A Comparison of Samuel Barber’s: *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* And *Andromache’s Farewell*

D.M.A. DOCUMENT

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Abstract

*Knoxville: Summer of 1915* and *Andromache’s Farewell* by Samuel Barber were written for soprano voice and have some similarities in structure; however, they differ greatly in terms of subject matter, mood, demands on the voice, orchestration, instrumentation, and compositional techniques. This study, after presenting a brief biography of the composer, will look at each of these two pieces thoroughly regarding the texts selected, specific compositional devices used, challenges of performance, and critical reactions to the premieres. Further study will point out specific points of comparison between *Knoxville* and *Andromache*. 
Dedication

To Dr. Oscar and Louise Cataldi for their stalwart support throughout this and all of my degree processes.

To Luis, Oscar, Caroline, and Linda Cataldi who have always been loving, supportive siblings and sisters-in-laws.

To Sandra McGowan, Wyk and Todd McGowan, and Hilary Neroni, who though they are a former spouse and in-laws, continue to be a much appreciated source of encouragement.

To my colleague/consigliere Vincent Davis, also a doctoral student, who has helped me keep my sanity during many “end of the precipice” moments.

To my dear neighbor and friend Ria Lopez Roth who has kept me centered.
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Special thanks goes to Dr. Charles Larkowski at Wright State University for his suggestions and guidance throughout this process. I also wish to thank my children for their patience this summer, and, again, my parents for their help and above-board support.

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*Andromache’s Farewell for Soprano and Orchestra Opus39* by Samuel Barber, copyright © 1963 G. Schirmer, Inc. International copyright secured. All rights reserved. Used by permission.
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Chapter 1: Extended-Form, Solo Vocal Writing—A Historical Perspective

1.1 Definitions

The combination of music and drama exists throughout music history regardless of origin or culture. In his *A Short History of Opera*, Donald Grout asserts that this combination is a part of dramatic instinct.¹ These two elements have merged to create several different longer compositional forms for the solo classical voice: the *cantata*, the *serenata*, the *aria* (both in *opera* and composed for a recital/concert setting), the *scena*, and the *monodrama*. In this chapter, I will define these types of solo music and trace their development up to the time when Samuel Barber successfully completed his goal of writing an extended-form composition for the solo voice.

The Grove Encyclopedia of Music defines a *cantata* as follows:

A work for one or more voices with instrumental accompaniment. The cantata was the most important form of vocal music of the Baroque period outside opera and oratorio, and by far the most ubiquitous. At first, from the 1620s in Italy, it was a modest form, but at its most typical it consists (notably in Italy in the later 17th century) of a succession of contrasting sections which by the early 18th century became independent movements, normally two arias, each preceded by a recitative. Most Italian cantatas of this period are for a solo voice, but some were written for two or more voices. Up to the late 17th century the cantata was predominantly a secular form, but the church cantata, which included choral movements ranging from simple chorale harmonizations to complex, extended structures, was a major feature of Lutheran music in early 18th-century Germany. The standard form of accompaniment gradually expanded from continuo alone in

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the mid-17th century to an orchestra, including obbligato instruments, in the 18th. Cantatas, mainly secular, were also fairly widely cultivated elsewhere, especially in France and Spain and to a lesser extent in England. Both the secular and the sacred cantata sharply declined in importance after the middle of the 18th century. In contrast to the previous 100 years and more, the cantata has enjoyed no consistent independent existence since then, and the term has been applied, somewhat haphazardly, to a wide variety of works which generally have in common only that they are for chorus and orchestra.  

Malcolm Boyd, later in the same *Grove* article, states that the *cantata* in true form did not live beyond the baroque era. He does indicate, however, that “its influence was still felt in isolated works, such as Mozart's *Eine kleine deutsche Kantate* K619 (1791), and Schubert's *Der Hirt auf dem Felsen* D965 (1828). The orchestrally accompanied solo *cantata* . . . may be said to have survived into the next period and even into the next century in the form of the concert *aria* and *scena*, exemplified in Mozart's *Ch'io mi scordi di te* K505 (1786), Haydn's *Scena di Berenice* (1795), Beethoven's *Ah! perfido!* (1796), Berlioz's *Cléopâtre* (1829) and Mendelssohn's *Inelice* (1834–43). Such works, however, were not normally called *cantatas*, and from Haydn's time onwards the term has been reserved almost exclusively for choral compositions with orchestra, usually including parts for solo voices.”

The *cantata* form took on other names with time. Michael Talbot has written an article in *Grove* for one of the cantata’s closest relatives, the *serenata*.

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3 Boyd, Malcolm. Ibid.
A dramatic cantata, normally celebratory or eulogistic, for two or more singers with orchestra. The name alludes to the fact that performance often took place by artificial light outdoors at night. ‘Serenata’ has become associated incorrectly with ‘sera’ (evening); this etymology has long influenced the interpretation of the word, which has been used also to denote a lover’s serenade or an instrumental composition (e.g. Mozart’s Serenata notturna k239).

The first serenatas appear to have been written in Italy and in Vienna, shortly after the emergence of the solo cantata. Two early examples are Antonio Bertali’s Gli amori d’Apollo con Clizia (1661, Vienna) and Antonio (or possibly Remigio) Cesti’s Io son la primavera (1662, Florence). In the 17th and 18th centuries the serenata was viewed as a dramatic genre in the Aristotelian sense (the singers representing characters who communicate directly, without external narration) rather than in the senses of being acted on stage or having an identifiable plot. Its apparently contradictory nature has led to its being seen variously as a species of overblown cantata and a miniature opera. In reality, the serenata is a distinct genre, although its literary texts go by a multiplicity of descriptions that suggest greater diversity than actually exists.4

There are similar elements between the serenata and its cousins, the chamber cantata, oratorio and opera. This was a form of courtly entertainment like the cantata. In terms of drama, the serenata most resembles the Baroque oratorio. Many utilize allegorical characters with a strong emphasis on duty and honor. If not allegorical figures, the characters tend to be deities, semi-deities, or denizens of Arcadia. The texts used for the serenata are strongly moralistic. Those of Pietro Metastasio were among some of the most well-known and popular to be set in this form. Many achieved classic status and, like his opera librettos, were set repeatedly. Most of these pieces have a loose

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plot and were often performed in an elaborate setting with costumes but without dramatic action.

In terms of structure, the serenata is often divided into two equal parts, each consisting of recitatives and arias. Talbot states: “It is in its musical style and resources that a serenata comes closest to true opera. The rise of the genre coincided with that of the modern orchestra, and its accompaniment was orchestral almost from the beginning.” The Oxford Companion to Music, states that in length, these compositions would lie somewhere between a cantata and an opera. Alessandro Scarlatti wrote twenty-five serenatas for his various patrons, and the form was extensively cultivated by 17th- and 18th-century Italian composers, and at the imperial court in Vienna (e.g. by Fux and Caldara). The Talbot’s Grove Encyclopedia of Music article about composer Antonio Vivaldi tells us that “the serenatas are more extended works, intermediate in style between cantata and opera and commissioned to celebrate an event or eulogize some person. Lacking the length and bombast of the operas, while furnishing more interesting sonorities than the cantatas, they fully deserve revival.”5

“The serenata quickly spread beyond the Alps to centres of Italian culture in northern Europe. In Lutheran states vernacular versions appeared. The works by J.S. Bach known today as ‘secular cantatas’ could accurately be described as German serenatas (indeed, bwv66a and 173a are titled ‘serenata’),” says Talbot. Further he has said that “the significance of the serenata in its time is not yet fully appreciated. From a modern point of view it sits uncomfortably between stage and concert hall and has

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suffered as a result. However, the growth of music theatre as distinct from traditional opera has encouraged the development of an aesthetic more tolerant of forms of presentation falling somewhere between full staging and concert performance, and opening the door to imaginative and stylistically fitting revival of the best works in the serenata tradition."6

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was known to write serenata or “occasional pieces” while in service of the archiepiscopal court. An example of this is his “L’amèrò, sarò costante.” Many of these have survived as our next extended form type, the concert aria (arias which stand alone in a recital or concert setting, not particularly associated with the opera in which they originally might have appeared).

Kenneth Chalmers has given us a bit more insight into Mozart’s use of the concert aria in the Oxford Companion to Music. Mozart and his family spent time in London in 1764 where he was exposed to a great deal of Italian Opera. Chalmers states that in mid eighteenth century London, the Italian style was dominant. As was stated earlier, Pietro Metastasio, the Viennese court poet was the favored source of texts at this time. Many of his selections were used repeatedly, and would eventually be pasted together to form longer dramatic units with compositions by a number of composers. This newly formed opera would be called a pasticcio. According to Chalmers, each of these “concert” arias would be comprised of “recitatives and arias with a dramatic flow that moved from misunderstandings to revelations of the truth by way of expressions of despair, rage, hope, determination and contentment.”7 Mozart contributed his first aria, “Va, dal furor

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6 Ibid.
7 Chalmers, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: The Concert Arias, 6.
portata” for a pasticcio written by J. C. Bach, a mentor to the young composer. J.C. Bach had a large influence in Mozart’s early symphonic and vocal writing. Many of his other concert arias he wrote for specific singers to perform in recital, including Josefa Dušek (Bella mia fiamma, addio! . . . Resta, oh cara), Aloysia Weber (Schon lacht der holde Frühling), Nancy Strorace (Ch’io mi scordi di te).

Another well known composer who wrote concert arias was Felix Mendelssohn. The concert aria that has survived, though incomplete, is Tutto è silenzio, composed in 1829 for Anna Milder-Hauptmann, the Berlin based prima donna. Using texts from Metastasio, Mendelssohn also composed the scena and aria entitled Infelice (op.94) which was commissioned by the Philharmonic Society in London in 1834. This work, written for Maria Malibran, mezzo-soprano daughter of the famous pedagogue and singer Manuel Garcia, better displays his dramatic abilities.

This brings us to our next type of solo, vocal composition, the scena. According to The Oxford Dictionary of Music, it is defined as follows:

Scene. Prin. meaning of this term is an elaborate concert aria for v. and orch. in several sections, like the cantatas of Haydn, A. Scarlatti, etc. Examples are Beethoven's Ah! perfido, Bliss's The Enchantress, Barber's Andromache's Farewell, and Britten's Phaedra. Other meanings are

- (1) a scene, subdivision of an act in opera;
- (2) solo operatic movement, less formal than an aria e.g. Leonore's Abscheulicher! in Beethoven’s Fidelio.

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8 Written for Paisiello’s Il barbiere di Siviglia sung in German (Chalmers, 7.)
9 Chalmers, 6 – 7.
The *Oxford Companion to Music* provides more insight:

In opera, an extended episode consisting of a loosely constructed sequence of related sections (e.g. introduction, recitative, arioso, one or more arias), often for a solo singer and principally dramatic in intent. In the 18th and 19th centuries the title was given to specially composed dramatic episodes intended for concert performance by a solo singer, rather in the style of a cantata. These were normally settings either of an extract from an opera libretto or of some other dramatic text; examples include Beethoven's *Ah, perfido!*\(^\text{12}\)

The final term to define is **monodrama**. There is some disagreement about the meaning of this form. According to the Anne Dhu Mc Lucas’ article in *The New Grove Encyclopedia of Music*, **monodrama** is defined as follows:

In its narrow meaning, a form of melodrama which features one character, sometimes with chorus, using speech in alternation with short passages of music, or sometimes speaking over music. Simultaneously with melodrama, the initial enthusiasm for monodrama occurred chiefly in Germany during the 1770s and 80s, and the two terms are often used interchangeably, since many of the early melodramas had only one character on stage at a time. . . .

In modern times, the term has lost its exclusive association with the combination of speech and music characteristic of melodrama and is most often used as a synonym for a one-character staged dramatic work for singer and orchestra, as in Poulenc’s *La voix humaine* (1958); as a non-staged dramatic work for singer and orchestra, as in Poulenc’s *La dame de Monte Carlo* (1961), Floyd’s *Flower and Hawk* (1972), Rocheberg’s *Phaedra* (1973 – 4), J.E. Ivey’s *Testament of Eve* (1976) and Peter Maxwell Davies’s *The Medium* (1981).\(^\text{13}\)

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\(^{13}\) McLucas, Anne Dhu, Grove [http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/18976?q=monodrama&article_section=all&search=article&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit](http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/18976?q=monodrama&article_section=all&search=article&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit) accessed December 28, 2009.
1.2 Discussion

As can be seen in the definition of these terms, there is a sense of flow and carry-over from one form of solo, vocal music to another. In the twentieth century, composers began to blend forms in earnest. According to Donald Grout, Vaughan Williams’ *Pilgrim’s Progress*, and Britten’s *Rape of Lucretia* both incorporated some oratorio or cantata characteristics. He cites Wagner’s *Parsifal* and Pfitzner’s *Palestrina* as being forerunners of the “opera-oratorio” style characteristic of the mid-twentieth century. Ballet also was treated to the same blending. Composers began working in smaller forms, “chamber” or “workshop” opera, requiring few performers. The rise of opera for the new media of radio and television, the composition of incidental music for films and for stage plays as well as the rise of electronic music introduced a new realm of possibilities.\(^{14}\)

That being said, it is hard to identify specifically what drove Samuel Barber to write these extended-form solo pieces for voice. Several sources have stated that it was an important goal for him, and he wrote three different vocal pieces that could be described as taking on that “extended-form,” neither simple song nor as sterile as a concert aria. Was it perhaps it was part of his preparation before he could allow himself to compose an opera? None of his biographers have provided his motivation to complete this task, though. The then new medium of radio might have had a large part in the composition of *Knoxville: Summer of 1915*, since it is not intrinsically a visually oriented piece, rather a narrative monologue or a train of thought. While Samuel Barber used the term “lyric rhapsody” for the *Knoxville: Summer of 1915*, it is more than a simple art

\(^{14}\) Grout, 600.
song. There are many different emotions represented. The child protagonist is reminiscing about an entire evening that culminates in being taken to bed and drifting off to sleep.

As the definition for *scena* mentions Barber’s *Andromache’s Farewell*, research would indicate that composition would represent that form. Considering the highly dramatic subject material, however, and the very pictorial nature of the piece with motives that suggest specific actions, *Andromache’s Farewell* would lend itself well to staging in the form of a monodrama. It would make sense to have a child there to represent Astyanax. The music clearly suggests the place where guards would come and take him away. In a way, it would be a more engaging piece to perform if staged. The longer orchestral interludes could then be visual action between mother and child, and later, guards.

Barber did indicate that the chamber version of the *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* would make it more user friendly for concert and college performance settings. Sharon Mabry in 1990 wrote three articles for the NATS Bulletin to inform the nation’s voice teachers of monodramas as a neglected form of music for recital use. This genre provides a more dramatic, theatrical aspect than traditional recital repertoire with the use of minimal costuming and props, she contends, and these works could easily replace half of a standard recital for more advanced students. Further, she states that the monodrama gives singers “an opportunity to bridge the gap between the theatrical and dramatic impact of *opera* and the intimate subtleties of the art song.”

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15 Mabry, “The Contemporary Monodrama.”
Chapter 2: Samuel Barber

2.1 Biography

Samuel Osmond Barber II was born in Westchester, Pennsylvania in 1910. Young Samuel was exposed to music from very early in his life. His Aunt, Louise Homer (his mother’s sister), was a leading contralto at the Metropolitan Opera Company. She was married to a composer from Boston, Massachusetts, Sidney Homer, who would become one of Barber’s most valued advisors and role models. By the age of six, he saw his Aunt Louise perform the role of *Aida* opposite Enrico Caruso. This inspired Barber to become a composer.

From the beginning of his experiments with composition, melody was of the utmost importance. Young Barber began studying piano with William Hatton Green at the age of nine.\(^{16}\) It was at this age that young Sam, prone to melancholy moods, wrote the following letter to his mother:

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Notice to Mother and nobody else

Dear Mother: I have written this to tell you my worrying secret. Now don’t cry when you read it because it is neither yours nor my fault. I suppose I will have to tell it now without any nonsense. To begin with I was not meant to be an athlete [sic]. I was meant to be a composer, and will be I’m sure. I’ll ask you one more thing. – Don’t ask me to try to forget this unpleasant thing and go play football. – Please -- Sometimes I’ve been worrying about this so much that it makes me mad (not very).

Love, Sam Barber II\(^{17}\)
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\(^{16}\) Simmons, *Voices in the Wilderness: Six American Neo-Romantic Composers*, 243.

At age ten, Samuel composed his first opera--a one-act work entitled *The Rose Tree* to a libretto written by Annie Sullivan Brosius Noble, the family’s Irish cook. It was at this point that his Uncle Homer took his desire to compose seriously and became his mentor. His uncle urged him to master practical instruments. He also advised Barber to write naturally and spontaneously and to develop his own style. Homer was quoted as saying, “It is the unconscious charm that is so elusive and valuable, in art, as in life . . .”\(^{18}\)

In 1924, at the age of fourteen, Samuel Barber was spending his Friday afternoons as part of the first class of students at the new Curtis Institute of Music. This is where, in 1928, Samuel met the young Gian Carlo Menotti, who had just arrived from Italy. The two soon became involved in a life-long relationship that took on many forms, ranging from romantic companion and artistic collaborator to a deep and abiding friendship after they were no longer romantically involved.\(^{19}\)

In addition to his time spent composing music, Samuel was an avid reader. He spent his spare time attending many orchestral concerts by the Philadelphia Orchestra under the baton of the famous Leopold Stokowski.\(^{20}\) He would often spend his summer months in Italy with Menotti. The two young men went uninvited to *Lago Maggiore* to visit the conductor Toscanini. To their delight and surprise, they were welcomed and introduced to many luminaries while in his presence.

Meanwhile, Mary Curtis Bok, the founder of Curtis Institute, introduced him to Carl Engel of G. Schirmer Publishing. Schirmer went on to publish the majority of his

\(^{18}\) Simmons, 244.  
\(^{19}\) Ibid.  
\(^{20}\) Ibid, 247.
In 1935, Barber won the *Prix de Rome* and was called the “most talented and deserving student of music in America.” He spent two years studying in Europe, where he was criticized for the conservatism of his style. Barber wrote in a romantic style with more traditional harmonies at a time when his compositional colleagues were experimenting with serialism and a departure from the safer treatment of harmony and form of their predecessors.

Finally in 1937, after many requests, Barber submitted two of his compositions to Toscanini—the *Adagio for Strings* and one of his orchestral *Essays*. To this day, the *Adagio* is one of the three most well known pieces by American composers. Toscanini had them premiered by the NBC Symphony November 5, 1938. This was difficult for Barber’s peers to take, as Toscanini was known for his antipathy toward American composers. At a time when simple, romantic lines were not in vogue, Barber’s neo-romantic, unfussy style was deemed worthy by the conservative Toscanini to be played when other American composers’ works were rejected. Proponents of modernism were outraged.

In 1928 Barber won the Bearns Prize in composition offered by Columbia University and spent time in Europe studying with George Antheil. Barber found Mr. Antheil to be a kindred spirit very interested in his more conservative compositional style. In the 1930s, Barber took a post as a teacher at Curtis, though he was disdainful of

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21 Ibid.
22 Ibid. 248.
23 Ibid. 250.
teaching. At the age of thirty, he gave up teaching to focus solely on composition. In 1935, he was awarded a Pulitzer Traveling Scholarship.

In 1942, with the help of Mary Curtis Bok, Barber bought a house in Mount Kisco, New York with Menotti and a friend, the poet Robert Horan, which they named “Capricorn”. Capricorn became the “center of intellectual, cultural, and social life for whole network of creative artists with the help of Mary Curtis Bok.” Its quiet, picturesque placement on a hill over a lake provided a great deal of inspiration for both composers and several of their artistic colleagues who would use the home as a productive and creative retreat. In September of 1942, Barber became a member of the Air Force stationed in Fort Worth, TX. He was commissioned to write a “flight” symphony with electronic sounds (now named his Second Symphony). This piece was premiered by Serge Koussevitzky and the Boston Symphony Orchestra in March of 1944. In 1945, he received an honorable discharge.

Barber, aside from his talents as a pianist and a composer, was also a trained baritone with a lovely voice. After completing his bachelor’s degree, he moved to New York City for a short time to pursue a singing career. He premiered his scena Dover Beach with the NBC Music Guild series to good reviews in 1931. The performance was hailed as having “singular charm and beauty.” According to Barbara Heyman, one of his biographers, this first-hand experience as a singer and his intuitive empathy with

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25 Simmons, 250.
26 Ibid, 251
27 Alcorn, 5.
28 O’Keefe, A Background Study And Analysis of Text-Setting Techniques Used in Samuel Barber’s “Knoxville: Summer of 1915,” 4.
the voice would find expression in the large legacy of songs that occupy some two-thirds of his output.29

Barber, who had already set the James Agee poem “Sure on This Shining Night” in 1938, again turned to Agee’s writing to set *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* for soprano and orchestra. Eleanor Steber would be the first soprano to sing this piece with Serge Koussevitzky and the Boston Symphony Orchestra.30 More will be written about this piece and its place in his life in the next chapter.

In the 1950s, Samuel Barber found inspiration in a set of French poems by Ranier Maria Rilke entitled *Poèmes français*. Barber made a departure from his previous German lied style to appropriately set the French language text, seeking instead to use “a semi-parlando vocal lines, fluid piano accompaniments marked with gentle syncopations, and expanded tonal language.”31 In his desire to set the French texts appropriately, Barber went to Paris where he met and worked with composer, Francis Poulenc. Barber entitled this work *Mélodies Passagères*, and he chose to dedicate the songs to Poulenc. The French composer was so taken with the works that he promised to perform them with Pierre Bernac the following year in Paris and New York. During this time, the two composers became close, sharing their ideas.

In 1952, following a period of seclusion, Barber’s interest in Irish literature and poetry took him on a trip to Ireland. It was in the wake of this trip that he wrote the *Hermit Songs* Op. 29, based on writings from the margins of manuscripts by monks and

29 Grove Online, s.v. “Barber, Samuel,” (by Barbara Heyman)
http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy.libraries.wright.edu:2048/subscriber/article/grove/music/01994?q=samuel+barber&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit (accessed 7/14/09)
30 Simmons, 253.
31 Heyman, 325.
scholars during the eighth to thirteenth centuries. It was during this time that he heard
an up and coming African-American soprano named Leontyne Price. Unafraid to make
what society would deem unpopular choices, Barber chose to promote Ms. Price’s career
by selecting her to perform the Hermit Songs with him at the Library of Congress.

Paul Wittke, the editor at Schirmer said of Barber:

Barber was free-thinking, curious, tolerant, and intellectually thorough. He was
so cultivated that shock for its own sake did not amuse him. He believed in good
manners and outward convention, but he had the courage to break the rules when
he wished. At a time when most of the United States were still segregated he
helped launch the careers of two young black singers: Martina Arroyo and
Leontyne Price. When Girard Bank and the Philadelphia Orchestra board became
nervous that Pablo Neruda, the Chilean poet of The Lovers [a poem Barber also
set for baritone and chorus, Op. 43], wrote with graphic sensuality and was a
Communist, Sam stood his ground and won the day.

Ms. Price had just finished touring the opera Porgy and Bess to high acclaim and
was broadcast over the radio in the leading role of Tosca with the Metropolitan Opera.
Hers was the voice he selected to premiere many of his new pieces, notably the soprano
solo in the choral/orchestral work he wrote entitled Prayers of Kierkegaard in 1954.

Though he came close to doing so many times earlier during his mature career as
a composer, Barber did not write a full opera until 1956 when he began work on the
opera Vanessa for the Metropolitan Opera. Despite the interest others had shown in
Barber’s ability to write an opera, he wanted to wait until his own skills at writing for
orchestra, ballet, and chorus were honed before taking on this kind of project. When he
felt prepared, he then had a long search for a librettist. After considering Dylan Thomas

32 Heyman, 336.
33 Ibid., 228.
and James Agee, he settled on collaboration with Menotti, whose own compositional career was extremely busy at this time. After pushing Menotti to complete the libretto, Barber was very pleased with “the finest and most chiseled of (Menotti’s) libretti.”

*Vanessa* premiered in January of 1958 to spectacular reviews, with Eleanor Steber singing the title role opposite Nicolai Gedda as “Anatol.” It was the first well-received and critically-acclaimed opera written by an American composer. Later that same year, he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for *Vanessa*.35

On the heels of this success, in 1959 Samuel Barber was one of seven composers commissioned to compose pieces for the new Philharmonic Hall for the opening of the new Lincoln Center. Barber was commissioned to write two original compositions. The first was a piano concerto with orchestra, Op. 38, written for and performed by John Browning with the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Erich Leinsdorf on September 24, 1962.36

The following year saw the premiere of his second commission from the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, *Andromache’s Farewell* for soprano and orchestra Op. 39. Long inspired by Greek mythology and literature, Barber chose to compose a concert scene based on the Euripides play, *The Trojan Women*. Martina Arroyo, also a young African-American soprano beginning to gain public attention for her talent, was chosen

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34 Heyman, 381.
35 Ibid., 393.
36 Ibid., 410
to perform the premiere with conductor Thomas Schippers.\textsuperscript{37} On April 6-7, 1963, *Andromache’s Farewell* was performed to sustained ovation.\textsuperscript{38}

The success of this piece led the Metropolitan Opera to commission another opera by Barber to celebrate the opening of their new facility in Lincoln Center. *Antony and Cleopatra* (Op. 40) was selected as the subject, with Leontyne Price in a lead role.

Famed director and scenic designer Franco Zeffirelli wrote the libretto. Zeffirelli also designed and directed the production for the opening of the newly built opera house; this fact was a source of tension between Barber and Menotti. Menotti offered many times to write the libretto.

The premiere on September 16, 1966 was “the monumental misfortune of Barber’s career.”\textsuperscript{39} Barbara Heyman described the premiere as follows:

> Everything that could have gone wrong mechanically did. Lighting cues misfired, causing Cleopatra to make her entrance on a pitch-black stage. The revolving stage, around which Zeffirelli had designed the whole production, had gone out of order one week before the performance and had to be manually revolved by stage crew dressed in costume. The metallic scrapings of mechanical procedures for changing sets and the noise of the menagerie of live animals competed with the music. The director’s grandiose plans for the battle of Actium—a vast revolving pyramid, around which were supposed to be six barges, twelve horses, four elephants, 120 Romans, and a huge crowd of other players milling around simultaneously were reduced to a mere “160 on stage, 2 small Arabian horses, 1 black horse, 2 camels, 1 elephant, 65 senators.”\textsuperscript{40}

Heyman also included a quote by Leontyne Price.

\textsuperscript{37} Schippers and Menotti became partners after Menotti’s relationship with Barber ended.
\textsuperscript{38} Heyman, 420 - 427.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid, 428.
\textsuperscript{40} Heyman, 446.
With a three minute cue, I was locked in the pyramid at the first aria because something mechanical didn’t open up at the right time. But I must say, there’s no business like show business, and I kept singing in the pyramid—I’ll be heard no matter what—and I kept singing right through to the next cue. . . There was no way in the world I could make that cue. I was to be dressed in the pyramid for the next scene, and I simply said “Zip this one back up, whether it fits or not, I’ll keep singing, and just go out!”\(^{41}\)

While the score contains some of the “most beautiful of Barber’s music” the “over produced,” “overdressed” performance was a failure.\(^{42}\)

According to Walter Simmons, the self-consciously modernistic 1960s saw “the bitterness and disappointment of his later years which lent the best works from this period – *Andromache’s Farewell, Antony and Cleopatra, and The Lovers* – an emotional complexity and ambiguity missing from the works that made him famous. These are probably Barber’s least understood masterpieces.”\(^{43}\)

After *Antony and Cleopatra*, Barber had grown sullen, moody, and taken to drink, while Menotti had become outgoing and cosmopolitan, running the Spoleto Festival, and attending lavish cocktail parties. During the last fifteen years of his life, Barber struggled with emotional depression, alcoholism, and creative blocks that profoundly affected his productivity. He refused any more orchestral commissions despite fervent requests.\(^{44}\)

Menotti wrote of Barber:

\(^{41}\) Ibid., 446.
\(^{42}\) Ibid.
\(^{43}\) Simmons, “A Continuing Reassessment of Samuel Barber,” 84.
\(^{44}\) Ibid, 461.
His gifts were colossal, but as such a tormented soul, he was never happy with what he had done. He was only happy when he was composing. When he finished a piece, he could not bear to look at it, and when he had to correct something, going over the work seemed like agony. In addition to these self-imposed tortures, add the suffering over long periods of block. Once he’d gotten into a piece, however, he would work day and night without stopping.  

Depression and alcoholism plagued Barber for several years. In September 1980, Barber’s health had been declining with many hospitalizations due to a mysterious cancer of which he kept to himself. Despite a comprehensive search, I could not find information explaining what kind of cancer Barber had. He went to be with Menotti in Scotland during which time he suffered a stroke. This affected his health so severely that he never fully recovered. After several months in the hospital in New York and his final five days at home surrounded by friends and loved ones, Samuel Barber died of cancer at the age of 70 on January 23, 1981.

2.2 Compositional Style  

Barber was one of the three most recorded and performed composers of the twentieth century. Almost all of his works were introduced by major performers of their time – Leontyne Price, Eleanor Steber, John Browning, Arturo Toscanini, Serge Koussevitzky, and Bruno Walter. . . .Barber was possibly the only American composer of the twentieth century who was able to earn his living by composing; he did not need to teach or lecture.  

Walter Simmons has divided Samuel Barber’s compositions into three periods. Works written up until 1942 are considered his “Childhood.” 1942 – 1952 spans his

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45 Felsenfeld, *Parallel Lives Benjamin Britten and Samuel Barber: Their Lives and Their Music*, 64.
46 Felsenfeld, 65.
“Adolescence,” and 1952 – 1971 marks his “Mature” period. \(^{48}\) We will explore each of these periods more thoroughly.

Counterpoint was one of Barber’s first strong compositional tools. \(^{49}\) His first period showed strong influences of Brahms; polyrhythmic passages, hemiola rhythms, and syncopated chordal passages. \(^{50}\) He wrote in a straightforward, modestly chromatic tonal harmony with few unresolved dissonances. Rhythms were very regular. His melodies tended to be sweet but sad, often tailored to the soloist for whom the piece was written. \(^{51}\)

His second period showed a reaction against critics who claimed that he was a “contemporary composer only in that he is still alive.” \(^{52}\) During this time, he explored the compositional trends of others – neo-classicism of Stravinsky with pan diatonic, polytonal harmonies and irregular rhythmic pattern. His main influences were Aaron Copland and Menotti. \(^{53}\) Knoxville: Summer of 1915 was his most notable success of this period. \(^{53}\) By the 1940s Barber’s melodic lines were usually more chromatic and dissonant, and sometimes the lyrical phrases became dominated by the use of particular intervals, such as series of fourths and/or fifths. \(^{54}\)

His “Adulthood” displayed a more personal language characterized by tonal freedom, ambiguity, and textural complexity. The elegance and sensuality noted in his

\(^{48}\) Simmons, 265.
\(^{49}\) Acorn, 6.
\(^{50}\) Heyman, 78.
\(^{51}\) Alcorn, 266.
\(^{52}\) Ibid, 281.
\(^{53}\) Ibid.
\(^{54}\) Acorn, 6.
second symphony are typical. It was during this time that he tried twelve-tone writing.\(^{55}\)

When in 1950 – 60 he chose to experiment with modernism, he met his first taste of failure.

Nathan Broder distinguishes the changes in Barber’s melodic treatment over time:

A typical line for Barber may be lyrical in character with a certain simple freshness, despite its traditional shape or it may be dramatic and expansive, characterized by broad leaps. In the later music the lyric type of line tends to become more chromatic or more angular and the dramatic type, while retaining the broad leaps is contracted into a short theme, jagged and biting. Here, tonality is no longer the principal determining factor; instead, certain intervals dominate the melodic structure.\(^{56}\)

Robert Cushman in the liner notes of Barber’s Masterworks Portrait states that “Barber was two composers in one – neo-classical and neo-romantic. He was never a stylistic innovator. He used late Romantic language to say deeply personal things.” Further, he asserts, “Nothing dates a composer more quickly than yesterday’s radicalism; Barber’s fundamentally conservative manner of expression now seems far more fresh than the flashy novelties and earnest experimentation of most of our modernists.”\(^{57}\)

Richard Jackson adds in the same set of notes, “His sense of proportion and total form is very keen. Barber’s fondness for Romantic fullness & lyricism, combined with classical procedures, places him in a position within his era similar to Brahms.”\(^{58}\)

\(^{55}\) Ibid., 295.


\(^{57}\) Barber, Samuel Barber Thomas Schippers, Original sound recording made by Sony Music Corp. and Masterworks Heritage. CDs 1, 01-062837-10. 10.

\(^{58}\) Ibid, 10.
Barbara Heyman states in Grove that elements of modernism were incorporated into his work after 1940. There was an increased dissonance and chromaticism (*Medea’s Meditation and Dance of Vengeance* and the Cello Concerto), tonal ambiguity and a limited use of serialism (movements 1, 2, and 3 of the Piano sonata, the *Nocturne* and *Prayers of Kierkegaard*). These tools were only of use in so far as they allowed him to pursue without compromise principles of tonality and lyrical expression. The twelve-note rows in the Piano Sonata, for example, are not used as part of a rigid technique of organization. Their presence in melodic lines or accompaniment is rarely in conflict with – indeed often reinforces – the tonal structure.\(^{59}\)

Barber often put his best into compositions for the voice and was always fascinated by words and music. He wrote vocal scores that slowly but surely emerged from a mass of musical works that survive as curiosities. Always interested in creating an extended form for the voice, Barber went on to create three pieces of this nature: *Dover Beach, Knoxville: Summer of 1915*, and *Andromache’s Farewell*. It was his orchestral scores, though, that brought him into the view of the public.\(^{60}\)

Biographer Barbara Heyman makes the following statement:

For the present-day listener, it is often the youthful works of the 1930s and 40s that seem the most quintessential distillation of Barber’s art. It is not the case that his later works are worse or reveal a falling-off from what came before (indeed, in the 1950s and early 60s Barber was probably at the height of his critical and public success), but rather that he was becoming in his time and especially in ideological retrospect evermore seen as out-of-step with the times.\(^{61}\)

\(^{59}\) Grove Online. s.v. Barber, Samuel. (by Barbara Heyman)  

\(^{60}\) Cushman, 3.

\(^{61}\) Heyman, 228.
Chapter 3: Knoxville: Summer of 1915

3.1 Selection of Prose

In 1947, Barber wrote, “We have been through some difficult times here in West
Chester.” And true enough, he had: not only was the finality of WWII only two years in
the past – with all atrocities abroad coming to light – but, more personally, Barber’s
father was dying, as was his Aunt Louise. Aaron Copland brought this nationalistic
feeling to serious music in the forties with Appalachian Spring, Billy the Kid and Rodeo.
In this frame of mind, Barber read James Agee’s prose poem whose evocations of
summer hit a chord within him. In the words of the composer:

“I had always admired Mr. Agee’s writing and this prose-poem particularly
struck me because the summer evening he describes in his native southern town
reminded me so much of similar evenings when I was a child at home. I found
out, after setting this that Mr. Agee and I are the same age, and the year he
described was 1915 when we were both five. You see, it expresses a child’s
feeling of loneliness, wonder and lack of identity in that marginal world between
twilight and sleep.”

Barber was already acquainted with writings of James Agee (1909-1955), who
was remembered as “a poet, novelist and the best motion-picture critic this country has
ever had” according to director John Huston. Agee also wrote screenplays, including that

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62 Felsenfeld, Parallel Lives Benjamin Britten and Samuel Barber: Their Lives and Their Music, 150.
63 Heyman, 279.
of *The African Queen* in 1950-51. It was in reading *Partisan Review* that Samuel Barber first read *Knoxville: Summer of 1915*. The prose-poem was first published in this periodical August-Sept 1938. Barber’s intense connection to the text enabled him to compose *Knoxville* in a short time frame of only a few days.

Barber used about one-third of the original text for his “lyric rhapsody” (a name he gave it) which he composed during the Spring of 1947. On his mind at the time was his father’s deteriorating health and the strain it placed on his mother as well as the knowledge that his beloved Aunt Louise was gravely ill. Barber recalled much later: “Agee’s poem was vivid and moved me deeply, and my musical response was immediate and intense.”

Samuel Barber met James Agee shortly after the premiere and was later struck by the similarities between the two of them. They were born the same year to cultivated families. Both had aunts who were musicians. They both had large backyards where the family would lie on summer eves. He had recollections of his parents sitting on their porch talking quietly. Further, both attended good schools. Both were reflecting on the loss of their fathers (in Barber’s case imminent loss) when writing the *Knoxville*.

James Agee’s father died in an automobile accident in May 1916. The absence of his father during his childhood became increasingly important to Agee. He read several psychoanalytical works, among them *The Inner World of Childhood* by Frances Wickes, a devotee of Carl Gustav Jung. She gave a good deal of attention to the way a

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64 Alcorn, 14.
66 Simmons, 253.
67 Simmons, 289.
child comes to terms with death. It was while reading this that Agee put aside his current poetic work and began to write of his Knoxville memories. 68 

*Knoxville: Summer of 1915* appeared as a preface to *A Death in the Family* which was published posthumously in 1957. 69 “It was not part of the manuscript which Agee left, but the editors would certainly have urged him to include it in the final draft,” states David McDowell in a later edition of the book. 70

Agee’s *Knoxville* has been compared to Garrison Keillor’s “Lake Wobegon” stories in that it taps into “the collective American unconscious in a beautifully written prose-poem evoking his own childhood in Knoxville, Tennessee,” says Anthony Burton in the liner notes for Kathleen Battle’s recording of *Knoxville*. “Barber’s contemplative monologue turns Agee’s irregular prose rhythms into simple musical meters,” says John Harbison in the notes of Dawn Upshaw’s *Knoxville* recording, “brining intensity to phrases that were casual in the prose telling and emphasizing two undercurrents: nostalgia and intimations of mortality. The scene is still viewed through the eyes of a child, but the mature voice of the writer is also there, emerging especially in the elements of fore-knowledge which give the setting a special poignancy.” 71 In the liner notes for Leontyne Price’s recording of the work appears the quote, “*Knoxville* is a mature expression of Barber’s artistry as a musical poet and a master of orchestral color. His


69 Dressler, 6.


music vividly mirrors the vacillating emotional climate of the text – at once contemplative and anguished.”72

While he shared the concern of his generation for writing music accessible to a broadly based audience--unlike Aaron Copland, Roy Harris, Marc Blitzstein and Virgil Thomson who searched for a style of music with national identity--Barber rarely incorporated popular, jazz and folk idioms into his compositions. Of his works that do include native elements, Knoxville: Summer of 1915 is considered the most American. A reverie of childhood in a small Southern town, on a text by James Agee, it is a palpable evocation of folklore in a quasi-pastoral style, with frequent word-painting, hints of the blues, rich orchestral color and freely varied meter. David Diamond claimed Knoxville was ‘the pinnacle beyond which many a composer will find it impossible to go’.73

Jane Dressler has written extensively in articles and a dissertation about the pairing of the Agee and Barber and how complimentary their work was to each other’s craft. Walter Simmons described the pairing as the “most apt fusion of text and music found in American rep.”74 Agee was always interested in music, wanting to create music. He is quoted as saying:

“I want to write symphonies . . .It’s got to be narrative poetry, but a sort that so far as I know has never been tried . . . I’ve thought of inventing a sort of amphibious style-prose that would run into poetry when the occasion demanded poetic expression . . . What I want to do is. To devise a poetic diction that will cover the whole range of events as perfectly and as evenly as skin covers every organ vital as well as trivial of the human body.”75

72 Leontyne Price Sings Barber, RCA Victor, CD 09026-61983-2, 5.
73 Broder, 325.
74 Simmons, 290.
75 Dressler, 4.
Barber set only one-third of the original prose-poem, cutting out the first section which is a lengthy description of the neighborhood, the houses, trees, and people. James Agee created a thorough description of this sleepy evening in the town. The poem is notable for its synaesthetic qualities mixing freely the senses of sight, taste, touch, and — more than any other — sound, to transform the banality of everyday noises into music. This was done purposely to help readers to feel as if they were present in that backyard.

3.2 “Word Music”

Robert Fitzgerald coined a term for this musically poetic diction in the manuscript for Agee’s *Permit Me to Voyage*. He called it “word music.” According to Jeanne Concannon, by the late 1930s these techniques cohere in a style which is distinctly Agee’s: rhythmic and harmonic use of the colon; repetition of words and sounds — anaphora, alliteration, assonance.”

“These devices, assonance, alliteration, onomatopoeia, and word repetition are familiar in poetic texts. Barber’s melodic response to Agee’s poetic devices within prose will be limited to the following specific compositional means: agogic accent (emphasis through duration), dynamic accent (emphasis through use of crescendo, decrescendo, or other types of dynamic variation and contrast), metric accent (emphasis through placement of syllables on important beats of the prevailing meter), pitch accent (emphasis

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76 Heyman, 213.
77 Ibid., 5.

27
through unexpected melodic dissonance), and rhythmic accent (emphasis through syncopation or the unexpected division of beat.)”

Louis Untermeyer describes **assonance** as follows: “a resemblance, rather than a matching; an approximation of sounds. Sometimes the same vowel is used. Sometimes merely a similar one, and there is no particular concurrence of consonants as there is in regular rhyme.” This device is used in the phrase, “Now is the night one blue dew.”

![Figure 1 (Knoxville mm. 94 - 99), vocal line](image_url)

The melodic shape, long note values and a cessation of harmonic change within the measures all add expressiveness. In second repetition of the statement, the monosyllabic phrase serves as transitional material. 

**Alliteration** can be defined as a repetition of sounds either at the beginning of two or more words or concealed within the words and notes that, in order to achieve its effect, the words must immediately succeed each other or occur at short intervals. Within the text of *Knoxville*, the phrase “streetcar, . . . stopping, . . . starting, . . . stertorous” takes

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78 Dressler, 6.
79 Ibid., 6.
80 Ibid.
advantage of this tool. Dressler points out that Barber makes metric, rhythmic and pitch accents to underscore the four (st) sounds.\textsuperscript{81}

\begin{figure}[h]
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\caption{\textit{Knoxville mm. 59 - 63}, alliteration in the vocal line}
\end{figure}

\textbf{Onomatopoeia}, meaning to “make a name” is the making or forming of a word by imitating its sound. This can be found within the setting of “the noise of the locusts from all the air at once enchants my eardrums.” Untermeyer says, “The stringing together of (z), (sts), (s), (ts), and (z) sounds imitate the locusts’ rasping buzz.”\textsuperscript{82}

To further enhance this effect, Barber uses limited pitch range for the melody which reproduces the monotonous low-pitched locust sounds. Barber has set the words

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., 7.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid.
in such a way that the rhythm emphasizes the words “noise,” “once,” and “enchants.”

The use of duplets further enhances this effect.\textsuperscript{83}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure3.png}
\caption{(Knoxville mm. 120 - 123), Onomatopoeia in the vocal line}
\end{figure}

Repetition is another favorite method of adding emphasis and music to a poem.

“They are not talking much, and the talk is quiet, of nothing in particular. Of nothing at all in particular. Of nothing at all.” Barber has taken special care to emulate the natural rhythms of speech. The agogic accents serve different purposes in each phrase stressing different words in each repetition.\textsuperscript{84}

\textsuperscript{83} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., 8.
Heyman writes along the same vein. The imagery in Agee’s text provides abundant opportunity for musical word painting: The downward interval of a fourth or fifth creates natural speech intonation in “Talking casually,” (mm. 23-24);

Figure 4 (Knoxville mm.147-155), vocal line

People in pairs, not in a hurry scuffling switching their weight of aesthetic body, talking casually.

Figure 5 Text Painting (Knoxville mm. 21 - 24), vocal line
The “increasing moan” of the trolley car (mm. 65 - 66) – seen in figure 2.1 -- can clearly be heard in Barber’s treatment. Finally, Dressler pointed out the setting of “the bleak spark crackling and cursing . . . the iron whine rises on rising speed; still risen; -- faints; -- halts” (mm. 72 - 78) as an example of text painting. The rhythmically crisp setting of “small malignant spirit” again has a biting quality. At last, the motion slows to a halt as the forward motion of the notes draws out and the bar lines are blurred.

![Figure 6 Text Painting (Knoxville mm. 72 - 79) vocal line](image)
Alliterations create an irresistible rhythmic momentum: “the faint swinging bell rises, again, -- still fainter, fainting, -- lifting; --lifts,” (mm. 79-86).

The contrasting allegro agitato section evaporates on a high “a” on “Now is the night one blue dew” (mm. 99-107). \(^{85}\)

In her thesis, *A Background Study and Analysis of Test-Setting Techniques Used In Samuel Barber’s Knoxville: Summer of 1915*, Marian Bodnar O’Keefe refers to

\(^{85}\) Heyman, 281.
composer Banbridge Crist’s book *The Art of Setting Music to Words*. Mr. Crist’s book asserts that text-setting for art song must reflect the significance of individual words and the declamation one would use in speaking the words. He states “One of the devices used lies in the emotional timings, the urgencies about continuity, the whole pacing and moving-forwardness of the composition. The composer may choose to emphasize the actual sound of the language paying attention to the elements such as cadence, pitch-curve, and vowel and consonant sounds, or else to stress the text’s underlying meaning and emotion. The process must begin with the language itself, rather than with the emotion of a text. The word stresses are fixed attributes in both speech and singing and one cannot with impunity change the tonic accents . . . because if you do you change the meaning.  

86 Barber stated that ‘if I’m writing music for words, then I immerse myself in those words, and I let the music flow out of them.’  

**3.3 Notes from Steber**

Knoxville was completed by early April 1947. Barber sent a telegram to Serge Koussevitzky of the Boston Symphony Orchestra asking him to listen to the piece. The conductor quickly suggested Eleanor Steber for the premiere performance. According to one source, Miss Steber in turn agreed to commission the work, although it was already completed.

Though Barber was initially concerned that Eleanor Steber’s voice would not be large enough to compete with an orchestra, once he began rehearsing with Steber, he was

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86 O’Keefe, 12 – 18.
87 Ibid., 21.
pleased with her work. Steber requested that two passages in the score be modified. She suggested that the section “Now is the night one blue dew” and the section beginning with “May God bless my people…” be transposed into a higher register because they would lie in a tessitura too low for a singer’s voice to be heard above an orchestral accompaniment.\(^{88}\)

Koussevitzky wanted a full orchestration, so the original composition was set for symphony orchestra. Barber, however, would have preferred a more intimate ensemble. In 1949, he rescored the piece for chamber orchestra and he revised it again in 1952. Woodwinds and trumpets were reduced to primo parts only; timpani and bass clarinet parts were deleted; the oboe and flute parts were alternated with English horn and piccolo. The number of horns was increased from one to two, and the triangle, harp and stringed instruments parts were kept intact.\(^{89}\)

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<tr>
<th>Full Orchestration</th>
<th>Chamber Orchestration</th>
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<tr>
<td>Flutes I/II</td>
<td>Flute I (doubling Piccolo I)</td>
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<td>Oboes I/II</td>
<td>Oboe I (doubling English Horn I)</td>
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<td>English Horns I/II</td>
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<td>Timpani</td>
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<td>Solo voice</td>
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Table 1 Instrumentation of *Knoxville: Summer of 1915*\(^{90}\)

\(^{88}\) Heyman, 288.
\(^{89}\) Ibid, 291.
\(^{90}\) Heyman, 291.
As a side note, Eleanor Steber’s memoirs (written by Marcia Sloat) tell the story somewhat differently. She says mutual friend, David Hocker suggested that she commission Barber to write the piece. She paid one thousand dollars for the piece and met with Barber working through the composition. She was thrilled to work on a vocal selection written just for her. She found out then that Koussevitzky had options on the first performance. He invited her to perform the piece with the Boston Symphony the following spring.

A few days before the performance, as she reported, she found out that Knoxville had not actually been written for her. An acquaintance (unnamed) told her he had seen and heard the piece before she commissioned it. This person told her the piece was written for contralto Carol Brice after arrangements were made by Barber and Koussevitzky. She reports being furious. It took her a long while to allow those “bad feelings” to pass.

Heyman’s biography of Barber states that Koussevitzky mentioned a few singers for whom the piece might be written. Barber purportedly did not want to set the piece for Carol Brice as he did not care for her voice. The biography does confirm, however, that he began composing the work before Ms. Steber confirmed her desire to commission it.\footnote{Heyman, 287.}

### 3.4 Critical Reception/Performance Considerations

April 1, 1948 was the premiere of Knoxville, one year after its completion.
Barber is quoted as saying that the critical acclaim for *Knoxville’s* premiere was not good. He was out of the country during the premiere, and so he was unable to hear it. Despite his wishes that the concert be moved to another date, Koussevitzky was not willing to change it. Both Steber and Barber were surprised and somewhat upset that Koussevitzky selected that night to announce his imminent retirement, completely overshadowing the excitement of their premiere.

These were the reviews generated from the premiere:

**Cyrus Durgin of *Musical America*** from April 9-10, 1948:

> “Mr. Barber’s music is melodic, metrically and structurally free, with close and very effective writing. Having heard it only in rehearsal and without recourse to a score, I would describe the effect of the music as simple, relaxed and expressive, although I suspect that the technique has its complexities.”

**Newsweek** published another review on April 19, 1948:

> “Koussevitzky had urged Sam Barber, easily one of your finest young composers, to write a work for voice and orchestra. And Miss Steber, for whom Barber had wanted to compose something, commissioned it. So Koussevitzky, Miss Steber and the Boston Symphony (who had taken to it from the first rehearsal) gave *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* a beautiful, compelling performance...the music Barber wrote is modern, but ridden with melody and perceptive of the mood Agee created. The part for soprano is perfectly suited to Miss Steber’s extraordinary legato and impeccable musicianship. Although the critics were divided on the work itself, Miss Steber’s performance drew the highest marks.”

Leontyne Price was selected to record the revised version of the piece. Here is a review of her performance from the *New York Times*:

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92 *Hennessee*, 227.
93 Ibid., 233.
“Leontyne Price . . .sang with such a grasp of the work’s spirit that one was hardly aware of vocalism. When one thought about it, one realized that the control and shading of the voice were delicate and the phrasing admirable. But one’s interest was drawn to the heart of the work’s emotion; that is an interpreter’s proudest achievement.”\textsuperscript{94}

In her dissertation, Marian Bodnar O’Keefe addressed the performance challenges inherent in \textit{Knoxville}. She used the words of David Craig – a musical theatre coach—who says, “The singer sings the song, not the song sings the singer.” This means the singer must dig deeper and find the thoughts and motivations behind the words. They must find “the passion that elevates it from thought, not merely to speech, but to song.”\textsuperscript{95}

Craig was quoted as saying, “A well-sung (performed) song gives us the illusion that it has never been sung before and beyond that, that its revelations are witnessed and heard by an audience at the very moment they are self-revealed to the singer.”\textsuperscript{96} Good acting dictates that all of these factors be present even if the text comes at a slow pace.

O’Keefe also includes a few specific performance reminders. In measure 180 when the words “One is my father who is good to me” appear, the singer must be aware that this presence will soon be gone. “That upcoming loss must suddenly be felt in the present and the prayer that follows as a genuine plea for a different future. And all of the preceding must lead to that final realization that for all the gentleness, for all the love, for all the wishing in the world, one is never known fully by anyone, even those who love us best.”\textsuperscript{97}

\textsuperscript{94} O’Keefe, 54.
\textsuperscript{95} O’Keefe, 46.
\textsuperscript{96} Ibid., 48.
\textsuperscript{97} O’Keefe, 56.
This fusion of text and music forms a type of expression that neither medium alone can accomplish. Barber has paid meticulous attention to the text in *Knoxville*, attention to natural word stresses, grouping words into meaningful phrases, and emphasizing and contributing to the meaning through musical means. O’Keefe summed it up aptly saying, “Knowing that both men had an affinity for the other’s medium brings a heightened awareness of the symbiotic relationship between the language and music.”

### 3.5 Performance Guided Analysis of Form

In the next several pages I will describe, measure by measure, my interpretation of *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* as seen through the eyes of the child experiencing it. With the addition of some of the analysis already done by other scholars, I will also discuss my perception Barber’s use of text painting and some motifs which foreshadow this child’s emotional transitions as his thoughts wander. The purpose of this analysis is to help give other singers a train of thought which will enable them to stay “present” and in character throughout the performance of this composition.

Carla Alcorn, in her thesis *Samuel Barber’s Knoxville: Summer of 1915  An Analysis and Performance Suggestions*, describes Barber’s style in *Knoxville* as having the following characteristics: a fixed tonal center with lyrical oscillating melodies; melodies with broad leaps; counterpoint; chromaticism; and “appropriate” dissonances. Walter Simmons describes the emotional tone as “one that is retrospective and nostalgic, recalling childhood innocence.” He further likens it to Stravinsky’s Neo-Classicism with woodwind-based sonorities, pandiatonic harmonies, pentatonic melodies and blue notes.

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98 Alcorn, .
that are evocative of 1940s rural America.\textsuperscript{99} He also asserts that the self-effacing lyricism of \textit{Knoxville} had a great influence on the vocal music of subsequent generations of composers such as Lee Hoiby, John Corigliano and Carlisle Floyd.

Barber referred to the work as a “lyric rhapsody” because of what he termed a lack of form. Despite this, it analyzes cleanly as a rondo form organized not around text but around melodic material and the mood it represents. Below is the chart shown by Marian Bodnar O’Keefe in her thesis \textit{A Background Study And Analysis of Text-Setting Techniques Used in Samuel Barber’s Knoxville: Summer of 1915}. The chart shows the rondo form of the piece based on text division.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Musical section</th>
<th>Measure numbers</th>
<th>Texts used by Barber</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>6-40</td>
<td>“It has become that time of evening when people sit on their porches”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>41-91</td>
<td>“A streetcar raising its iron moan”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>92-114</td>
<td>“Now is the night one blue dew”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A’</td>
<td>114-127</td>
<td>“Parents on porches: rock and rock”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>128-201</td>
<td>“On the rough wet grass of the back yard”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>202-230</td>
<td>“May God bless my people”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A”</td>
<td>231-263</td>
<td>“After a little I am taken in and put to bed”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Form of \textit{Knoxville} with reference to text\textsuperscript{100}

The introductory measures (one through six) set the scene of a slow, tranquil evening. The gentle woodwind chords in measures one through three foreshadow the

\textsuperscript{99} Simmons, 289.
\textsuperscript{100} O’Keefe, 25.
prayer later spoken by the child. The strings take over in measure four to show a hint of 
the heightened emotions to come.

In measure six, the pace calms again and slows as the A motive appears. It is 
represented by a gentle rocking motif, the main theme of the piece, which oscillates back 
and forth between f# minor seventh and A Major chords.\footnote{Alcorn, 18.} The singer enters in measure 
seven in a pure exposition, painting the scenery of that summer evening in 1915. The 
emotions are calm, the singer taking on the role more of a storyteller than an emotionally 
engaged child.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure9.png}
\caption{Motive A (\textit{Knoxville} mm. 6 - 8) piano reduction}
\end{figure}
The B section enters in measure 41 providing a musical rendition of a “mechanical” interruption to the peacefulness of a quiet evening. I have identified some specific melodic motives used by Barber to indicate what these interruptions represent. One can hear the sounds of cars passing; scurrying movement, car horns honking, and insects buzzing in Barber’s orchestration.

![Musical notation for Cars Passing](Figure 10 Cars Passing (Knoxville mm. 41 - 42) piano reduction)

![Musical notation for Scurrying Movement and Insects Buzzing](Figure 11 Scurrying Movement and Insects Buzzing (Knoxville m.42) piano reduction)
The voice enters in measure 59 in a frenzied manner. Alcorn asserts that the soprano must make absolutely certain she is counting precisely and that she knows the intervallic relationships between each note and its successor in this treacherous section. O’Keefe says that the B section is the most different from others for dissonances and louder dynamics help give striking sense of an interruption in this quiet evening. The text is delivered in a more biting fashion. Rather than reflecting an emotion or mood here, the composer has chosen to musically paint the scene. The changing meters, strong dynamics, syncopation and articulation are particularly effective. The whole note of “moan” seen in Figure 2, contrasted with the rhythm of “stopping,” followed by the syncopated accompaniment, creates a vivid image of the jerky lurch of the streetcar.\textsuperscript{102} The chromatic notes in the text “like a small, malignant spirit set to dog its tracks,” (Fig. 6) evoke the image of an insect buzzing about one spot. As the streetcar moves out of sight and hearing, Barber has created a sort of Bernoulli effect as note values for each

\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., 33.
word and syllable are elongated until the long, held final syllables of “forgone” and “forgotten” and the action slows to the original tranquil pace.\footnote{Ibid., 35.}

In measure 86, the hum of the locusts can be heard. Measures 90 – 100 take the listener back to the state of reverie. Arpeggiated ascending chords in measure 101 lead to the voice entrance in measure 104. The simple ascending minor seventh chord shown in Figure 8 provides a transition to the next section, pointing toward the twinkling stars.

Measures 107 – 113 return the listeners to the cozy backyard world, reintroducing the triplet-based, rocking rhythm in measure 114 when the $A'$ begins. The family is lulled by the hum of the locusts through measure 123. A poignant, chromatic string melody indicates heightened emotions as it is passed down to woodwinds in measures 125 – 127. Perhaps it could be a moment of beautiful reflection on the vastness of the stars with foreshadowing of loss of the child’s father.

The descending arpeggiated figure in measures 128 - 129 brings the emotional intensity down as the child then sets the scene in the backyard of section $D$, introducing the family members for the first time (mm. 137 - 146). The tone is very casual and conversational. The child seems to be falling into a sleepy chatter where the phrases are repeated (Figure 8) and slowing in pace.

Marian Bodnar O’Keefe, in her thesis \textit{A Background Study And Analysis of Text-Setting Techniques Used in Samuel Barber’s Knoxville: Summer of 1915}, brings up the point that Barber’s use of melodic motif in measures 147 through 172 provides an underlying translation to the text “They are not talking much” through “like the voices of sleeping birds”. One can view this portion of the prose as purely descriptive of three
separate things: the grown-ups talking, the stars above, and the sound of the adults’ voices. By employing recurring melodic motifs, the composer has tied these three together and provided a broader meaning to the text.\textsuperscript{104}

Measures 156 – 173 brings a comparison of the vastness of the stars compared with the “vastness” of the humans in his life – gentle, loving, larger bodies with smiling faces. The effect of this musical setting is not an obvious one, yet it is effective in providing meaning to the words in a subtle way. The child perceives these adults as “wide and alive” or “larger bodies,” just like the stars. These adults have smiles of “great sweetness.” Their voices, which are quiet and speak of nothing special, are an ever-present comfort, just as the night sky is.\textsuperscript{105}

\textsuperscript{104} O’Keefe, 38.
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid., 39.
The second introduction of the family and their interests follows in measures 174 – 182. The introduction of the child’s parents is done broadly with the mother using a major sixth and the father back to simplicity with a perfect fourth in the melodic line. The longer rhythmic value of the words “father” and “good” emphasizes the fact that his father is “good” to him with slower, more drawn out notes as can be seen in Figure 4.

Again in measures 183 - 200 Barber dictates high emotions with a sweeping, angular melody based on a minor ninth with markings for a *piu agitato.*
The child is having a profound moment of realization that these precious people are here with him, sharing this beautiful evening – the knowledge that these sweet evenings will end as will life for his beloved family and eventually himself. The voice lies in a higher tessitura here, predominantly sitting between c₅ and g₅ in this section.

The P section is a simple prayer, often the highlight of the entire piece. Barber has marked the section with intensity and deep feeling. The hymn-like chords bring a blessing for the child’s family now and upon their passing into death. This brings the third and most poignant treatment of the introduction to the parents in measures 207-208.
While the uncle and aunt sweep by with three beats each, but the mother is given four beats and the father six beats with a 3/2 measure unlike the 4/4 of the previous figures. He is described as a “good” father, again a special treatment.

This brings on the first real climax of the piece in measures 213 - 217 with the realization that these people will die. A lush, orchestral section follows in measures 217 - 226 continuing the hymn chords in an expansive range with a marking of *molto espressivo*. This sustains the strong feelings the child has just experienced bringing the listeners back into a more calm state with the child in measures 226 - 229. The rhythmic drive slows down again, and the expansive range is brought back to a simple oscillation preparing us for the return of A in measures 230 - 242.

Here, sleepiness sets in for the child. The pace slows down and the rhythms again are more drawn out. In measure 243, Barber suddenly gives us an F-sharp major seventh chord when the word “home” is sung, bringing out the importance of this place. Measures 245 - 253 (*molto espressivo*) show us the childlike adamancy, a passionate feeling of lack of identity or a knowledge of self in the world. The melody plays out a repetition of the text “and those receive me who treat me as one familiar and well beloved in that home” as the child is lulled to sleep.

We then see the final return of the A section in measures 256-258. Taylor Benedict in his document which addresses nostalgia and cultural memory in *Knoxville*, sums up the end of the piece beautifully. He states,
This final return rounds off the musical setting neatly, and following the subsequent reintroduction of the rondo theme’s characteristic lullaby accompaniment the music could easily have led straight into the final chord. This would have emphasized the bittersweet, unresolved potential of this close, the accompaniment recurs, but the subject is supports is finally gone, and can no longer return. Barber instead give us yet another statement of the primary theme, this time the oboe, preceding the A major added-note tonic. . . Instead, the theme returns yet again – will always return, complete. The effect of Barber’s decision is consoling, reassuring, there is a healing quality to these final measure that is less bitter than religious in its faith.\(^{106}\)

The final measures of the piece drift upward into the sleeping stars and sweet dreams.

\(^{106}\) Taylor, “Nostalgia and Cultural Memory in Barber’s *Knoxville: Summer of 1915.*” 218.
Chapter 4: *Andromache’s Farewell*

4.1 Notes from Premiere Performer

On March 23 and 25, 2009 I had opportunities to meet with Ms. Martina Arroyo, the famous African American spinto soprano who premiered *Andromache’s Farewell*, to discuss her experiences working with Samuel Barber and her insights on the performance aspects of this unique piece. Ms. Arroyo had been hand picked by Thomas Schippers, the conductor of the premiere, and was prepared for the debut performance of this work under Barber’s careful tutelage. Ms. Arroyo reiterated the points already mentioned about their work from the writings of Barbara Heyman and in *Great Singers on Great Singing* by Jerome Hines. She was much more interested in coaching me on the performance requirements for the long three minute (fifty-five measure) introduction. In this extended orchestral introduction, the singer must be able to subtly show the actions happening around her in the burning city and the shifts of emotion that would follow being told her young son must be thrown off a cliff to his death. The following analysis of the piece will include the motivic elements I found to help paint that scene.

4.2 Source Material

Later in his career, Barber had a growing interest in Greek and Roman subjects. Barber’s affinity for ancient texts is well documented. For example, in 1945, he began to work with Martha Graham on a ballet using a Euripides play, *Medea*, as its subject.
*Andromache’s Farewell*, commissioned for the Lincoln Center opening in 1962 was based on another Euripides play, *The Trojan Women*. Both in its story and its dramatic impact, *Andromache* may be seen to lead to Barber’s *Antony and Cleopatra*, commissioned for the opening of the new Metropolitan Opera House, in 1966.

Contemporary American poet John Patrick Creagh (b. 1930) was chosen by Barber to adapt *Andromache’s* “harrowing intensity” and hysterical agitation into a text for the solo piece. 107 The chosen scene from Euripides’ tragic story of the Greeks’ conquest of Troy and their subsequent murder of Astyanax, the son of Hector, the slain hero and Andromache’s assignment into slavery. Hector’s mother’s soliloquy as she bids her child goodbye provides the text, and Samuel Barber’s keen sense of her agony is reflected in his music. 108 This work is rarely performed and thus is an unfamiliar part of Barber’s oeuvre. 109 The story provided an “adult” emotional complexity missing from the works that made him famous. 110

Within the play, all grown men have been killed and their women and children enslaved by the Greeks. Troy has been captured. Andromache has entered with her son Astyanax in a wagon with spoils of war. The boy is clinging to his mother’s beating breast. Distraught and mourning the loss of her husband who was also her defender, Andromache longs for death and seethes with hatred for the Gods. This aristocrat, Andromache, will become a slave and servant to Achilles, the man who killed her husband, Hector.

108 Simmons., 80.
109 Follet, 11.
110 Ibid., 295.
In the play Andromache says, “I was a virgin when you took me from the house of my father; I gave you all my maiden love, my first, and now you are dead, and I must cross the sea, to serve, prisoner of war, the slave’s yoke on my neck, in Greece.”\(^{111}\)

The Greek Talthybius approaches her saying:

“O wife of Hector, once the bravest man in Troy, do not hate me. This is the will of the Canaans and the kings. I wish I did not have to give this message... The council has decreed for your son—how can I say this?... They will kill your son. It is monstrous. Now you know the truth. He said a hero’s son could not be allowed to live. He must be hurled from the battlements of Troy. Do not fight it. Take your grief as you were born to take it, give up the struggle where your strength is feebleness with no force anywhere to help.”\(^{112}\)

This is what Andromache hears directly before the monologue set by Barber in which her emotions range from rage at Helen and the Greeks to regret at having met Hector, and begun the journey which has put her in this situation; anger that brave Hector and his soldiers cannot protect her son from his fate; finally heart-rending tenderness, resignation and torment that she must stand proudly, showing no reaction, and watch her innocent son’s death.

The play tells us that Talthybius helps Hecuba, mother of Hector, bury Astyanax with Hector’s shield as tombstone. Hecuba reflects the strength of the bond between mother and son when she says:


\(^{112}\) Ibid., 167.
“You might have fallen fighting for your city, grown to man’s age, and married, and with the king’s power like a god’s, and died happy, if there is any happiness there. But no. You grew to where you could see and learn, my child, yet your mind was not old enough to win advantage of fortune. How wickedly, poor boy, your father’s walls, Apollo’s handiwork, have crushed your pitiful head tended and trimmed to ringlets by your mother’s hand.”

In the liner notes to the collection of Barber’s extended vocal works: *Dover Beach, Knoxville: Summer of 1915, Hermit Songs, and Andromache’s Farewell*, Robert Cushman explains, “What we have here is the modern equivalent of a classical *scena*, although the music is more brusque and more angular than usual with Barber (except in the suite from the ballet *Medea*—1946 – another Greek heroine.) Three contrasting sections follow each other without a pause. In the first, Andromache tells her child he is about to die. In the second, she evokes Hector, the valiant warrior who had been her husband who “cannot come from the grave.” In the third, she lovingly yet fiercely embraces her son. These sections are spelled out with the division of text in Table 3 below. The orchestra frames the three sections with an introduction and a majestic conclusion.\(^{114}\)

The piece is scored for a large orchestra comprised of the following instrumentation\(^ {115}\):

\(^{113}\) Ibid., 185.
\(^{114}\) Cushman, Masterworks Portrait: Samuel Barber, CD 0 7464-46727-2, 6.
\(^{115}\) Follet, 66.
Diane Weber Follet comments that the heavy orchestration mandates a powerful voice, and the emotional intensity of the piece requires the acting ability of an opera singer. Barbara Heyman used the words of Martina Arroyo to describe the vocal demands of *Andromache’s Farewell*, “The role requires the experience of an opera singer, one who can establish the dramatic character within the eleven-minute scene and handle sudden shifts of mood and dynamics with technical ease.”

Barbara Heyman, biographer of Barber, states it presents a “masterful fusion of lyricism, inventive counterpoint, and a full palette of orchestral color, all directed toward a precise rendering of the emotional and psychological values of the poetry. Solo woodwind passages project poignancy; choirs of brass instruments associate with anger, destruction, and acrimony.” She also states, “While it is true the brisk flourish of the opening measures does bring to mind Strauss, the chromatic harmonies, angular themes, densely constructed chords, strident military brass passages, and even certain exoticism

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116 Heyman, 422.
of *Andromache’s Farewell* seem more to presage the direction Barber would take in his next major work, *Antony and Cleopatra*.”  

Heyman states that the “vocal music . . . is in three sections – *moderato with dignity, andante un poco mosso*, and *tempo primo* – with two impassioned allegro interjections.” In accordance with this division, Follet has created the following illustration:

**Part 1 -**

So you must die, my son, my best-beloved, my own, by savage hands and leave your Mother comfortless. Hector’s valiant spirit, shield o thousands, Is death to his own son.

My wedding day! It was my sorrow that day I came to Hector’s house to bear my son. He was to be Lord of all Asia and not for Greeks to slaughter.

My boy, you are weeping. Do you know then what awaits you? Why do you hold me so? Clutch at my dress? (A small bird seeking shelter under my wing.) Hector cannot come back with his brave spear to save you. He cannot come from the grave nor any of his princes.

**Interjection –**

Instead, from the height, flung down! Oh pitiless! Head foremost! Falling! Falling! . . . Thus will your life end.

**Part 2 –**

Oh dearest embrace, sweet breathing of your body, Was it for nothing that I nursed you, that I suffered? Consumed by heart with cares, all for nothing?

Now, and never again, kiss your Mother, Come close, embrace me, who gave you life, Put your arms around me, your mouth to min . . . And then no more.

You Greeks, contrivers of such savagery, Why must you kill this guiltless child?

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117 Heyman, 422.
Interjection –

Helen! You they call daughter of God, I say you are the spawn of many fathers: malevolence, murder, hate, destruction – all the evils that afflict the earth. God curse you, Helen, for those

Part 3 A –

Eyes that brought hideous carnage to the fair fields of Troy.

Take him then, take him away, break his body on the rocks; Cast him down, eat his flesh if that is your desire . . . Now the Gods have destroyed us utterly. And I can no longer conceal my child from death.

Part 3 B –

Hide my head in shame; Cast me in the ship, as to that marriage bed across the grave of my own son I come!

Table 4 Division of Andromache’s Farewell Text

Thomas Schippers, always a champion of Barber’s music, was the conductor who was engaged to conduct the premiere of Andromache. Schippers had worked with Gian Carlo Menotti several times before this collaboration on Menotti’s compositions both as a rehearsal pianist and conductor. The two men had a good working relationship and enjoyed a mutual respect for each other’s capabilities. Menotti recalled in the liner notes of the compact disc Thomas Schippers Conducts Barber, “Schippers and Barber both died before reappraisal. Schippers was a champion of Barber’s work from the beginning – his loyalty never wavered.”

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118 Follet, 60.
119 Menotti, Thomas Schippers Conducts Barber, CD 400029358319, 12. Menotti also added that though Schippers and Barber were "professionally associated with each other and shared intimate social circle, the two were never close –they did not get along.”
Martina Arroyo spent many hours working with Samuel Barber on the music, and, more importantly to Ms. Arroyo, on the depths of the emotions the character would experience. Ms. Arroyo, when we spoke about her experiences preparing for the premier, mentioned that she believes that the composer was attracted in particular to the warm, dark tones of her voice and her ability to spin a pianissimo tone, much as he had appreciated those qualities in the voice of Leontyne Price.

Heyman documents that at the time of Ms. Arroyo’s audition, only the orchestral introduction and the middle section remained to be set. These dramatic passages were, according to Arroyo, composed after Barber had heard her sing and knew the particular strengths of her voice. This is the section which follows (Figure 13). It shows the technically demanding requirements and flexibility required of the soprano added to the emotional demands of the text.120

Figure 15 Section of Andromache’s Farewell written for Martina Arroyo (mm. 121-123) vocal line with piano reduction

120 Heyman, 425.
That Barber conceived of the vocal work as a dramatic scene is indicated also by his attention to the visual impression Arroyo would convey to the audience. He selected her gown and consulted on her final appearance wanting Andromache to have a certain “look” according to Ms. Arroyo.\textsuperscript{121} The premiere took place with Thomas Schippers

\textsuperscript{121} During our brief interview March 2009, Ms. Arroyo contradicted Ms. Heyman saying she had selected the gown and Barber suggested a wrap worn partially as a hood for a more regal, time-period appropriate appearance for a Greek Tragedy.
conducting the New York Philharmonic at the new Philharmonic Hall on 4-7 April 1963 and received a sustained ovation.

4.3 Critical Reception

Hennessee’s Bio-Bibliography lists two of the reviews generated by the premiere:

Henry W. Levinger – Musical America 83:22 (June 1963)\textsuperscript{122}

Samuel Barber’s \textit{Andromache’s Farewell}, an example of American music at its best, with soprano Martina Arroyo the superb soloist…It is a deeply moving and highly dramatic score, a logical addition to Barber’s \textit{oeuvre} as we know and cherish it. Composer, conductor [Thomas Schippers] and soloist received an ovation.

Peter Davis - Music Journal 21:68 (May 1963)\textsuperscript{123}

It is perhaps ungracious to comment on Barber’s extreme eclecticism at this stage of his career, yet in the orchestral introduction the ghosts of half a dozen early 20\textsuperscript{th} century composers marched past, finding themselves rather ill at ease in each other’s company. When the voice enters, however, Barber finds his own with a Grand Tune that dominates the material in the opening and closing section of the work. The composer’s skill and technique coupled with pleasing melodic lines, extremely grateful for the voice, carry through to the end of the work. As in all of Barber’s pieces the construction is immaculate and the scoring imaginative. Although it is refreshing to find a contemporary composer unashamed of the large romantic gesture, it is unfortunate that one is left with the fixed impression of a pleasant musical experience rather than the revelation of a great tragic character in true dramatic depth. Schippers conducted the work with proper bravura and sweep, while Arroyo sang the solo part with impeccable musicianship and style.

\textsuperscript{122} Hennessee, 217.
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid.
Chapter 5: *Andromache’s Farewell* Analysis

5.1 Performance Guided Structural Analysis of Andromache

In this section, I will analyze the piece measure by measure exploring to incorporate my own aural perceptions of the events and emotions that propel Andromache’s words. This was one of the first tasks Ms. Arroyo asked me to complete during our work together. I spent many hours listening to *Andromache’s Farewell* envisioning the scenery, action and raw emotions felt as Barber might have intended them during the composition process. I will also include motives I have identified as well as some documented by Diane Weber Follet in her thesis.

The twelve-tone row is a compositional technique seldom used by Barber. Three known pieces use this device, his *Sonata for Piano* (Op. 26), the *Nocturne* (Op. 33) and *Andromache’s Farewell* (Op. 39). In none of these pieces, however, is the row employed solely as a basic method of pitch organization, nor are all of its possibilities fully explored. In *Andromache’s Farewell*, the row first appears in the second measure of the piece.\(^{124}\)

The use of key signatures is tantalizing, hinting at tonal areas, but the traditional devices which establish tonality are absent. There is often an implied tonality, but Barber

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\(^{124}\) Follet, 31.
does not provide the expected resolutions, this leading to a very high level of tension which is suitable to the unpleasant emotional struggle of the scene being set.  

While a student at Curtis Institute, Barber studied composition and theory with Rosario Scalero. “He did not teach harmony as such, because he believed harmony is the result of good counterpoint.” Follet asserts that Scalero’s influence is evident in *Andromache’s Farewell*. It is “driven by the melodic material. The harmonies are often the result of linear motion.”

Throughout much of *Andromache’s Farewell*, Barber has evaded conventional tonalities by avoiding the usual devices which would establish a key. “These devices,” says Follet, “include diatonic melodies and functional harmony, the latter characterized by triads, particularly the tonic triad as emphasized by dominant-tonic cadences. What is present instead is tonality by assertion, that is, by repeating a central pitch or otherwise emphasizing it by means of instrumentation, register, rhythmic elongation, or metric accent. . . or contrapuntal motion within or around some central chord.”

The first melody heard in the piece was labeled *Motive X* by Ms. Weber Follet. This motive opens the first two sections of the piece and reappears in the last two. She called it the “death” motive.

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125 Ibid., 81.
126 Ibid., 34.
127 Ibid., 46.
128 Ibid., 22.
Figure 16 Motive X (Andromache Farewell)\textsuperscript{129}

Upon its heels, the listener hears Motive Y which Follet said, along with Motive X, represents the high parapets of a burning Troy.

Figure 17 Motive Y (Andromache’s Farewell)\textsuperscript{130}

Appearing between these two melodies, we hear for the first time in the violas and oboes the twelve-tone row Barber assembled. Programmatically, I hear this sequence as depicting the anxiety and bustle of displaced people around Andromache. Motive I appears in measure three, continuing the business of the scene.

\textsuperscript{129} Ibid., 16.
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., 16.
In measure eight, I have identified the first of my own motives, **Motive DC1** – the sound of Andromache’s heartbeat. This motive continues for twenty measures of the introduction, reappearing again shortly before Andromache sings. This sound, to me, is an indication of her mounting anxiety.

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131 Ibid., 17.
132 Ibid.
Measure ten introduces Follet’s **Motive L**. In my opinion, this severely rhythmic melodic line emphasizes the military control over the area.

The military presence is also felt in measure twenty with the use of muted brass playing another of my own motives, **Motive DC6**. One can hear the troops march past. The motive is taken down an octave in the following measure as their presence passes.

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133 Ibid., 18-19.
In measure twenty-two we hear the other captive women and children who are nearby in this keening “sob” of a motive, which Follet labeled Motive R. In the orchestration an anvil is struck repeatedly. To my ear this represents the sound of metal manacles being formed and placed on the captives.

Measure thirty-four brings our first instance of homophonic, fully diminished chords. The juxtaposition of the busily moving sixteenth-note texture to all orchestral

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134 Ibid., 19.
parts playing these chords momentarily slows the pace of the musical drama. I suggest that this change in texture was seen by Barber as the moment when Andromache is being told what will happen to her son. Four measures later, the death motive is prominently displayed followed immediately by an intensified use of DC1 – the heartbeat.

Andromache enters in measure forty-six singing Motive X, an acknowledgement of the coming death of Astyanax according to Follet. The heartbeat is still present; however it is now played in quarter notes instead of eighth notes. This suggests that her heart beat is beginning to calm as she begins to accept the fate of her son. Motive M appears five measures later – signifying the slain Hector’s strength. Arroyo had labeled her score “Narrative” here according to Barber’s suggestion. The text is sharing vital information with the listener so they can understand what is happening, both within the scene and in Andromache’s mind.

![Motive M](image)

Figure 24 Motive M (Andromache’s Farewell m. 50 - 52)

From these motivic occurrences, it is clear that Andromache is pondering the death of her husband in the measures that follow, as well as the moments with her husband that led up to this one. This reflection manifests itself in Motive S1 and thoughts of her

\[\text{Follet, 19.}\]
wedding. Beneath this motive, Barber has again provided fully diminished chords. Follet asserted that these represent melancholy wedding bells. Conceivably, Andromache regrets having met Hector, now knowing that their union would result in such a tragic fate.

![Motive S1](image)

Figure 25 Motive S1 (Andromache’s Farewell m.59)\textsuperscript{136}

Andromache shows us her first real fury in measures sixty-four through sixty-six. She spits out, “He was to be Lord of all Asia and not for Greeks to slaughter.” Barber instructed Arroyo to use a “free, darker” tone here. After this epithet, Motive S2 appears.

![Motive S2](image)

Figure 26 Motive S2 (Andromache’s Farewell)\textsuperscript{137}

\textsuperscript{136} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{137} Ibid.
For the first time, Andromache speaks directly to her son in measure sixty-nine. **Motive X** plays continually. In measure seventy-two, the heartbeat (DC1) returns for a short time. When she likens Astyanax to a “small bird seeking shelter,” we again hear **Motive M** – a reminder of Hector’s strength.

Another moment of fury erupts immediately in what I have labeled **Motive DC4**, an angular downward spate of notes that repeat in an even more extreme delivery. This is one of the most challenging moments for the soprano, plummeting suddenly down into a low vocal register but still cutting through the orchestra. Andromache feels the powerlessness of her now dead protector.

![Motive DC4](image)

Figure 27 Motive DC4 (Andromache’s Farewell) paraphrase of the vocal line

Again following her anger, **Motive S1** ushers in an “interjection” as our heroine talks about her son’s fate, virtually seeing Astyanax fall before her eyes. Arroyo urges the singer to push forward here, challenging and leading the orchestra. As Andromache talks about her son “falling head foremost,” Barbara Heyman has mentioned “the three-part counterpoint in a downward motion set in different rhythmic units and melodic shapes of five-note clusters using superimposed fourths and fifths for the brasses and a jagged sixteenth-note pattern in the lowest voices. The precipitous fall is portrayed even
more vividly by descending blocks of chords, the rapid tumble accelerated through rhythmic diminution."\textsuperscript{138}

Listeners are now treated to the most hauntingly lovely, heartrending part of the scena. This section is dominated by \textbf{Motive Z}, which is treated with rich, suspenseful counterpoint. This was the section written specifically for Ms. Arroyo. Very rightly, Follet has dubbed this motive lyrical and expressive. I agree with Follet’s observation that the use of \textbf{Motive Z} in the compelling middle section covers a very limited scale and signifies the closeness she is experiencing with her son at this moment. As this passage concludes, she kisses her son, and \textbf{Motive Z} is heard in augmentation as she sings, “and then no more”.\textsuperscript{139} This truly represents Andromache’s farewell, her final kiss and embrace with her beloved son.

\begin{figure}[h]
    \centering
    \includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{motive_z.png}
    \caption{Motive Z (Andromache’s Farewell)\textsuperscript{140}}
\end{figure}

This goodbye elicits a diatribe against Helen of Troy for whom this war was fought. The singer must make a strong transition from her despair to pure rage. Again,

\textsuperscript{138} Heyman, 423.
\textsuperscript{139} Follet, 23.
\textsuperscript{140} Follet, 21.
she must push forward the tempo, never apologizing or lagging behind. The delivery here is biting, a spitting out of insults against Helen and a curse against her eyes. **Motive X** reappears again once this curse is uttered, representing the “hideous carnage to the fair fields of Troy.” Again, Hector’s heroism is recalled with **Motive M** in measure 154, a final tribute.

Resolved now in what she must do, Andromache again uses the **DC4** motive, angrily instructing the soldiers to take away her son. The treatment is yet more angular this time with the severity of her words. As Andromache laments at the destruction of all she knows, her melody is that associated with Hector – **Motive M**.

**Motive DC1** returns again briefly before we hear those fully diminished chords and tritones again. This is her moment of resignation. She can do nothing to protect her son. **Motive S1** is prominent in this admission. The score tells us at this point, “She relinquishes Astyanax.” The death motive winds its way above the heartbeat (**DC1**) as her son is taken up the cliff.

In measure 172, according to her interview with Barbara Heyman, Barber instructed Arroyo that she was now a “tragic princess.”141 She is accepting her fate as a slave wife to Achilles’ son. She defies her captors to “cast” her in the ship across the grave of her own son. The following nine measures are heart-stopping. **Motive X** is playing repeatedly in a wide range for four measures. A series of winding ascending chords show her son being lifted high into the air, a moment of rest represents him being dropped, and six final chord clusters show him hitting the rocks below as the piece ends.

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141 Heyman, 426.
Figure 29 Lifting Astyanax’s body and dropping it (Andromache’s Farewell mm. 186 - 189) piano reduction
5.2 Discussion of Analysis

In her thesis, Follet included the following chart showing how *Andromache’s Farewell* is organized according to the motives she identified.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>DC Motives</th>
<th>Key areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction 1</td>
<td>X, Y</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>tone row</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-7</td>
<td>I, S, Y, row</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-19</td>
<td>L, X, Y, row</td>
<td>DC1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-27</td>
<td>R, L, I</td>
<td>DC1, DC6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-36</td>
<td>L, X, Y, R, I</td>
<td>f#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37-45</td>
<td>L, Y, X</td>
<td>DC1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Part 1 46-49 | X | DC1 | f |
| 50-55 | M, X | DC4 | g phrygian |
| 56-58 | M, X | d phrygian |
| 59-72 | S¹, X | DC1 | d |
| 73-79 | M, X, Y | DC4 | g phrygian |

| Interjection 80-83 | S² | DC1 modified | E pedal |
| 84-94 | S² | tritones |
| 95-99 | S² | DC1 modified | D pedal, tt’s |

| Part 2 100-139 | Z | g# |

| Interjection 140-143 | I | E/F |
| 144-148 | X, I | ? |

| Part 3 - A 149-153 | X, Y | f# |
| 154-159 | M, X, Y | DC4 | g# phrygian |
| 160-163 | M, X | DC1 | d# phrygian |
| 164-167 | S¹ | DC1 | d# |

| Part 3 - B 168-173 | From X | DC1 | ? |
| 174-187 | X | DC4 | f |
| 188-191 | S² | tritones, “c” |

Table 5 Organization Chart of *Andromache’s Farewell* with inclusion of Follet’s motives.\(^{142}\)

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\(^{142}\) Ibid., 54.
She asserted that it would be difficult to ascribe a name to this form, although the frequent returns of Motive X create a “rondo-like structure.” Visually, this is easier to see in the above chart. She also shows how Part 3B can be seen as a coda to create an arch form (symmetrical construction in which thematic orderings…are similar when read forward or backward.)\textsuperscript{143}

\textsuperscript{143} Follet, 60.
Chapter 6: Comparison

6.1 Discussion

Comparison of Knoxville and Andromache reveals some clear similarities, the most obvious being that both pieces are extended, one-movement pieces for soprano and orchestra. In listening to the two, however, one is challenged to hear how they may have been composed by the same individual. In the following several paragraphs, I shall attempt to show what connections exist and some possible reasons for the more compelling differences.

One strong similarity is that both compositions are driven by recurring themes with programmatic value. These themes or motives make it possible to analyze both works as a sort of rondo (see Tables 2 and 5), though other analytical possibilities have been mentioned. Knoxville uses these themes more conservatively, the most notable being the rocking theme (Figure 9). Andromache, especially with its use of twelve-tone rows, uses motives in a much more pronounced fashion (see Figures 16, 17, 21, 23, 24, 27, and 28).

Both works present a rhythmic challenge for the singer due to Barber’s frequent use of complex rhythms. Barber’s songs often employ mixed meters and extremely complex rhythmic passages. Monks and Raisins is one example, as is the song The Secrets of Old. One example within the two soprano works under discussion can be seen in this passage from Andromache (see Figures 6 and 7 for Knoxville).
In both compositions, Barber uses strings to indicate strong or heightened emotions as in Figures 14 and 15. Barber’s heartrending Adagio for Strings is the most well-known composition of his which shows his use of strings to indicate high emotion. Dover Beach, his first extended form vocal work set for baritone and string quartet, is another good example. Additionally, both works use the interval of a minor second or a major ninth to indicate distress (see Figures 23, 27, 28 and 14). These sometimes angular leaps are another trademark of Barber’s compositional style.

Finally, there are long sections written for orchestra only which present a challenge for the singer to bring alive for the audience. In Knoxville, this is the interruption of the cars passing in measures 41-58. In Andromache, this is the lengthy introduction already mentioned in chapter four. This is a characteristic of Barber’s style also seen in The Desire for Hermitage.
There are, however, many more differences between the works than similarities. In terms of orchestration, *Andromache’s Farewell* employs the use of a significant percussion section including an anvil and whip as well as a strong brass section to show military might (see Table 3). The subject matter, again, dictates a more harsh, militaristic presence and very unpleasant emotional content. *Knoxville*, in contrast, uses a limited and more intimate range of instruments, predominantly woodwinds and strings (see Table 1). The childlike thought process present in the work, extremely gentle, even sentimental, dictates a sweeter sound without any of the harshness present in *Andromache*.

The opposition of the emotional content of these works represents one of the most notable differences between the two. *Knoxville* creates a sentimental tone of nostalgia and the poignant emotions of valued moments that can never be recaptured. It is a musical rendering of a “pleasant recollection”. The text is set from a child’s perspective. There is, however, a clear element of an adult’s knowledge of impending loss of family.

*Andromache’s Farewell*, as a listener, is a raw offering—not entirely pleasant to hear on an emotional level. It expresses a range of emotions from tenderness, despair, helplessness, resignation, and frustration, to the most prominent emotion—impotent fury. These more negative emotions in *Andromache* lead to the use of more tritones and chromatic passages (see Figures 15, 23, and 27) to show this discord. In contrast to *Knoxville*’s child character, these are very much adult expressions of emotion. *Andromache* is experiencing a situation the depths of which a child could not imagine. In
accordance with the harshness of these emotions, Barber has created more abrupt shifts between sections and the emotions represented in Andromache.

Knoxville, for the most part, flows smoothly. There are several transitional interludes and only one abrupt change of texture. This takes place when the serenity of the peaceful outdoor evening is interrupted by the still new, harshness of the sounds of streetcars passing on a nearby street.

One might ask what would cause Samuel Barber to use such a different style or, perhaps, why would he be compelled to compose a piece based on such a harsh scene when his earlier inspiration was more benign. I would like to point out two possible reasons for this. First of all, in 1948 when Knoxville was composed, the United States was enjoying a nationalistic, nostalgic phase with a short respite in time between the end of World War II and the beginning of the US involvement in the Korean War. Barber’s own life was peaceful and successful at this time.

By 1962, the United States was contemplating a more intense and controversial involvement in the Vietnam War. The Cuban Missile Crisis was in full swing with a blockade against Cuba. The civil rights movement was beginning to make strides with the enrollment of the first African-American student at the University of Mississippi. Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichman was found guilty of involvement with the Gestapo in the “final solution” of the extermination of Jews. Prayer is no longer allowed in schools. Add to this Barber’s alcoholism, the strains on his romantic relationship with a now very popular Menotti, and his already melancholy demeanor. Samuel Barber’s life was in a
darker place as was the world in which he lived. It is no wonder he chose to express these darker emotions with a much more intense piece of literature.

Though these works are both written for soprano with comparable vocal ranges (c4 to b5), the prevailing tessitura for Knoxville lies between g4 and e5. In Andromache, whose emotions dictate more angular or even severe lines, Barber juxtaposes disparate tessituras with sections which lie in a range from c5 to g5, then fall immediately to e4 through c4 (see Figure 27 DC4). These harsh angular lines seek to express her helpless fury. Again, for the soprano, this can present a challenge, especially when competing with the densely orchestrated texture. These demands require the soprano who sings Andromache’s Farewell to possess a larger and more dramatic instrument than is needed for Knoxville. In all truth, there are not many sopranos who could easily sing both pieces with the same sense of ease or comfort. The use of the lower register makes Andromache accessible and appealing to mezzo-sopranos as well. In fact, mezzo-soprano Jennifer Larmore has performed this work on her most recent recording entitled Royal Mezzo.

Another striking difference is the sort of harmonic treatment Barber used in each of the works. Walter Simmons describes the tonality of Knoxville as a “gentle oscillation between pandiatonic harmonies,” whereas in Andromache Barber experiments successfully with twelve-tone rows. Further, in Knoxville, Barber’s focus seemed to be on the most “speech-like” setting of Agee’s prose poem with rhythms that lend themselves to conversation (see Figure 4). In Andromache, his focus was more on the expression of the raw emotions demanded by the soliloquy rather than concerns of speech patterns. The latter also uses a much stronger programmatic compositional element to
help aurally portray the actions suggested in the play but not said in text--i.e. the
marching of soldiers (Figure 22), the keening cry of enslaved women and babies (Figure
23), the stark sounds of Astyanax's body being lifted up on a high cliff and then finally
tumbling onto the rocks below (Figure 29). *Knoxville* does have a few programmatic
devices as noted in Figures 2 – 5 but they are not as integral to the structure of the
composition.

6.1 Singer/Performer Analysis

As a soprano who has worked on both of these masterpieces, I can personally
attest to the challenges and joys of preparing both of them. *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* is
a lovely, lyrical work to sing. During the months I was working on this piece, the singing
was pure joy. Learning how to navigate some of the rhythmic challenges, however,
required several hours of hard work and coaching. Because of the lyrical nature of the
vocal writing, the actual singing, aside from deciding on phrasing and breath use, was
effortless.

The biggest challenges in performance were threefold. The first was inherent in
articulating the text well enough to be understood without disturbing the legato required
of the line. It is imperative that the audience be able to understand the text. The next real
challenge for me was memorizing the work. With a performance duration of sixteen
minutes, at least thirteen of which involve singing text that does not repeat, it took me a
couple of months of consistent work to fully memorize the text and its flow in the work.
Additionally, some of the words did not make sense, so I spent time trying to find out
Agee’s intended meaning. The other challenge for the performer and singer is that of “staying present” on stage with an awareness of the subtle changes in the child/narrator’s moods. It is all too easy to fall into a pattern of just singing the work without actively remaining engaged in the sentiments that are unfolding for this child.

*Andromache’s Farewell* required a very different set of skills for me. The piece requires much more thick-fold engagement of the vocal cords (i.e. use of a heavier mechanism or more chest mixture in the middle-low range of the soprano voice.) Before singing through the piece, I would warm up extensively, keeping the vocal exercises light and agile in order to keep my folds supple and my breath fully engaged. I had to be careful, however, not to vocalize too high or the lower chest mixture would be more difficult for me to navigate in *Andromache*. Because of its dramatic intensity, *Andromache* required more energy vocally for me than *Knoxville*. There were times when I questioned the suitability of my instrument for this piece, especially the ability to be able to cut through the orchestra in the lower register.

As with *Knoxville*, there were sections that required a great deal of maintenance for me to properly count the complex rhythms, most notably Andromache’s diatribe against Helen. I also had to be careful not to immerse myself too deeply in the intense, negative emotions of the work. The soprano cannot fall into the trap of allowing the tone of the voice to become too harsh as the character expresses her anger.

Finally, the introduction of *Andromache’s Farewell* is a daunting task for the soprano to contemplate in performance. The balance between her regal demeanor and
keeping the audience visually engaged during that three minute introduction is not easy. One must not be too melodramatic nor just stand impassively.

6.2 Conclusion

While the works have their similarities, for an audience, they present such a different experience that each work has its own place in programming. As Follet mentioned in her thesis, *Andromache’s Farewell* is not performed often because it is a difficult work for audiences to hear. Further, this piece requires a larger voice, ranging from full lyric soprano to dramatic soprano or even a dramatic mezzo soprano. *Knoxville* could be performed by heavier or lighter sopranos with its lighter orchestration.

These are two greatly differing expressions of Samuel Barber’s emotions and his compositional style. One is a reflection of calmer times with neo-romantic lyricism. The other presents a harshness more expected of experimental, twentieth-century composers, with the use of twelve-tone rows and a darker subject matter.

Barber has tied both pieces together beautifully with thematic devices that help the performer learn how to analyze the character at hand and what will be required of her in performance. In my opinion both are masterpieces that can be gratifying works for a singer to learn and perform. I would love to see Andromache’s Farewell garner more attention for the strengths, and expressiveness it offers.
Appendix A: *Andromache’s Farewell* (Original Euripides Text)\(^{144}\)

O darling child I loved too well for happiness,
Your enemies will kill you and leave your mother forlorn.
Your own father’s nobility, where others found protection, means your murder now.
The memory of his valor comes ill-timed for you.

O bridal bed,
O marriage rites that brought me home to Hector’s house a bride,
You were unhappy in the end.
I lived never thinking the baby I had was born for butchery by Greeks,
But for lordship over all Asia’s pride of earth.

Poor child, are you crying too?
Do you know what they will do to you?
Your fingers clutch my dress.
What use to nestle like a young bird under the mother’s wing?

Hector cannot come back, not burst from underground to save you,
That spear of glory caught in the quick hand,
Nor Hector’s kin, nor any strength of Phrygian arms.
Yours the sick leap head downward from the height,
The fall where none have pity, and the spirit smashed out in death.

O last and loveliest embrace of all,
O child’s sweet fragrant body.
Vanity in the end.
I nursed for nothing the swaddled baby at this mother’s breast;
In vain the wrack of the labor pains and the long sickness.
Now once again, and never after this, come close to your mother,
Lean against my breast and wind your arms around my neck,
And put your lips against my lips.

Greeks!
Your Greek cleverness is simple barbarity.
Why kill this child, who never did you any harm?
O flowering of the house of Tyndareus!
Not his, not God’s daughter, never that, but child of many fathers I say;

\(^{144}\) Euripides, 169-170.
The daughter of Vindictiveness, of Hate, of Blood, Death;
Of all wickedness that swarms on earth.
I cry it aloud: Zeus never was your father,
But you were born a pestilence to all Greeks and the world beside.
Accursed; who from those lovely and accursed eyes
Brought down to shame and ruin the bright plains of Troy.
Oh, seize him, take him, dash him to heath if it must be done;
Feed on his flesh if it is your will.
These are the gods who damn us to this death,
And I have no strength to save my boy from execution.

Cover this wretched face and throw me into the ship
And that sweet bridal bed I walk to now across the death of my own child.”
Appendix B: *Andromache’s Farewell* (Text Translated by John Patrick Creagh with explanatory paragraph)

Scene: an open space before Troy, which has just been captured by the Greeks. All Trojan men have been killed or have fled and the women and children are held captives. Each Trojan woman has been allotted to a Greek warrior and the ships are now ready to take them into exile. Andromache, widow of Hector, Prince of Troy, has been given as a slave-wife to the son of Achilles. She has just been told that she cannot take her little son with her in the ship. For it has been decreed by the Greeks that a hero’s son must not be allowed to live and that he is to be hurled over the battlements of Troy. She bids him farewell. In the background the city is slowly burning. It is just before dawn.

So you must die, my son.  
my best-beloved, my own.  
by savage hands and leave  
your Mother comfortless.  
Hector’s valiant spirit, shield of thousands,  
Is death to his own son.

My wedding day! it was my sorrow  
that day I came to Hector’s house  
to bear my son. He was to be  
Lord of all Asia and not for Greeks to slaughter.

My boy, you are weeping.  
Do you know then what awaits you?  
Why do you hold me so?  
clutch at my dress? (a small bird seeking shelter under my wing.)  
Hector cannot come back  
with his brave spear to save you.  
He cannot come from the grave  
nor any of his princes.

Instead, from the height, flung down! oh pitiless!  
head foremost! falling! falling! . . . . .  
Thus will your life end.

Oh dearest embrace, sweet breathing of your body,  
Was it for nothing that I nursed you, that I suffered?  
consumed my heart with cares, all for nothing?
Now, and never again, kiss your Mother. 
Come close, embrace me, who gave you life. 
Put your arms around me, your mouth to mine . . .
And then no more.

You Greeks, contrivers of such savagery. 
Why must you kill this guiltless child?

Helen! you they call daughter of God, 
I say you are the spawn of many fathers: 
Malevolence, murder, hate, destruction—
all the evils that afflict the earth. 
God curse you, Helen, for those eyes that brought 
hIDEOUS carnage to the fair fields of Troy.

Take him then, take him away, 
break his body on the rocks; 
Cast him down, eat his flesh if that is your desire . . .
Now the Gods have destroyed us utterly, 
And I can no longer 
conceal my child from death. (She relinquishes Astyanax.)

Hide my head in shame; 
Cast me in the ship, 
as to that marriage bed 
across the grave of my own son I come!
We are talking now of summer evenings in Knoxville Tennessee in the time that I lived there so successfully disguised to myself as a child. It was a little bit mixed sort of block, fairly solidly lower middle class, with one or two juts apiece on either side of that. The houses corresponded: middle-sized gracefully fretted wood houses built in the late nineties and early nineteen hundreds, with small front and side and more specious back years, and trees in the yards, and porches. These were soft-wooded trees, poplars, tulip trees, cottonwoods. There were fences around one or two of the houses, but mainly the yards ran into each other with only now and then a low hedge that wasn’t doing very well. There were few good friends among the grown people, and they were not poor enough for the other sort of intimate acquaintance, but everyone nodded and spoke, and even might talk short times, trivially, and at the two extremes of the general or the particular, and ordinarily next door neighbors talked quite a bit when they happened to run into each other, and never paid calls. The men were mostly small businessmen, one or two very modestly executives, one or two worked with their hands, most of them clerical, and most of them, between thirty and forty-five.

But it is of these evenings, I speak.

Supper was at six and was over by half past. There was still daylight, shining softly and with a tarnish, like the lining of a shell; and the carbon lamps lifted at the corners were on in the light, and the locusts were started, and the fire flies were out, and a few frogs were flopping in the dewy grass, by the time the fathers and the children came out. The children ran out first hell bent and yelling those names by which they were known; then the fathers sank out leisurely in crossed suspenders, their collars removed and their necks looking tall and shy. The mothers stayed back in the kitchen washing and drying, putting things away, recrossing their traceless footsteps like the lifetime journeys of bees, measuring out the dry cocoa for breakfast. When they came out they had taken off their aprons and their skirts were dampened and they sat in rockers on their porches quietly.

It is not of the games children play in the evening that I want to speak now, it is of a contemporaneous atmosphere that has little to do with them: that of the fathers of families, each in his space of lawn, his shirt fishlike pale in the unnatural light and his face nearly anonymous, hosing their lawns. The hoses were attached at spigots that stood out of the brick foundations of the houses. The nozzles were variously wet but usually so there was a long sweet stream of spray, the nozzle wet in the hand, the water trickling the right forearm and the peeled-back cuff, and the water whishing out of a long loose and

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145 Agee., 565-568.
low-curved cone, and so gentle a sound. First an insane noise of violence in the nozzle, then the still irregular sound of adjustment, then the smoothing into steadiness and a pitch as accurately tuned to the size and style of stream as any violin. So many qualities of sound out of one hose: so many choral differences out of those several hoses that were in earshot. Out of any one hose, the almost dead silence of the release, and the short still arch of the separate big drops, silent as a held breath, and the only noise the flattering noise on leaves and the slapped grass at the fall of each big drop. That, and the intense hiss with the intense stream; that, and the same intensity not growing less but growing more quiet and delicate with the turn of the nozzle, up to that extreme tender whisper when the water was just a wide bell of film. Chiefly, though, the hoses were set much alike, in a compromise between distance and tenderness of spray, (and quite surely a sense of art behind this compromise, and a quiet, deep joy, too real to recognize itself), and the sounds therefore were pitched much alike; pointed by the snorting start of a new hose; decorated by some man playful with the nozzle; left empty, like God by the sparrow’s fall, when any single one of them desists: and all, though near alike, of various pitch; and in the unison. These sweet pale streaming in the light lift out their pallors and their voices all together, mothers hugging their children, the hushing unnaturally prolonged, the men gentle and silent and each snail-like withdrawn into the quietude of what he singly is doing, the urination of huge children stood loosely military against an invisible wall, and gently happy and peaceful, tasting the mean goodness of their living like the last of their suppers in their mouths; while the locusts carry on this noise of hoses on their much higher and sharper key. The noise of the locust is dry, and it seems not to be raped or vibrated but urged from him as through a small orifice by a breath that can never give out. Also there is never one locust but an illusion of a least a thousand. The noise of each locust is pitched in some classic locust range out of which none of them varies more than two full tones: and yet you seem to hear each locust discrete from all the rest, and there is a long, slow, pulse in their noise, like the scarcely defined arch of a long and high set bridge. They are all around in every tree, so that the noise seems to come from nowhere and everywhere at once, from the whole shell heaven, shivering in your flesh and teasing your eardrums, the boldest of all the sounds of night. And yet it is habitual to summer nights, and is of the great order of noises, like the noises of the sea and of the blood her precocious grandchild, which you realize you are hearing only when you catch yourself listening. Meantime from low in the dark, just outside the swaying horizons of the hoses, conveying always grass in the damp of dew and its strong green-black smear of smell, the regular yet spaced noises of the crickets, each a sweet cold silver noise threenoted, like the slipping each time of three matched links of a small chain.

But the men by now, one by one, have silenced their hoses and drained and coiled them. Now only two, and now only one, is left, mystery of his mild face like the lifted face of large cattle enquiring of your presence in a pitch dark pool of meadow; and now he too is gone; and it has become that time of evening when people sit on their porches, rocking gently and talking gently and watching the street and the standing up into their sphere of possession of the trees, of birds hung havens, hangars. People go by; things go by. A horse, drawing a buggy, breaking his hollow iron music on the asphalt: a loud
auto: a quiet auto: people in pairs, not in a hurry, scuffling, switching their weight of aestival body, talking casually, the taste hovering over them of vanilla, strawberry, pasteboard and starched milk, the image upon them of lovers and horsemen, squared with clowns in hueless amber. A streetcar raising its iron moan; stopping; belling and starting, stertorous; rousing and raising again its iron increasing moan and swimming its gold windows and straw seats on past and past and past, the bleak spark crackling and cursing above it like a small malignant spirit set to dog its tracks; the iron whine rises on rising speed; still risen, faints; halts; the faint stinging bell; rises again, still fainter; fainting, lifting, lifts, faints forgone; forgotten. Now Is the night one blue dew. 

Now is the night one blue dew, my father has drained, he has coiled the hose. Low on the length of lawns, a frailing of fire who breathes.

Content, silver, like peeps of light, each cricket makes his comment over and over in the drowned grass.

A cold toad thumpily flounders. Within the edges of damp shadows of side yards are hovering children nearly sick with joy of fear, who watch the unguarding of a telephone pole. Around white carbon corner lamps bugs of all sizes are lifted elliptic, solar systems. Big hardshells bruise themselves, assailant: he is fallen on his back, legs squiggling.

Parents on porches: rock and rock. From damp strings morning glories: hang their ancient faces.

The dry and exalted noise of the locusts from all the air at once enchants my eardrums. On the rough wet grass of the back yard my father and mother have spread quilts. We all lie there, my mother, my father, my uncle, my aunt and I too am lying there. First we were sitting up, then one of us lay down, and then we all lay down, on our stomachs, on our sides, or on our backs, and they have kept on talking. They are not talking much, and the talk is quiet, of nothing in particular, of nothing at all in particular, of nothing at all. The starts are wide and alive, they seem each like a smile of great sweetness, and they seem very near. All my people are larger bodies than mine, quiet, with voices gentle and meaningless like the voices of sleeping birds. One is an artist, he is living at home. One is a musician, she is living at home. One is my mother who is good to me. One is my father who is good to me. By some chance, here they are, all on this earth; and who shall ever tell the sorrow of being on this earth, lying, on quilts, on the grass, in a summer evening, among the sounds of the night. May God bless my people, my uncle, my aunt, my mother, my good father, oh, remember them kindly in their times of trouble; and in the hour of their taking away.

After a little I am taken in and put to bed. Sleep, soft smiling, draws me unto her: and those receive me, who quietly treat me, as one familiar and well-beloved in that home: but will not, oh, will not, not now, not ever; but will not ever tell me who I am.
Appendix D: Knoxville: Summer of 1915 (Text Excerpt Set by Barber)

“We are talking now of summer evenings in Knoxville Tennessee in the time that I lived there so successfully disguised to myself as a child.”

“...It has become that time of evening when people sit on their porches, rocking gently and talking gently and watching the street and the standing up into their sphere of possession of the trees, of birds’ hung havens, hangars. People go by; things go by. A horse, drawing a buggy, breaking his hollow iron music on the asphalt: a loud auto, a quiet auto: people in pairs, not in a hurry, scuffling, switching their weight of aestival body, talking casually the taste hanging over them of vanilla, strawberry, pasteboard, and starched milk, the image upon them of lovers and horsemen, squared with clowns in clueless amber.

“...A street car raising its iron moan; stopping; belling and starting, stertorous; rousing and raising again its iron increasing moan, and swimming its gold windows and straw seats on past and past and past, the bleak spark crackling an cursing above it like a small malignant spirit set to dog its tracks; the iron whine rises on rising speed; still risen, faints; halts; the faint stinging bell; rises again, still fainter; fainting, lifting, lifts, faints foregone: forgotten. Now it the night one blue dew.

“Now is the night on blue dew, my father has drained, he has coiled the hose.

“Low on the length of lawns, a frailing of fire who breathes...

“Parents on porches: rock and rock. From damp strings morning glories: hang their ancient faces. The dry and exalted noise of the locusts from all the air at once enchants my eardrums.

“On the rough wet grass of the backyard my father and mother have spread quilts. We all like there, my mother, my father, my uncle, my aunt, and I too am lying there. They are not talking much, and the talk is quiet, of nothing in particular, of nothing at all in particular, of nothing at all. The starts are wide and alive, they seem each like a smile of great wetness, and they seem very near. All my people are larger bodies than mine, with voices gentle and meaningless like the voice of sleeping birds. One is an artist, he is living at home. One is a musician, she is living at home. One is my mother who is good to me. One is my father who is good to me. By some chance, here they are, all on this earth; and who shall ever tell the sorrow of being on this earth, lying on quilts, on the grass, in a summer evening, among the sounds of the night. May God bless my people, my uncle, my aunt, my mother, my good father, oh, remember them kindly in their time of trouble; and in the hour of their taking away.
“After a little I am taken in and put to bed. Sleep, soft smiling, draws me unto her: and those receive me, who quietly treat me, as one familiar and well beloved in that home; but will not, oh will not, not now, not ever; but will not ever tell me who I am.”
Appendix E: Discography


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”Scena,” *The Oxford Companion to Music.*


