

The Sea Hath Its Pearls: Romantic American Choral Music

2021 National Conference, American Choral Directors Association

March 19, 2021, 11:30 a.m.

David P. DeVenney, presenter
West Chester University of Pennsylvania

The Sea Hath its Pearls (JCD Parker, *Seven Part Songs*)

Introduction

Elements of Style: Melody and Harmony

Kyrie (Bristow)

Vittoria Rybak, mezzo soprano

Parvum quando cerno Deum (Chadwick)

[When we see our tiny Lord

held in his mother's arms,

it salves us in our breasts

with a thousand joys.

The eager boy, eagerly seeing,

your mother above all:

while the smiling boy

is kissed a thousand times.]

**Such a simple brightness*

shines through the child,

The mother clings to him.

Requiem aeternum (Buck)

This beautiful mother,

This mother with her beautiful son,

such a lovely one all pink,

like a violet that became a lily.

[O that one of the arrows,

sweet or boyish,

which should pierce the mother's breast,

may fall upon me, little Jesus!]

-Author Unknown

(* text for excerpted portion)

Elements of Style: Structure and Craft

The Lord of Hosts Is with Us (Gilchrist)

Sing Hallelujah (H. Parker)

And They Shall Reign (JCD Parker)

Music for Women's and Men's Voices

Sanctus (Hadley)

Emily Salatti, soprano

At Sea (Buck)

Concluding Remarks

Seven Part Songs (JCD Parker)

The World's Wanderers

The West Wind

The Composers in this Presentation



George Frederick Bristow (1825-1898) spent the majority of his life in New York City. By age 11 he was playing the violin at the Olympic Theatre in New York and later spent over thirty years playing violin with the New York Philharmonic Society. He was conductor of the Philharmonic from 1851-62, in addition to being a church organist and violin teacher. His principal work was the opera *Rip van Winkle*; he also composed several symphonies in addition to a body of choral music that includes two oratorios: *Praise to God* (1860) and *Daniel* (1867), two cantatas, and numerous other choral works. The Mass in C was probably intended for practical purposes, rather than for concert use.



Dudley Buck (1839-1909) was one of the most prominent American composers and teachers in late nineteenth-century America. Born in Hartford, Connecticut, Buck—like so many American composers—traveled to Germany to further his studies, in his case Leipzig and Dresden. He held many important teaching and organist appointments in Hartford, Chicago, Boston, and Brooklyn; in Boston, he taught at the New England Conservatory of Music. Buck was enormously influential in the arena of sacred music, writing dozens of anthems and much service music that was widely used in America's churches. His larger choral works are also numerous, including both secular and sacred cantatas and oratorios.



George Whitefield Chadwick (1854-1931) was born in Lowell, Massachusetts. His music study began early but it seemed likely that he would go into business. However, study with Buck and George Whiting at the New England Conservatory of Music changed that. Chadwick, too, traveled to Leipzig to study (1877-79), before settling in Boston where he was frequently engaged as a conductor for choral and orchestral concerts. He later taught at and became director of the New England Conservatory and among his pupils were some of the more important American composers of the period, including Horatio Parker, Frederick Converse, Henry Hadley, and William Grant Still. Chadwick wrote much for choir, mostly in larger forms. His most ambitious composition was *Judith*, a work difficult to categorize, exhibiting qualities of both oratorio and opera.



William Wallace Gilchrist (1846-1916) was a major figure in the musical life of Philadelphia. He founded and for forty years served as the music director of that city's Mendelssohn Club and conducted the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra, forerunner of the current ensemble. Gilchrist wrote a variety of compositions for orchestra and choir, in addition to much chamber music and some works for keyboard. He won several major composition prizes, among them the 1882 Cincinnati Festival Prize for his setting of *Psalm 46* ("God Is Our Refuge").



Henry Hadley (1871-1937) was one of the most prominent musicians of his era in New York City. Born in Massachusetts, he studied at the New England Conservatory and like many of his contemporaries traveled for further study to Europe. He was conductor of the Seattle Symphony Orchestra (1909-11) and then the San Francisco Symphony (1911-15); in 1920, he was made associate conductor of the New York Philharmonic Society. Hadley was a prolific composer in all genres. His more important works include several operas (*Cleopatra's Night* and *Azara* among the better), a large number of symphonic works, much chamber music, 150 songs, and a significant body of choral music, including several cantatas and oratorios.



Horatio Parker (1863-1919) was arguably the most influential composer of the Romantic period, together with John Knowles Paine. Parker studied with Chadwick before traveling to Munich, where he continued his musical studies with Josef Rheinberger. He settled in New York City upon return, serving at Trinity Church there and later in Boston at the church of the same name. Parker was a life-long choral conductor and wrote many works for the choirs he led, including much service music and many anthems for his church choirs.



James Cutler Dunn (JCD) Parker (1828-1916) is little remembered today. He spent most of his life in Boston, teaching at the New England Conservatory and working as organist at Trinity Church. He wrote many choral works, including a large body of service music for church. He was an excellent craftsman and his larger choral works show his musicality, as well. His largest choral work is the oratorio *The Life of Man* (1894). Among his cantatas is a beautiful setting of *Psalm 137* (ca. 1875) for soprano, chorus, and orchestra, and the longer *St. John*, written for the 75th anniversary of the Boston Handel and Haydn Society in 1890. It was well-received at its premiere by contemporary critics and the work as a whole would resonate with modern audiences. "And They Shall Reign" is a portion of the concluding chorus.

Romantic American Choral Music

An Anthology, compiled and edited by David P. DeVenney

(Forthcoming publication by Hinshaw Music, in affiliation with ACDA. A CD recording of the music will be published by Naxos and recordings for each selection will be available to stream with the purchase of the volume.)

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The Participants in this Presentation

West Chester University is located in West Chester, Pennsylvania, a suburb of Philadelphia. Established in 1871 as a normal school for training teachers, the University has grown to include comprehensive programming through its seven academic divisions offering undergraduate majors in 180 subjects, as well as masters and doctoral programs. The **Wells School of Music** has a long, proud tradition of excellence; in 2021-22, the school will celebrate its 100th year. WSOM faculty—more than sixty strong—are outstanding mentors with wide-ranging expertise and distinguished credentials as performers, teachers, and composers. These exceptional teachers, along with a well-rounded curriculum that balances private study, classroom sessions, related courses, chamber/small ensemble participation, and large ensemble membership, guarantees a rich environment for learning and performing.

The West Chester University **Concert Choir** is a select, largely undergraduate thirty-two member ensemble chosen by competitive audition from among the nearly 500 music majors enrolled in the Wells School of Music. They strive to perform, in a historically sensitive manner, music of all styles and epochs from the past five centuries. The choir frequently appears off-campus and past tours have sent them to California, Florida, the Desert Southwest, the Northeast, and Europe, as well as concertizing in New York, Washington, and Philadelphia. Recent performance highlights include the Monteverdi *Vespers*, the premiere of JCD Parker's *By the Rivers of Babylon*, and a staged performance of Distler's *Totentanz*. Concert Choir has performed new works commissioned from Jennifer

Higdon, David Conte, Robert Maggio, Kurt Erickson and WCU student composers; they appear on six commercial CD recordings.

David P. DeVenney has established a wide reputation as a conductor and scholar. His choirs have toured throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe, receiving acclaim for their carefully prepared and musically exciting performances from audiences and critics alike. His conducting repertory includes over one hundred major choral works with orchestra and dozens of operas and musicals, and he has commissioned and premiered numerous new choral works by noteworthy composers such as David Conte, Robert Maggio, Jennifer Higdon, Emma Lou Diemer, Marvin Hamlisch, and Robert Page. He received the 2003 Dean's Award for Artistic Excellence from West Chester University and the 2006 Distinguished Music Alumnus award from Iowa State University, and has several times been named Outstanding Teacher by the WCU Honors College. In 2011, he was one of the winners of the American Prize in choral conducting.

Dr. DeVenney holds degrees in conducting from Iowa State University, the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. He is professor of music at West Chester University, where he directs the select Concert Choir and the Men's and Women's Choruses and guides the MM program in choral studies. For over a decade, he was music director of the Reading Choral Society, a highly regarded community chorus and one of America's oldest musical ensembles. Under his leadership, the Society pursued a much expanded repertory and greatly increased its educational programs. He founded and for seven seasons served as music director of VocalBaroque, a professional chamber choir in Columbus, Ohio. He has held faculty appointments at Otterbein University, the University of Arizona, and Virginia Tech.

Dr. DeVenney has made substantive contributions to scholarship in American choral music through his fourteen books and dozens of articles. In addition to a five-volume annotated bibliographic guide to American choral music, he has also written the first historical survey of this important repertory, as well as books on opera, musical theatre, and cultural studies. The *Choral Journal* called him "one of the most industrious scholars on the current scene," while *MLA Notes* labeled his contributions to the study of American choral music "an impressive achievement." For fifteen years he was General Editor of the *Research Memorandum Series* published by Chorus America. His many arrangements of American folk songs and original choral works are published by Roger Dean, Yelton Rhodes, and ECS Publishing); his critical edition of John Knowles Paine's *Mass in D*, an important nineteenth-century American masterwork, is available (Serenissima Music), in addition to a three-volume textbook series, *Conducting Choirs* (Lorenz). Dr. DeVenney was Contributing Editor for choral music for the new *Grove Dictionary of American Music*, second edition.

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Robert Rust, *audio engineer, Wells School of Music*

West Chester University Concert Choir
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Adella Brady	Denver, PA	B.M.E., voice, B.M. vocal performance
Emily Caplan	Hereford, MD	B.M.E., voice
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*section leaders