

ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION: The Choral Cycle: A Conductor's Guide to Four Representative Works

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This study explores the choral cycle as a genre and analyzes in depth four representative choral cycles, all of them American, and all composed in the twentieth century. Choral cycles are multi-movement choral works intended by their composers to be performed as sets. The term "choral cycle" has been used for only about a hundred years; similar genres include song cycles, for solo voice, and cantatas, usually for soloists and choir. Choral cycles, however, typically use several poetic texts unified by common theme or common author, and do not typically contain solo movements. The evolution of the use of the term by some composers and publishers has been inconsistent, but it seems to have been an effort to describe compositions that were inadequately described by other genre names. This study shows that composers and musicologists have used the term with increasing frequency. The four choral cycles analyzed in this study are *The Hour-Glass* by Irving Fine, *American Madrigals* by Kirke Mechem, *Voices* by Stephen Paulus, and *Five Hebrew Love Songs* by Eric Whitacre. These four cycles demonstrate widely

divergent compositional techniques, performing force requirements, and uses of text. As such, they illustrate the wide range of possibilities within this genre.

In addition to the detailed analysis of the aforementioned choral cycles, this study also provides background into the historical predecessors of choral cycles. An appendix offers a list of numerous other choral cycles for consideration.