths
- **mm. 3-4**: similar, but melody in second violin
- **mm. 5-8**: variant of mm. 1-4
- **mm. 9-10**: short cadential phrase, with melodic descending minor sixth, setting up vocal entrance
- **m. 10.5**: voices enter in unison for two beats, then melody in soprano: arch-shaped (ascending first, then descending) with steps and thirds (see Example 5.1)

**Example 5.1. Five Hebrew Love Songs**, mvt. 1, mm. 10-14, soprano and alto: melody and vocal harmony

- **mm. 12.6-14.3**: soprano descending melody, stepwise
- **mm. 15-16**: soprano arch-shaped melody similar to previous, but including perfect fourths with steps
mm. 17-18  stepwise melody descending, then returning two steps upward for cadence
mm. 19-20  short cadential phrase by strings alone

**Harmonic characteristics**

The piece is in D Mixolydian mode, and the main theme is built on a recurring v-IV-I progression; this harmonic motive then modulates into different key areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>mm.</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>v-IV-I harmonic motive in D Mixolydian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>harmonic motive repeated in G Mixolydian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-6</td>
<td>harmonic motive reworked as V-IV-i in D minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-8</td>
<td>harmonic motive reworked as VII-iv-I in D Mixolydian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-10</td>
<td>the outer chords, v and I, of the harmonic motive are reiterated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>harmonic pattern of mm. 1-10 is repeated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>final chord in piano/violin version is D major (D4, A4, D5, F#5); in the string quartet version it is D major with an added raised fourth, (G#4, A4, D5, F#5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Rhythmic characteristics**

This movement is, with the exception of one measure, in 6/8 time, at a languorous tempo of eighth note at 96 beats per minute. The tempo is further characterized as *Dolce con rubato*. The rhythms in the string parts are generally one active part in counterpoint with the other three more sustained parts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>mm.</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>violin 1, with pickup, on primarily eighth notes, with some dotted rhythms; other parts more sustained, on dotted quarter notes and dotted half notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>violin 2 has active rhythm, as before; other parts sustained, as before</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-6</td>
<td>violin 1 resumes the active rhythmic role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3-8</td>
<td>violin 2 resumes the active rhythmic role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>time signature changes to 2/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>time signature returns to 6/8; fermata in strings on downbeat; voices begin on beat 5 with two eighth note pickups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-18</td>
<td>soprano part predominantly dotted eighth/sixteenth/eighth note rhythms against even eighth notes and quarter notes in alto part</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-12</td>
<td>strings as in mm. 1-2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
mm. 13-14  viola takes over active rhythm; other parts more sustained
m. 15     strings as in m. 1
mm. 16-19  strings more active, in counterpoint with each other, except cello, which
           maintains sustained rhythms as before
m. 20     final chord on dotted half note with fermata

Texture/Voicing

The first half of this movement is scored only for four-part strings. It is
homophonic, with the melody part, whether in violin 1 or violin 2, the highest sounding
pitch in the texture. The second half of the movement includes the voices in two parts.
The soprano becomes the highest pitch in the texture. The voices and one of the string
parts move in counterpoint, while the other strings provide homophonic accompaniment.
Double-stops in the cello thicken the texture by providing an additional pitch. The final
five measures become more contrapuntal in the accompaniment as each part is given a
more rhythmically active line to play, while the voices continue as before. The strings
play the last two measures alone.

Formal characteristics

The piece is divided into two nearly equal parts. The first part is instrumental, the
second vocal and instrumental. The melodic and harmonic material in the first part is
reworked in the second part as it becomes accompaniment to the vocal parts. The whole
is described as AA¹ in form.
Summary

As a first movement, “Temuná” sets the tone for the whole cycle. It has at the same time a melancholy and a sensuality, communicated by the rhythm, the tonality, and the exclusive use of the women’s voices. It begins the set quietly rather than rapturously.

2. “Kalá kallá (Light Bride)”

“Kalá kallá,” the second song of this set, takes advantage of the two homophonous words in the title, which mean “light” and “bride,” respectively. Contemplative statements by the men’s voices are answered twice by a lilting, nonsensical tune sung by the women, until the women take up the more solemn mood, which is followed by all the singers together finishing the piece with a joyous flourish.

Text choice, setting, and analysis

1  Kalá kallá kulá shelí  Light bride, she is all mine,
2  La la la...  La la la...
3  Kalá kallá kulá shelí  Light bride, she is all mine,
4  La la la...  La la la...
5  U’vé kalút Tishák híli!  And lightly she will kiss me!
6  Kalá kallá kulá shelí  Light bride, she is all mine,
7  U’vé kalút Tishák híli!  and lightly she will kiss me!
8  La la la...  La la la...

The words kallá and kalá are homophones, and the word play of the two together forms the basis for this text. While musically the texted portions of the song remain somber, the alternating “la la la” sections provide a lighthearted contrast in keeping with the original play on words. The first two texted sections are sung by the men, in keeping with the dramatic voice of the poem. Each of the subsequent “la la la” sections is then
sung by the women. The third texted section begins with the women, who are then joined by the men also singing text. The final “la la la” section is sung by all voices. The text is set with single-note syllables alternating with multiple-note slurs. The first texted section uses only two-note combinations on the slurred syllables; the second texted section has some three- and four-note slurs in the tenor part; the third texted section has up to five notes per syllable, but is mostly two or three notes per syllable. The “la la la” section is consistently syllabic.

**Melodic characteristics**

This movement is characterized by a series of antecedent and consequent phrases in both the slow sections and the fast.

- **mm. 1-2** antecedent phrase: men’s voices in unison, primarily stepwise motion with an upward minor sixth followed by a downward perfect fifth just ahead of a half-cadence
- **mm. 3-4** a consequent phrase, beginning the same as the antecedent, ending with a descending perfect fifth followed by an ascending perfect fifth at the cadence
- **mm. 5-6** antecedent phrase repeated
- **mm. 7-8** consequent phrase repeated, but ends with stepwise motion
- **mm.1-8** accompaniment in strings fairly static, with repeated tones, steps, and thirds in all parts; violin 1 has only repeated notes, on E4; at m. 4, violin 2 has short melodic phrase marked “Solo” while other instrumental and vocal parts are on sustained pitches
- **mm. 9-10** antecedent phrase: women’s voices in unison with initial ascending perfect fifth from A4 followed by mostly descending stepwise movement
- **mm. 11-12** consequent phrase beginning on A4 moving basically downward by steps
- **mm. 13-16** repetition of previous two phrases, but with ascending octave at phrase end from F#4 to F#5
- **mm. 17-20** repetition of mm. 9-12
- **mm. 20.25-25** narrow stepwise melody from D4 to G4, cadencing on G#4
- **mm. 9-25** instrumental accompaniment is predominantly chordal skips, with a few steps
- **mm. 26-29** vocal and instrumental lines are essentially the same as mm. 1-4
“solo” instrumental line from m. 4 reiterated in violin 1, at an octave higher, and cello, at an octave lower

bass retains melody, as in mm. 5-8; tenor line begins stepwise, then adds larger intervals, up to a minor seventh; instrumental parts expand to wider range, incorporating many octaves, a perfect eleventh in the violin 2, and a major thirteenth in the cello part

essentially a reiteration of mm. 9-25 in the soprano and string parts; alto part is lower, but moves in mostly parallel motion with soprano

women’s voices in unison on decorated form of original melody from mm. 1-4; violin 1 and 2 move in stepwise motion while viola and cello move in chordal skips

all four voice parts independent; movement in vocal and instrumental parts expand in range and incorporate many chordal skips; bass 2 to E2, soprano to G5

transitional phrase: soprano descends by step spanning a minor seventh; other parts move by steps and small skips spanning a narrow range

soprano is essentially a reiteration of the melody in the other two fast sections, mm. 9-25 and 34-50, with alto moving in parallel motion; at m. 73 to the end, these parts shift up an octave providing added intensity and excitement; men’s voices and strings move in primarily repeated tones and shift by chordal skips as the harmonies change; from m. 72 to the end, these parts move by step; tenor 1 and sopranos end on high G# (G#4 and G#5 respectively)

Harmonic characteristics

The key signature indicates E minor, and the verse sections maintain this tonality with occasional forays into E Dorian. The refrain sections begin in A Dorian, with no change in the key signature, and end in E major.

alternating measures of C major and E minor (VI and i); all of the E-minor chords except the final one contain an added second (F#); final chord is an open fifth (E2, E3, B3, and E4)

alternating sets of two measures each of A minor and D major

returns to E minor with VI-VII-i sequence, which, when repeated, ends with I, or an E-major chord

same as mm. 1-8, except cadences on an E-major chord

same as mm. 9-25, with a minor seventh (G) added to color the A-minor chords

same as mm. 1-8, with last measure a truncated version of mm. 7-8, and cadence on E minor
mm. 58-59 transitional D major, C major, E no third
mm. 60-76 same as mm. 9-25

Rhythmic characteristics

The main rhythmic feature of this movement is the alternating use of dotted-eighth-note rhythm followed by even eighth notes. This happens in both the slower sections and the faster ones. The fast sections also include time signature changes and two quarter notes after the eighth notes. In the time signature changes, the duration of the eighth notes remain constant. Each of the fast sections is preceded by a fermata.

mm. 1-8 slow 6/8 rhythm in men’s voices over primarily dotted quarter notes in strings (see Example 5.2)
mm. 9-20 fast 6/8 alternating with 2/4 rhythm in women’s voices and upper strings (see Example 5.3)
mm. 21-25 rhythm similar, but 6/8 alternates with 3/4
mm. 26-29 slow 6/8, as before in mm. 1-4

Example 5.2. *Five Hebrew Love Songs*, mvt. 2, mm. 1-2, tenor: antecedent phrase in slow tempo sections

![Example 5.2](image)

Example 5.3. *Five Hebrew Love Songs*, mvt. 2, mm. 9-10, soprano and alto: antecedent phrase in fast tempo sections

![Example 5.3](image)

mm. 30-33 basses retain pattern from mm. 5-8; tenors and strings become more active, incorporating some sixteenth notes in more contrapuntal movement
mm. 34-50 rhythmically analogous to mm. 9-25
mm. 51-54  women’s voices in more active version of the slow 6/8 rhythm, incorporating sixteenth notes and thirty-second notes; strings play longer note values again, as in mm. 1-4
mm. 55-57  sopranos retain slow 6/8 rhythm, as before; other vocal parts and strings move contrapuntally
mm. 58-59  a short transition in which the sopranos sing the fast motive over short, accented punctuations on the beat by the other voices and the strings, in 6/8 and 3/4 time
mm. 60-76  women’s voices reiterate the fast rhythmic motive from mm. 9-25; men’s voices move in complimentary rhythm (see Example 5.4); strings move in more driving rhythm (see Example 5.5); at mm. 72-76, men’s voices and strings repeat rhythm from mm. 58-59 twice, the second time with a held final chord

Example 5.4. *Five Hebrew Love Songs*, mvt. 2, mm. 60-71: rhythmic motive of men’s voices

Example 5.5. *Five Hebrew Love Songs*, mvt. 2, mm. 60-71: rhythmic motive of strings

Texture/Voicing

The vocal parts move from thin to thick texture over the course of the movement.

The first verse is unison men, and the first refrain is unison women. The second verse begins with unison men, and becomes two-part and contrapuntal; the second refrain is two-part women. The third verse begins with two-part women and expands to four-part mixed voices, expanding to five parts for two chords by dividing the basses. The final refrain continues in four parts until three measures from the end, where the basses divide,
and the final chord at which all parts divide except sopranos, producing a seven-part chord.

The instrumental parts similarly add thickness and complexity as the song progresses. The opening verse is in homophonic four- and five-part harmony, the fifth voice accomplished with double stops alternately in the cello and viola parts. In the first refrain, all the parts employ double stops, and the violin 1 occasionally has triple stops. The texture becomes polyphonic, with the higher parts more active than the lower. The second verse begins like the first, but becomes more polyphonic about halfway through, corresponding to the point at which the men begin singing in two parts. The second refrain is, for the instruments, an exact repetition of the first refrain. The third verse begins like the other two, and like the second verse becomes polyphonic about halfway through. The final refrain has a thicker feel as all instruments play homorhythmically active rhythms and double and triple stops. The violin 1 even has a few quadruple stops.

This movement is the only one that employs an additional instrument, a tambourine. It is used only in the refrains, adding more exuberance to these contrasting sections.

Formal characteristics

This movement is organized in a verse/refrain form iterated three times. The text in the first two verse sections is the same; the third verse uses different text. The first two refrains use the neutral syllable “la” throughout; while the third has a bit of text overlapping into the beginning of the refrain. The verses are in a slow tempo, while the refrains are in a contrasting fast tempo.
Summary

The contrasting sections in this movement alternate between tenderness and exuberant joy, expressing two sides of the same coin, that is, the love between these two people. The contrasts are provided by most strikingly by the tempo changes. Changes in the texture, harmony, melody, and rhythm also underscore the contrast in mood. Of the five movements, this is the longest, and the one most likely for use as a stand-alone piece.

3. “Lárov (Mostly)"

The choral setting of the brief “Lárov” retains much of the character of the original vocal solo, with the sopranos singing in nine of the eleven measures, while the lower three voice parts sing only three and a half measures. It is also the most fanciful, being a portion of an imagined dialogue between a roof and the sky. The nearly constant sixteenth notes in the accompaniment contribute to the dream-like mood of this movement. The end of this movement is notable for its recapitulation of the end of the first movement, with only a slight variation.

Text choice, setting, and analysis

1. “Laróv,” amár gag la’shama’im,
   “Mostly,” said the roof to the sky,

2. “Hamærchák shebeynéynu hu ad;
   “the distance between you and I is endlessness;

3. Ach lifnéy zman alu lechán shna’im,
   But a while ago two came up here,

4. Uveynénynu nishár sentiméter echád. ”
   and only one centimeter was left between us.”
The wistful character of the text is mirrored in the musical setting, notable for its brevity. The roof fancifully speaking to the sky notes that the presence of these two lovers changes the very laws of nature, bringing close objects that were once distant. This is also an implied analogy regarding the lovers themselves, that once they were distant, now they are as close as can be imagined. The melody, in the soprano, has the text set syllabically with the only exception on the penultimate syllable, which has three notes. The other parts have no more than four notes on each syllable.

**Melodic characteristics**

This movement is the shortest and yet the most textually dense of the five. Spanning just eleven measures, the first half is solely the sopranos accompanied by the string quartet. The other parts sing for three measures. The strings end the song alone. The tessitura of the violin 1 is quite high.

mm. 1-2 disjunct melody in soprano spanning an octave D4-D5, partially doubled up an octave by violin 1; contrapuntal viola part mostly stepwise

mm. 3-4 disjunct melody in soprano spanning a minor seventh A4-G5, partially doubled up an octave by violin 1 and down an octave by cello; violin 2 mostly stepwise, while viola and cello move predominantly by chordal skips

mm. 5-6 disjunct melody in soprano spanning a perfect eleventh E4-A5, partially doubled by violin 2; violin 1 tacet, while viola and cello continue in steps and skips

mm. 6-9 violin 1 re-enters on beat 3, followed by initial entrance of bass, tenor, and alto, on beat 4, 5, and 6, respectively, each with a combination of steps and chordal skips; violin 1 and 2 essentially double the soprano and alto up an octave; the violin 1 and soprano are now in descending stepwise movement

mm. 9-11 the instrumental codetta is a quote from the last two measures of the first movement
Harmonic characteristics

The key center for this piece is D, alternating between D Dorian, D Mixolydian, and D minor. The harmonic pattern within the first three phrases is v-IV-I, with the first phrase in D, the second in G, the third returning to D, though this time cadencing to D minor. The fourth phrase maintains approximately the dominant/subdominant/tonic pattern, with VII-IV-I, a C-major chord taking the dominant function, based on the lowered seventh degree of the natural minor and both modes used. Listed below are chord qualities, not fully realized tonalities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Chord Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>m. 1</td>
<td>A minor to G major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 2</td>
<td>D major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 3</td>
<td>D minor to C major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 4</td>
<td>G major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 5</td>
<td>A minor to G major, as in m. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 6</td>
<td>D minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 7</td>
<td>C major to G minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 8</td>
<td>Continues in G minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 9</td>
<td>D major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 10</td>
<td>A minor, in first inversion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 11</td>
<td>Final cadence is D major, with violin 1 on D4 and A4, violin 2 on F#4, but with striking dissonances in viola and cello, G#4 and E4, respectively, giving an unsettled feeling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rhythmic characteristics

In 6/8 time like the first two movements, this one is slightly faster, with the eighth note at 108 beats per minute. Along with this is the indication con rubato, though with the exception of ritardando marked in measure 8-10, there are no further indications of precisely where the rubato should be applied.

mm. 1-2 begins with an eighth-note anacrusis; melody in soprano moves with eighth notes until the phrase end; violin 1 doubles rhythm of melody in an
ornamented form; violin 2 and cello have longer note values; viola moves contrapuntally with sixteenth notes (see Example 5.6)

Example 5.6. *Five Hebrew Love Songs*, mvt. 3, mm. 1-2: soprano melody and viola counterpoint

**mm. 3-4** begins with two sixteenth notes as anacrusis; melody in soprano similar to mm. 1-2, with violin 1 and cello moving homorhythmically with melody at first; violin 2 on sixteenth notes, joined by cello; viola independent, mostly on eighth notes

**mm. 5-6** violin 2 begins doubling the eighth-note rhythm of the soprano melody, then joins the predominantly sixteenth-note counterpoint of the viola and cello

**m. 6** beats 4-6 feature a hocket-like run of sixteenth notes beginning in the bass, followed by the tenor, followed by the soprano and alto together in an anacrusis beginning to the last vocal phrase; all of these sixteenth notes are reinforced by the cello, the tenor also by the viola, and the women’s voices also by the violins

**mm. 7-9** the alto line, along with the violin 2, are the most rhythmically active parts, with mostly sixteenth notes; the soprano and violin 1 are eighth notes until the penultimate beat of the phrase; men’s voices are less active, with eighth notes and longer; viola and cello are independently contrapuntal with many sixteenth notes mixed with longer note values

**m. 8** time signature changes to 3/8

**mm. 9-11** time signature changes to 2/4; strings finish with mostly dotted quarter notes and eighth notes

**Texture/Voicing**

Although much of the song is essentially soprano soli with accompaniment, the texture starts relatively thick, in seven parts. This is accomplished by double stops in the
cello and violin 2. This texture, however, is only sustained through the first two measures, after which it is reduced to the five parts of a single vocal line accompanied by strings playing single notes. It is further reduced to three parts when, in measures 5-6, the violin 1 drops out and the violin 2 doubles the sopranos. It gradually re-thickens as the violin 1 re-enters and the other three voice parts enter one by one. The ending is just the strings, the five-voice chord accomplished with a double stop in the violin 1.

Formal characteristics

As mentioned previously, this is a rather short movement, but it does have notable form. The five phrases are organized as aba\textsuperscript{1}c with a codetta that recalls the ending of the first movement.

Summary

After the expansive “Kalá kallá,” “Lárov” has the effect of a recitative after an aria or a chorus. The text is set forth in a straightforward manner, with no repetition, in the brief nine measures of singing. The instrumental ending recalls the first movement. This song more than any of the others belies the original form of the set as a song cycle for solo voice, and the implied intimacy should be emphasized in performance.

4. “Éyze shéleg! (What Snow!)”

“Éyze shéleg!” uses the voices as instruments in an imitation of bells and snow. The composer uses \textit{a piacere} elements to evoke a dreamy effect, with imprecise entrances and indeterminate tempos. These occur at the beginning and at the end of the
The text is only whispered, briefly, by a soloist. The soloist then sings wordlessly on a neutral vowel, further reinforcing the ethereal mood.

Text choice, setting, and analysis

1  Éyze shéleg!  What snow!
2  Kmo chalomót ktaním  Like little dreams
3  Noflim mehashamá’im.  falling from the sky.
(also “bong” and “ooh”)

The text of this movement is, in its shortness and form, reminiscent of a haiku. But the song is about more than the text. The composer explains that the pitches sung on the syllable “bong” are in imitation of cathedral bells that the couple heard each morning while spending time in Germany. With this juxtaposition, one can imagine the text as a fleeting thought or an exclamation by one person while both people listened to the bells. The fact that the text is whispered, and occurs in only one of the twenty-one measures of the song, seems to indicate that the song is about more than just the text. In addition to the repeated “bong” of the bells, the soprano soloist and then the choir sing long passages on the neutral vowel “ooh,” providing a languorous but unspecific meaning to the whole of the piece.

Melodic characteristics

The sound of bells is portrayed at the beginning and end of this movement in an a piacere fashion. At the beginning each of the four sections is assigned one pitch, which they “strike” together, but repeat at random. In similar style at the end of the song, the altos and tenors are each given a series of four pitches to repeat at random times and tempos. The only real text is not sung, but rather is whispered. The non-a piacere singing
is done on the syllable “ooh,” as mentioned above. The strings provide the atmosphere suggesting snowfall, with their use of scintillating harmonics and two-note motives separated by rests.

w/o m. SATB enter one part at a time, imitating bells, on E4, D4, C4, and A3 respectively; soloist then whispers the entire text

mm. 1-7 soloist sings disjunct melody ranging over a major tenth; violin 1 plays eighth notes on harmonic, interspersed with rests; violin 2 plays continuous C7 harmonic; viola and cello play sustained notes in octaves (see Example 5.7); choir continues a piacere bell-like singing; at m. 7 basses stop singing bell-like part

Example 5.7. *Five Hebrew Love Songs*, mvt. 4, mm. 1-2: solo soprano melody and string quartet

mm. 8-14 basses re-enter, singing C3, B2, A2 (in m. 9); they hold the A2 for six measures; soprano and alto stop their bell-like sounds and sing “ooh” on C4 on beat four; sopranos hold this note for 4¼ measures; altos ascend a perfect fifth, then descend by step, repeating the process twice; tenors stop singing the bell-like pattern at m. 9, re-entering at m. 10.4 to sing scalar steps from C3 to C4; at m. 13 soprano begins to move upward by step
mm. 9-13  strings play two-note motive, the first note of which is trilled, the second note is alternately a step higher or a step lower (see Example 5.8); this motive is separated by 1\(\frac{1}{2}\) of rest, and is played six times, three ascending, three descending:

Example 5.8. *Five Hebrew Love Songs*, mvt. 4, mm. 9-10, violin 1: two-note motive

mm. 14-17  string parts become more legato and sustained; sopranos and tenors continue moving predominantly by step, now descending; basses divide, and also descend by step, with the bass 2 eventually reaching D2 before returning to A2; alto moves by chordal skips in both directions but gradually getting lower

mm. 18-21  sopranos and divided basses sustain pitches C4, C3, and F2, respectively; altos and tenors resume bell-like sounds, altos on C4-A3-B3-G3 and tenors on A3-F3-G3-C3; cello plays C4-F3-F2 pizzicato; violins alternate two-note motive with high harmonic; viola plays C4 tremolo at the same time as the violins play the two-note motive

**Harmonic characteristics**

The tonality of this song alternates between C major and A minor. It ends, however, with an F major chord. With no flats or sharps in the key signature, and no accidentals whatsoever throughout the song, it has a strong pull to C, and a weaker pull to A, when it is in this tonality, due to the use of the natural minor. This gives it a sense of bitonality, albeit a subtle one, based on the relationship between C major and A minor.

w/o m.  opening *a piacere* section begins ambiguously; when tenor enters, it seems like C major, with the alto D adding color; when the bass enters, it is more firmly A minor, with the alto D again adding color

mm. 1-2  C major

mm. 3-4  A minor

mm. 5-6  F major
mm. 7-8  C major
mm. 9-14  bitonal, with soprano, alto and tenor in C major, bass and strings in A minor
mm. 15-18  C major: V, IV, I, ii, vi, V, IV, the harmonic rhythm of these changes is at the half-note
mm. 18-21  finishes on F major chord, with melodic B natural in the two-note motive of the violin 1 part reminding us that we are really still in C major; this is further substantiated by the *attacca* to the next movement, which is also in C major

**Rhythmic characteristics**

From the arrhythmic *a piacere* section in the beginning, to the partially *a piacere* section at the end, clear, pronounced rhythms are never the strongest features of this movement. Even when the time signature is indicated, the feeling of metrical regularity is mitigated by movement deliberately inconsistent with the meter, as well as the use of three-against-two rhythms.

w/o m.  opening *a piacere* section marked *senza misura*, or without meter; after each section enters together, singers are directed to repeat their pitches in random tempo

mm. 1-7  4/4 time signature; solo soprano moves with half note and quarter notes, beginning each of the three phrases on beat two; violin 2, viola, and cello sustain long tones; violin 1 plays transparent single eighth notes with various rests in between; choir continues *a piacere* repetitions

m. 8  solo ends; choir begins measured time, first with basses on half notes, then sopranos and altos entering on beat 4;

mm. 9-15  sopranos and basses hold tied whole notes, soprano until m. 13, basses until m. 15; altos move on half notes and quarter notes; tenors rest until m. 10.4, when they re-enter using quarter notes and half notes; strings play the two-note motive (see Example 5.8) six times, beginning on beat 4, then beat 3, then beat 2, then beat 1, then beat 4 again, and finally on beat 3 again;

m. 13  sopranos begin movement on quarter notes

m. 14  strings no longer homorhythmic, with staggered entrances from bottom to top

mm. 15-16  altos movement in quarter notes; STB move on half notes; strings quarter notes and eighth notes; violin 1 plays quarter note triplets on beat 3
m. 17  viola plays quarter-note triplets throughout measure, violin 1 plays them again on beat 3; altos continue movement in quarter notes; bass moves on half notes; tenor has a whole note; soprano a quarter note followed by a dotted half note;

mm. 18-21  time signature changes to 6/4, then back to 4/4 at m. 20; soprano and bass hold long note values; alto and tenor return to a piacere arrhythmic pattern; violins reiterate two-note motive, followed by a single quarter note, supported by viola with the same rhythm of the two-note motive, but with a tremolo replacing the trill; cello plays two quarter note followed by a half note and a half rest, then finishes with two measures of quarter note then dotted half note; all parts move attacca to the next movement, with tenors and basses starting on the downbeat, others thereafter

Texture/Voicing

This movement begins with very thin texture, as one section of the choir begins at a time. After singing the initial note together, each individual singer begins to sing the same pitch at his or her own tempo, making the rhythmic texture thicken much faster than the tonal texture. The tonal texture gradually thickens as other parts are added. As the solo and strings are added, the texture thickens more, but the open octaves still give the piece a lean feel. The four-part texture in the voices becomes more traditional sounding after measure 8, but the strings’ short entrances followed by rests only partially fill up the texture. At measures 14-17, the effect is quite lush, and from thence until the end, it seems to gradually thin out, despite the increased number of pitches used in the alto and tenor a piacere ending section.
Formal characteristics

This movement is through-composed, with the repetitious elements, the bell-like sound of the voices and the two-note motives of the strings, not providing enough formal continuity to indicate any overarching form.

Summary

This is the most atmospheric of the five movements, the text being treated as a fleeting thought amidst the sound of bells and snowflake imagery. The a piacere elements and the transparent string writing helps establish this atmosphere, giving the piece an ethereal, dreamlike quality.

5. “Rakút (Tenderness)”

“Rakút,” both musically and textually, is a summation of the previous movements. The loose narrative strand of the poetry seems to have concluded with a happy ending. Musically, this movement is tied to the previous one by the utilization of the only attacca marked in the cycle, as well as by remaining in the same key. This movement is tied to the beginning of the set in its reuse of the opening melody of the first movement in the closing measures of this, the last movement, and in the harmony of the second half of this movement, recollecting the harmony of the first movement.
Text Choice, Setting, and Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Hebrew</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>Huhayá malé Rakút;</em> He was full of tenderness;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><em>Hi haytá kasha.</em> She was very hard.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><em>Vechól káma shenistá lehishaér kach</em> And as much as she tried to stay thus,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><em>Pashút, uvlí sibá tová.</em> Simply, and with no good reason,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><em>Lakách otá el toch atzmó,</em> He took her into himself,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td><em>Veheńíach Bamokóm hachí rach.</em> And set her down.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Putting this poem as the final song of the cycle is the composer’s way of saying that what occurs in the poem all happened because of what was sung in the previous four songs. The feelings of the two individuals are summarized, and the change of mind on the part of the woman can be inferred. Also evident is the reversal of the stereotypical roles: the man is tender, the woman is hard. This makes the poem all the more affecting. Much of the song uses the nonsense syllable “tum” as an underlayment for the melody. Tenors and basses repeatedly sing this syllable from the beginning until measure 18, and they are joined by either the altos or the sopranos, whichever part is not singing the melody. The Hebrew text is set mostly syllabically, with some two- or three-note slurs. Notable among the few longer syllables is the short melisma at the very end of the text, sung by the sopranos.

Melodic characteristics

The repeated tones in the lower parts provide a harmonic drone and a rhythmic ostinato throughout much of the movement. The main melodic ideas are given a Middle-Eastern quality with modalities shifting between Lydian to Mixolydian, with a few melodic tritones particularly emphasizing this effect.

mm. 1-18  tenor and bass repeat pitches
mm. 1-6 altos, divisi, repeat pitches separated by rests; sopranos narrow melody; strings, minus violin 1, double the drone pitches of the tenors and basses

mm. 6.4-8 sopranos take over alto pitches from mm. 1-5; altos narrow melody below staff

mm. 9-10 violin 1 enters, alternating between C4 and G4; violin 2 descending melody from E5

mm. 10.4-12 soprano melody spanning a minor sixth, with Bb hinting at Mixolydian mode, and F# hinting at Lydian mode; alto repeated pattern C4 to D4/E4; strings sustained pitches

mm. 12.4-14 violin 1 and cello echo soprano melody

mm. 14.4-16 soprano similar melody, but wider range

mm. 16.4-18 violin 1 and cello again echo soprano melody

mm. 19-20 voices move independently, with strings doubling somewhat

mm. 21-22 strings only, with violin imitating soprano melody from mm. 19-20, at a perfect fourth higher

mm. 23-31 voices re-enter, moving actively in either direction in turn, with strings sometimes doubling, sometimes independent

mm. 32-33 soprano finishes with narrow melody; all other parts tacet

mm. 34-35 strings recapitulate the first two measures of movement #1

**Harmonic characteristics**

The piece begins with a strong C-major orientation, left over from the previous movement, and re-established and reinforced by the drone of C3 in the bass and G3 in the tenor for roughly half the song. These pitches are often doubled by two or more of the strings. Mitigating that orientation, however, are melodic F sharps and B flats, suggesting in turn the Lydian and the Mixolydian modes. The second half of the song uses harmonies and progressions borrowed from the first movement, eventually settling on D, sometimes minor, but ending major.

mm. 1-18 C major, with open fifth on C and G throughout; colored by occasional D, F# and Bb

mm. 19-20 ii-I-V progression in G

mm. 21-22 ii-I-V progression in C

mm. 23-24 II-I-v progression in G

mm. 25-27 VII-iv-I progression in D Mixolydian

mm. 28-33 alternates between v and I in D Mixolydian
Rhythmic characteristics

The first half of this movement is characterized by ostinatos in the voice parts and long, sustained tones in the strings. The exception to this is the melody, which moves in mostly eighth notes, whether it is in the soprano or the strings. The melodies are often ornamented with thirty-second notes, notated as such or as sixteenth-note grace notes, which rhythmically amount to the same value in this context. The second half of the piece is more active with lots of quarter-note and eighth-note movement in all parts. With the exception of the last two measures, the time signature is 4/4; the tempo is marked Simplice, with the quarter note at M.M. 76.

mm. 1-8  ostinato established in bass, tenor, and alto (see Example 5.9); at m. 5, soprano takes over the alto part in the pattern; at m. 2, beat 4 soprano enters with melodic motive of two eighth notes, half note, quarter note, performed three times; at m. 3, lower three strings enter on long, sustained notes (tied whole notes); m. 7, altos melody with dotted rhythm; m.8, viola echoes alto melody

Example 5.9. Five Hebrew Love Songs, mvt. 5, mm. 1-4, bass, tenor, and alto: ostinato

mm. 9-10  violin 2 ornamented eighth-note melody; violin 1 half note counterpoint; tenor and bass sing sustained notes

mm. 10.4-12 soprano sings ornamented eighth-note melody
mm. 11-17 alto, tenor, and bass sing modified ostinato (see Example 5.10); strings play sustained notes, except when playing melodic echo

Example 5.10. *Five Hebrew Love Songs*, mvt. 5, mm. 11-14, bass, tenor, and alto: modified ostinato

mm. 12.4-14 violin 1 and cello echo ornamented eighth-note melody
mm. 14.4-16 soprano sings ornamented eighth-note melody
mm. 16.4-18 violin 1 and cello echo ornamented eighth-note melody
mm. 19-28 more active rhythms in counterpoint in all parts
mm. 29-31 strings continue contrapuntally; choir rhythms move to longer note values
mm. 32-33 sopranos alone with a few ornamented eighth notes bookended by longer notes
mm. 34-35 time signature changes to 6/8, with the rhythm essentially the same as movement 1, mm. 1-2, that is, violin 1, with pickup, on primarily eighth notes, with some dotted rhythms; other parts more sustained, on dotted quarter notes and dotted half notes

**Texture/Voicing**

The texture for the first half of this movement is homophonic, with a relatively active melody over a more static harmony. It achieves its thickest sound at measures 11-12 and 15-16, when the alto is *divisi* and the viola and cello are playing double-stops. The second half of the piece is contrapuntal. In measures 32-33, it is briefly monophonic, with just the soprano section singing. It ends homophonically with the strings.

**Formal characteristics**

The form of this song is AA\(^1\)B, with the B section about as long as both the A and the A\(^1\) combined. It begins with a two-measure introduction; then the A section is from
the pickup to measure 3 through measure 8. There follows a two-measure interlude, then pickups again to the A\textsuperscript{1} section, ending at measure 17. The B section, with its contrasting rhythm and texture, continues from measure 19-33. This is followed by a brief instrumental coda.

**Summary**

The two-part nature of this song underlines the two different attitudes that the woman in the poem has, first hard and guarded, second loving and accepting. The change of heart is revealed in the change of music that occurs about halfway through the song.

**Summary of Cycle**

The five poems of this cycle are set as five individual movements, but the interrelatedness is apparent in a number of aspects of the composition. The first and most obvious is that the poems are all written by a single person, and are all about the author of the poems and one other person, who just happens to be the composer of the cycle. The key signatures of the five movements also provide some unity: the first two movements have one sharp in the key signature, the third through the fifth have no flats or sharps. This relationship, however, is not as straightforward as it might seem. The first movement is in D Mixolydian, with the second beginning in E minor. While these share a common key signature, the sound is quite different. The fast sections of the second movement are again related by key signature, in A Dorian, but they always end with an E-major chord. The third movement is related by tonal center to the first, in D, with fluctuating modalities passing through Dorian, Mixolydian, and minor. The shared key
signature provides a tonal link from the third to the fourth movement, the former in D Dorian and the latter beginning ambiguously but settling in A minor. The key relationship of the fourth and fifth movements is strongest, the fourth movement having ended in C major, and the fifth beginning in C major.

Rhythmically, the pieces are related in two groups, having most to do with their meter. The first three movements are related because of the predominant use of 6/8 time signature. Movements 1 and 2 also have in common the dotted Siciliano rhythm. Movements 4 and 5 are also related, in this case by the predominant 4/4 time signatures.

Choral conductors looking for a multi-movement work of modest proportions should consider *Five Hebrew Love Songs*. The difficulty level makes it accessible for college choirs, community choirs, and accomplished high school choirs. The version that uses piano and solo violin with the choir is beautifully written, but the string quartet version gives a wider variety of colors, and is especially recommended for a choir that does not often get the opportunity to perform with strings.

Over the course of the *Five Hebrew Love Songs*, composer Eric Whitacre and lyricist Hila Plitmann show us in about twelve minutes a microcosm of the story of a new love relationship. Other than the exuberance of the fast sections of “Kalla kalá,” the set is more about tenderness and wistfulness. The marriage of music to text in all cases shows the personalities of both the composer and the lyricist, and indeed the close relationship between them that is more often absent in settings of poetry, where the composer more typically is separated from the poet by chronological and geographical divisions. This is an affecting work from the standpoint of both the performers and the audience.
Chapter 6: Summary and Conclusions

Summary of Choral Cycle

The choral cycle has been and continues to be an important genre within the body of choral literature. Choral cycles have been a part of choirs’ repertoire for many generations, even though the use of the term “choral cycle” is less than a century old. Choral cycles are groups of songs, composed by a single composer, with the intent of being performed together. A choral cycle also exhibits unity of text, either written by the same person, having the same subject matter, or having the same general mood. Other means of defining choral cycles delineate what they are not: they are not formal parts of religious services, that is, they do not have liturgical texts; they are not oratorios, though there are certainly similarities; they are not dramatized, or acted out, the way that opera choruses are.

Musicological terms and definitions follow the evolution of the genres they define, sometimes by many years. “Choral cycle” is most closely related to “song cycle,” the genre that flowered in the early nineteenth century, and was specifically named and defined in 1865.¹ Predecessors to both of these can be found as early as the Middle Ages.

The name and definition of “choral cycle,” however, have evolved much more slowly than that of “song cycle.”

Because of their similarities, the cantata, particularly the secular cantata, is historically related to the choral cycle. Unlike “song cycle,” early composers of cantatas applied the term to the genre contemporaneously, not after the fact. Like song cycles and choral cycles, cantatas, whether sacred or secular, were groups of related pieces intended to be performed together. The main difference between cantatas and choral cycles is the frequent inclusion of solo movements in cantatas. Choral cycles may have solos within a movement, but generally do not have entire movements that are solos. Another difference between cantatas and choral cycles is how the texts are used. In cantatas, composers most often set a single text, and divided it into many sections. For choral cycles, composers use different texts to provide the lyrics for the separate movements or songs in the cycle. The use of the term “cantata,” however, has the weight of centuries of usage. There are few choral composers who identify their sets of sacred choral songs as choral cycles, even if they fit the criteria. Composers more frequently have applied the term “cantata,” especially “secular cantata,” to groups of choral songs that otherwise fit the criteria of choral cycles.

Nineteenth-century program music includes analogies to the overlapping of musical genre names in the same way that “choral cycle” overlaps with “cantata.” Composers of programmatic music referred to their pieces under many different genre names. Some of these compositions have been categorized as “tone poems,” “symphonic poems,” “preludes” or “overtures” (where there is no subsequent related composition), or by vaguely descriptive titles such as “nocturne” or “serenade.” Two or more of these
terms could justifiably apply to the same specific composition. This is the dilemma of the
term “choral cycle,” when compared to “cantata;” if they are viewed as being the same,
composers and musicologists may tend to opt for the older, more established
terminology.

The use of the term “choral cycle” has evolved and is evolving. If a set of choral
songs is sacred, it is much more likely to be called a cantata, as is evidenced by the use of
the qualifier in the term “secular cantata.” If, however, a set of choral songs is secular, the
evolving preferred term has become choral cycle. Still, for unknown reasons, composers
often will omit any explicit genre term for their compositions, and there remains overlap
and inconsistency in the use of the terms “cantata” and “choral cycle.”

Notwithstanding the exceptions already addressed, a typical choral cycle is
several individual secular choral songs, unified by textual or thematic considerations,
composed with the intent that they will be sung together as a set. Also typical is the
suitability of individual songs from a choral cycle to be performed out of the context of
the rest of the set. While this is contrary to the composers’ obvious intent, an audience is
much more likely to hear an individual song from a choral cycle than they are to hear the
entire cycle. Choral music aficionados need only think about the number of times they
have heard Randall Thompson’s “Choose Something Like a Star” from *Frostiana*, or
Morten Lauridsen’s “Dirait-on” from *Les Chansons des Roses* to illustrate this point.
Many publishers enable this practice by printing individual pieces from choral cycles,
such as these two, under separate covers at a fraction of the cost of purchasing an entire
cycle.
The Four Choral Cycles Analyzed in This Study

The four choral cycles analyzed in this dissertation are examples of how four different composers, over approximately a half-century, chose to express their art through the choral cycle genre. These four cycles, considered together, illustrate many of the characteristics that are present in the evolving definition of what a choral cycle is, but the sample is far too small to completely demonstrate the scope of the choral cycle as a genre.

In *The Hour-Glass*, Irving Fine used centuries-old poetic texts by Elizabethan poet Ben Jonson in musical settings that reflected the mid-twentieth century rather than musical styles of Jonson’s time. They are songs about romantic love, from several different points of view, containing passion, frustration, and pathos. Despite the fact that they are unaccompanied, Fine infused them with a wide variety of textures through the use of *divisi* voices, double choir writing, and soloists. Of the four cycles, *The Hour-Glass* is the oldest, written in 1949 and published in 1951. Choirs of any size can perform it, but because of its style and complexity, it is most suitable for a chamber choir of 20-40 voices. Some high school choirs may find success with this cycle, but its sophisticated harmonic palette makes it more appropriate for college, community, and professional choirs.

Kirke Mechem’s *American Madrigals* contain a measure of light-heartedness that many choral cycles lack. Mechem used not only traditional texts, but traditional folk tunes as well. Although many composers of choral cycles use folk material (see Appendix), this is the only set of the four discussed in this dissertation that has this
characteristic. Amid the traditional musical material he wove his own unique compositional threads that did much more than tie everything together; the resulting tapestries are artistically more than the sum of their parts. Another reason for its inclusion as part of this study was that it included piano accompaniment. Piano and voice are the prototypical arrangement for the historically significant Romantic-Era song cycles, and this combination is a common feature of choral cycles, as well. *American Madrigals* is, however, versatile in that the set can also be sung without accompaniment, or with a small instrumental ensemble. This cycle was written and published in 1976. Despite the title’s characterization of these pieces as madrigals, implying a small vocal ensemble, choirs of all sizes can comfortably and successfully perform them. Groups of a skill level at or beyond that of an advanced high school choir should be able to successfully perform these pieces.

*Voices*, by Stephen Paulus, is the most demanding of the choral cycles analyzed in this dissertation. It requires a full orchestra to complement the choir, a trait that is decidedly in the minority of choral cycles. To offset the full orchestra, as well as to accomplish the *divisi* into as many as sixteen parts, the choir must be large, probably not less than 64 singers, with 96 or more being preferable. The challenges in the music require highly skilled or professional singers. The text is also difficult: the subject matter portrayed in many of the poems is uncomfortable to many people, and understanding the figurative language will challenge the comprehension abilities of both singers and audience. *Voices* was composed and originally published in 1988. This choral cycle is not one to be taken lightly, but for an ambitious, socially-conscious ensemble and a sensitive, intellectual audience, it can be a powerful, affecting musical experience.
The music of Eric Whitacre has become very popular among choirs and conductors since the 1990s. The choral cycle *Five Hebrew Love Songs* may be one of his most popular works. Though the original solo-voice version was composed in 1996, Whitacre arranged it for choir, in 2001, in a manner that made it both accessible and challenging. Choirs of all sizes of at least high-school age will find this music rewarding and satisfying. The accompaniment is available in two options: piano, with solo violin, and tambourine; or string quartet with tambourine. This instrumentation makes it unique among the four cycles analyzed in this dissertation, but it is representative of the small instrumental ensemble that many composers of choral cycles have used as accompaniment (see Appendix for other examples). Another difference between this and the other three is the use of a language other than English. The texts were written specifically for the composer, and are in Hebrew. There are, of course, choral cycles written in many different languages worldwide, most of them in the native language of the composer.

These four cycles represent a microcosm of choral cycles; they can be unaccompanied, or accompanied by piano, small instrumental ensemble, or large orchestra; they can be in any language; they can be long or short; they can be entirely original, or can be based on folk or other borrowed material; they can express the entire gamut of human emotions and feelings. In other words, choral cycles can be what other musical genres can be, that is, limited only by the imagination and artistry of the composers that choose to write them.
Need for Further Study

In the course of research for this study, I have come across many additional subjects and branches relating to choral cycles that I could not follow in depth, but are deserving of further study. The most intriguing area deals with pre-twentieth-century cyclic multi-movement choral works. In writing, for example, about the cyclical nature of some German Romantic-Era compositions, I wondered what their original manuscripts would reveal about the intent of their composers to group them together like a choral cycle. For example, the *Five Songs* of Johannes Brahms, Opus 104, have an obvious connection in subject and tone, and they were performed together as a set during Brahms’s lifetime.² Do the manuscripts or other primary source materials indicate anything about Brahms’s intent to have them performed as a cycle? Another composer that I cited as providing examples of cyclic choral works in the nineteenth century was Franz Liszt. An examination of his manuscripts or other primary source material could prove whether or not he indicated the cyclic nature of the pieces cited, or if it was just an organizational category recognized by the editor of Liszt’s complete works.

The earliest examples of incipient choral cycles were rare but interesting. While I learned of a few examples of multi-movement cyclic choral works and vocal chamber works of the late Renaissance and early Baroque periods, it is likely that there are others by lesser-known composers that can be discovered in existing works lists or from

manuscripts. There were four composers of these early multi-movement cyclic choral works cited in this study: the sets by Lassus and Monteverdi seem fairly well known; those by Lechner and Schein are more obscure. The possibility of other examples of incipient choral cycles, especially away from the then-established musical capitals of Europe, seems to be both likely and intriguing.

The choral cycle as a genre seems to be more common in some countries and less common in others. I noted the popularity of the choral cycle genre among Eastern European composers, mentioning specifically the Estonian Veljo Tormis and the Bulgarian Todor Popov. It occurred to me that during most of their careers, they lived under communist rule, which inhibited their freedom to write religious music. Perhaps this is the reason that Eastern European composers were drawn to the choral cycle, as they could incorporate meaningful secular texts into a major choral work without offending the anti-religious sensibilities of the political system under which they lived and worked. This is only conjecture on my part, but if it could be proven, it would demonstrate at least one important factor in the development of choral cycles in the former communist-bloc countries of Eastern Europe.

Choral cycles tend to be a secular genre. The expansion of secular choral works in general is a subject I would like to see documented. Secondary school choirs in the United States have shown significant evolution in the past one hundred years. With this trend the demand for high-quality secular music has increased. This is probably one of the factors leading many composers to write more secular choral music. In the Renaissance the most successful composers wrote huge numbers of Masses and motets for the church. Because of changes in the patronage system, in religion, and in society
over the intervening centuries, composers have written relatively fewer liturgical works. A study exploring all of the outside influences on composers and the pieces they choose to compose would help conductors understand the motivation behind composers’ musical impulses. Along the same lines, contemporary composers could be polled, asking about the circumstances behind their composing choral cycles and other major works, specifically if the pieces were commissioned, and if so, what were the guidelines set by the commissioning persons or organizations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, multi-movement choral works have been around for centuries; it is just the name “choral cycle” that is a relative newcomer, being approximately a century old. The term has evolved because other previously applied genre names did not adequately describe or reflect the cycles’ inherent qualities. If a group of choral songs is composed with the intent to be performed together as a set, and it has a non-liturgical set of texts that are unified in some way, that group may be called a choral cycle. Choral cycles are being composed in greater numbers than in previous generations; choirs will continue to sing them, and conductors and musicologists will continue to study them. Whether or not this term wins out over other genre names remains to be seen. In the end, it is not the terminology but the music that is of utmost importance.
Bibliography


Discography of the Four Analyzed Choral Cycles

Fine, Irving: The Hour-Glass


Mechem, Kirke: American Madrigals

“Americana.” The San Jose Choral Project, Daniel Hughes, cond. (Contains only “Kansas Boys,” “He’s Gone Away,” and “New York Girls.”). San Jose, California: Johnson Digital Audio, 2001. CD: SJCP03

“Choral Music.” Demo CD from composer; not commercially available.

Paulus, Stephen: Voices


Whitacre, Eric: *Five Hebrew Love Songs*


Appendix

Selected Choral Cycles and Other Multi-movement Choral Works

The selected works listed below are available in performance editions. My criteria for listing works includes pieces mentioned in the dissertation, pieces by the four featured composers from the dissertation, pieces recommended by members of ChoralNet, other works by composers mentioned in Chapter 1, and finally, other works with which I am familiar. It is not intended to be comprehensive, but should provide options and titles of interest to conductors. The information given will always be listed in this order. Any items unknown or unavailable will be omitted in the order.

- Works will be listed by voicing, then alphabetically by composer and title. The four works analyzed in this study will be listed in all capital letters.
- Publisher, date, and catalog number will be listed, if available. If the pieces are published individually, this will be noted.
- The difficulty level (D) will be listed, if known, on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being the easiest, and 5 the most difficult (e.g. D: 3). The scale will follow the criteria delineated on pages 137-138 of *Teaching Music through Performance in Choir, Volume 2*, edited by Heather Buchanan and Matthew Mehaffey, GIA Publications, Chicago, 2007.
- Significant divisi or other variations in voicing will be listed, e.g. SSAATTBB.
- Instrumentation, if known, will be listed in the standard order of instrumentation: flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon-horn, trumpet, trombone, tuba-percussion-(other)-violin I, violin II, viola, violoncello, double bass (e.g. 2,2,2,2-4,3,3,1-3-piano-1,1,1,1 [or “strings”]).
- Text source will be listed, where available; the language will be English except where noted.
- The approximate length will be listed, when known.
- Individual songs, if known, will be listed in order.
SATB/Mixed Voices

1. Dedication-prelude
2. Parade (Song-Books of the War)
3. Elegy (For the Fallen)
4. Chorale (Let Us Now Praise Famous Men)
5. Admonition (There Will Come Soft Rains-War Time)
6. Cenotaph (On Passing the New Menin Gate)
7. Tattoo (The Last Post)

1. I Hate and I Love
2. Let Us Live, My Clodia, and Let Us Love
3. Greetings, Miss, with Nose Not Small
4. My Woman Says She Will Be No One’s
5. Was It a Lioness from the Mountains of Libya
6. You Promise Me, My Dearest Life
7. Wretched Catullus, Put an End to This Madness
8. I Hate and I Love

1. Mary Hynes
2. Anthony O’Daly
3. The Coolin

Bartok, Bela. *Four Slovak Folk Songs*. Boosey and Hawkes, 1924 (revised 1950). D: 2.5. Piano. Text: In Slovak, English, German, or Magyar (Hungarian). (Four individual songs, untitled)

Bartok, Bela. *Four Hungarian Folk Songs* (available separately). Boosey and Hawkes, 1956. Unaccompanied, with *divisi*. Text: Traditional Hungarian folksongs, in English or German.
1. The Prisoner
2. The Wanderer
3. Finding a Husband
4. Love Song
   1. To Daffodils
   2. The Succession of the Four Sweet Months
   3. Marsh Flowers
   4. The Evening Primrose
   5. Ballad of the Green Broom

   1. Dieu! Qu’il la Fait Bon Regarder!
   2. Quand J’ai Ouy le Tabourin
   3. Yver, Vous N’estes Qu’un Villain

   1. Come, O Come, My Life’s Delight
   2. Daybreak
   3. It Was A Lover and His Lass

   1. Sigh No More Ladies, Sigh No More
   2. Take, O Take Those Lips Away
   3. Sigh No More, Ladies, Sigh No More

   1. Melodies Steal Into My Heart
   2. Vesper Bells Ring
   3. Golden Sunlight
   4. Slender Young Birch
   5. This Day

   1. No Mark
   2. Noon
   3. Basket
   4. Wood

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   1. The Lobster Quadrille
   2. Lullaby of the Duchess
   3. Father William

   1. O, Know to End As to Begin
   2. Have You Seen the White Lily Grow
   3. O, Do Not Wanton with Those Eyes
   4. Against Jealousy
   5. Lament
   6. The Hour-Glass

   1. As Long Ago
   2. As Once We Met
   3. Summer Days Are Gone

   1. La Biche
   2. Un Cygne
   3. Puisque Tout Passe
   4. Printemps
   5. En Hiver
   6. Verger

   1. En Une Seule Fleur
   2. Contre Qui, Rose
   3. De Ton Reve Trop Plein
   4. La Rose Complète
   5. Dirait-on (available separately)

   1. Ov’ è, Lass, Il Bel Viso?
   2. Quando Son Più Lontan
3. Amor, Io Sento L’alma
4. Io Piangi
5. Luce Serene E Chiare
6. Se Per Havervi, Oime


1. O Bon Printemps (SAT)
2. Oiseau des Bois (SA)
3. Chères Fleurs (SATB)
4. O Ruisseau (SAT)
5. Chantez (SATB)

MECHEM, KIRKE. *AMERICAN MADRIGALS*, (available separately). Carl Fischer, 1976. D: 3. Piano (or small instrumental ensemble: 1,0,1,1-0,0,0-0-strings). Text: American folksongs (1-3, 5) and hymn (4). 15 minutes.
1. Kind Miss
2. He’s Gone Away
3. Kansas Boys
4. Adam’s Bride (A Marriage Lesson)
5. New York Girls

1. Fire and Ice
2. Richard Cory
3. Sweet Spring Is Your

1. Bridget at Ten
2. Turning Twenty
3. Is Thirty Young?
4. Forty Notes for Forty Years
5. Fiftieth Birthday Card
6. Advice On Turning Sixty
7. Is Seventy Old?
1. Skip to My Lou
2. Let Us Break Bread Together
3. Love and Pizen

1. I Could Hear The Least Bird Sing
2. Isle of the Dead
3. Rebirth

1. Spring
2. From You Have I Been Absent
3. Laughing Song
4. Loveliest of Trees
5. Spring

1. The Questionnaire (Die Behörde)
2. The Odor-organ (Die Geruchsorgel)
3. The Lattice Fence (Die Lattenzaun)

1. Kum Ba Ya (Spiritual)
2. Too Young to Marry (Folk-song Madrigal)
3. They That Mourn (Requiem)
4. Papageno and the Prince (Fairy Tale)

1. Impromptu
2. Deny It As She Will
3. Moral Precept

1. Tourist Time
2. Boston
3. Cologne
4. Texas
5. Rome

1. The Tune
2. Let It Be Forgotten
3. Over the Roofs
4. I Shall Not Care (SSAA)
5. Song (Love Me with Your Whole Heart)

1. Birds at Dusk
2. The Caged Bird
3. Everyone Sang

1. A Red, Red Rose
2. Green Grow the Rashes, O!
3. The Banks o’ Doon
4. Highland Mary

1. The Winter Is Past
2. O Whistle, and I'll Come to Ye
3. Behold, My Love, How Green the Groves

Mulholland, James Quitman. *Three 17th Century English Lyrics* (available separately). Colla Voce, 1999. D: 2.5. Piano or chamber orchestra (0,2,0-2,0,0,0-0-strings). Text: Nicholas Breton and anonymous.
1. Fair and True
2. Come, Let’s Be Merry
3. When I Lay Me Down To Sleep

1. To Kathleen
2. Mariposa
3. The Philosopher
4. The Spring and the Fall
5. Nuit Blanche
6. The Merry Maid
7. Thursday
8. Passer Mortuus Est
9. Lethe

   1. Luminous Mind
   2. The Sage
   3. Loving-Kindness
   4. Virtue
   5. All Living Beings

   1. Spring Has Come
   2. Flower Carol
   3. Welcome, Summer

   1. Banquet at the Tso Family Manor
   2. Jade Flower Palace
   3. Written on the Wall at Chang's Hermitage
   4. Snow Storm
   5. Clear After Rain
   6. Farewell Once More

   1. All Things
   2. The Oneness Within
   3. The Naked Circle

   1. The Woman Named Tomorrow
   2. We Are the Greatest
   3. Rats and Lizards
   4. The Wind and the Dust

   1. Fair and Tender Ladies
2. Black is the Color of my True Love’s Hair
3. Swing Low, Sweet Chariot
4. Shenandoah
5. Didn’t My Lord Deliver, Daniel

Paulus, Stephen. *In the Furnace of Love’s Fire*. Paulus Publications, SP 244. Two percussion and piano. Text: Greek Poets from Antiquity. 28 minutes.
1. Lips Barely Touching
2. Rivers of Tears
3. The Morning Star
4. Weariness
5. Burning Tears
6. Beauty
7. A Soft Pink Rose

1. City Upon a Hill
2. Lately Arrived from London
3. Dreadful Cold
4. Mr. Shrimpton
5. Bacon's Abridgement
6. Farewell My Loved One
7. To Be Seen!
8. Sumptuous City

1. How Can It Be?
2. A Burning Beam
3. All the Time
4. Beautiful Things
5. If Sense Will Let Its Flame

1. If this is not well understood…
2. I never liked the re-writing of these letters…
3. I wrote this as I found it…
4. This is a marvelously good story…
5. A prayer of grace…
6. Under the protection of the King of heaven…

1. Music
2. Is Very Close To
3. Sensual Pleasure
4. Sweet Sounds
5. I Insist
6. Infuse Strength


1. Seeking Mr. Right
2. Thirty
3. Good Looking Male
4. Dancing


1. An Instrument of Healing
2. Hymn
3. Piano Music
4. Art and Music


1. Grass
2. The Mowing
3. The Sound of Silence
4. Sorrow Song
5. Prairie Snow
6. The Old Church (available separately)


1. All Sky
2. Gentle Breezes
3. An Ocean of Clouds


1. Evening
2. Day After Day
3. On the Road
1. Nocturne
2. Song of Songs
3. Winter Song

1. Opening
2. Song of the Beggar
3. Song of the Drunkard
4. Song of the Suicide
5. Song of the Idiot
6. Song of the Leper
7. I Am, O Anxious One
8. As Once the Winged Energy of Delight
9. Voices

1. Humanity Sings,
2. In the Infinite
3. The Oneness Within
4. The Naked Circle
5. How God Comes to the Soul

1. Margoton Va t’a L’iau
2. La Belle Se Siet au Pied de la Tour
3. Pilons l’Orgue
4. Clic, Clac, Dansez Sabots (TBB)
5. C’est la Petit’ Fill’ du Prince
6. La Belle Si Nous Étions (TBB)
7. Ah! Mon Beau Laboureur
8. Le Tisserands

1. De Tout les Printemps du Monde
2. En Chantant les Servantes s’Élancent
3. Aussi Bas que le Silence
4. Riant du Ciel et des Planètes
5. La Menace Sous le Ciel Rouge

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6. Liberté

   1. La Blanch Neige
   2. A Peine Défigurée
   3. Par Une Nuit Nouvelle
   4. Tout les Droits
   5. Belle et Ressemblante
   6. Luire
   7. Marie

   1. Nicolette
   2. Trois Beaux Oiseaux du Paradis
   3. Ronde

Rorem, Ned. *Homer*. Boosey and Hawkes, 1986. Eight instruments: 1,1,0,1-0,1,0-0-piano-1,0,1,1,0. Text: Based on Homer's *The Iliad*.


   1. Invitation to the Voyage
   2. Cat
   3. Satan's Litanys
   I Gondolieri (HMC 508)
   La Passaggiata (HMC 509)

   1. Tell Me Where Is Fancy Bred
   2. There Is a Garden in Her Face
   3. The Urchins’ Dance;
   4. Riddle Song
   5. Midnight’s Bell
   6. The Bellman’s Song

   1. Icicles
   2. Winter Nights
   3. Good Ale
   4. Blow, Blow Thou Winter Wind
   5. Winter Wakeneth All My Care
   6. Hay, ay

   1. The Handsome Butcher
   2. Apple, Apple
   3. The Old Woman

   1. The Unfaithful Lover
   2. Handsome Mirko
   3. Eighteen Shining Buttons
   4. Heaven Above
   5. Hussars
   6. Fairy Tale

   1. The Road Not Taken
   2. The Pasture (TBB)
   3. Come In (SSA)
   4. The Telephone
5. A Girl’s Garden (SSA)
6. Stopping By the Woods on a Snowy Evening (TBB)
7. Choose Something Like a Star

1. Spirituals
2. Harlem Night Song
3. Tambourines

1. The Panther
2. The Cow
3. The Firefly

1. Temuná (A Picture)
2. Kalá kallá (Light Bride)
3. Lárov (Mostly)
4. Éyze shéleg! (What Snow!)
5. Rakút (Tenderness)

1. I Hide Myself
2. With a Lily in Your Hand
3. Go Lovely Rose

**Treble Voices/Women’s Voices**

1. Falling Leaves
2. Willows
3. Dawn

1. (Untitled)
2. Lied von Shakespeare
3. Der Gärtner
4. Gesang aus Fingal

   1. The Knave’s Letter
   2. The White Knight’s Song
   3. Beautiful Soup

   1. Love Is a Terrible Thing
   2. The Message
   3. The Cynic
   4. A Farewell
   5. Love Came Back at Fall o’ Dew
   6. Red May
   7. You Say There Is No Love

   1. Infant Joy
   2. When I Was Three
   3. All the Love Between Us
   4. God Made the Bees
   5. Now Is the Month of Maying
   6. Brown Penny
   7. My Heart Leaps Up

   1. The Singing Cat
   2. Cool and Plain
   3. Dirge
   4. Unpopular, Lonely and Loving
   5. The Pleasures of Friendship
   6. When the Sparrow Flies
   7. My Cats
1. Day Break
2. Sea and Sky
3. Wind and Sun

1. Chickadee
2. Uncle
3. Dr. Livingston
4. Tree of Two Birds
5. State Fair Song

1. Vanessa to Jonathan Swift
2. Margery Brews to Sir John Paston
3. Sophia Peabody to Nathaniel Hawthorne
4. Juliette Drouet to Victor Hugo
5. Lady Pelham to Sir John Pelham
6. Catherine of Aragon to King Henry VIII
7. Vanessa to Jonathan Swift

1. Melodys of Earth and Sky
2. Mighty Songs
3. Sing Creations Music On

1. The Soul, Like the Moon
2. I Cannot Dance, O Lord
3. Humanity Sings
4. Watching the Moon at Midnight
5. Oneness
6. A Song, Like the Voice of a Multitude

1. The Carol of the Rose
2. The Pelican
3. The Place of the Blest
4. Alleluia, Amen

1. On Hilissuvi (It Is Late Summer)
2. Ule Taeva Jooksevad Pilved (Clouds Racing Across the Sky)
3. Kahvatu Valgus (Pale Light)
4. Valusalt Punased Lehed (Painfully Red Leaves)
5. Tuul Kõnnuma Kohal (Wind on the Wasteland)
6. Külm Sügisõ (Cold Autumn Night)
7. Kanarbik (Heather)

**Men’s Voices**

1. Little Pigeon, I Have Told You
2. Hey Now, I’ve Had Too Much Waiting!
3. In My Sister’s Garden
4. Load the Cart Well, Ostler

1. Aunt Rhody
2. The Wayfaring Stranger
3. Blue-tail Fly

1. Jenny Kissed Me
2. Julia’s Voice
3. To Celia

1. A Red, Red Rose
2. Green Grow the Rashes, O!
3. The Banks o’ Doon
4. Highland Mary

1. Some Strange Musician
2. That Shadow, My Likeness
3. All For Love
4. The Soul, Reaching
5. Now Thy Sullen Notes
6. Tears
7. All Over Joy!

1. Zur Hohen Jagd
2. Habet Acht!
3. Jagdmorgen
4. Frühe
5. Bei der Flasche

1. The God Who Gave Us Life
2. We Have Counted the Cost
3. We Fight Not for Glory
4. I Shall Not Die Without Hope


1. A Sentinel
2. There Rolls the Deep
3. Crossing the Bar