

Stylistic synthesis in the twentieth century: A modern compositional approach in the music of
Samuel Barber

by

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Abstract

Samuel Barber was a prominent figure in American twentieth-century concert music, recognized for composing some of the period's most performed chamber, orchestral, and vocal works. As a result of his popularity, Barber benefited from a continual demand for commissions, performances, and recordings of his works, a luxury that quite few of his contemporaries enjoyed. Even so, criticisms of Barber's compositional approach were not uncommon, and his music was at times regarded as overly conservative and out of touch with modern developments in compositional technique. Possibly as an outcome of this, only limited scholarly research on Barber's music and compositional style has been published. In recent decades, a renewed interest in Barber's work has begun to contribute to a growing body of research on his technique, yet more work is to be done to contextualize his position in the framework of twentieth century concert music.

The purpose of this report is to discuss concise examples in Barber's oeuvre where the lyrical qualities of his music intersect with modern practice, as a means of better understanding his approach to solving twentieth century compositional problems. In a period where experimentation was highly propagated, Barber managed to strike a balance between individual expression and technical development, contributing works of intellectual interest to the repertoire that maintain a strong emotional pull. In the music analyzed in this report, particularly, Barber demonstrates an exceptional ability to synthesize the developments of the period with a well-defined individual voice. The young composer can benefit from Barber's example by always striving to merge learned technique with individual style.

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Introduction: A Synthesis of Style

It is well known that concert music in the early twentieth century was marked by a period of greater emphasis on musical experimentalism. Compositional developments of the period generally included explorations into the serialization of musical elements, efforts to objectify the role of the composer in the compositional process, and a search for a new musical esthetic through a fresh approach to the organization of sound. A common new perspective that composers of the period held was centered on the very general principle of structure, in the abstract sense, and the morphology of structure therein. In other words, working potential could be established by virtue of certain structural characteristics, resulting in unique sound world in which the composition is one of many plausible outcomes.¹ These types of practices were celebrated by proponents of art music in Europe and the United States during the period as innovative and modern, and for breaking away from the long-established Germanic musical tradition of the nineteenth century.² On the other hand, the complex sonorities resultant from such compositional procedures were not accessible to all concert audiences, and public preference did not necessarily reflect that of the proponents of these more complex styles.

Recent investigations into the musical developments of the twentieth century challenge this prioritization of modernism, as does musicologist Alison Sall, who confronts the binary opposition between “high art” and “mass culture” in music. She describes this opposition in terms of “innovation versus tradition, difficulty versus accessibility, reason versus emotion,” and seeks to establish a broader “middlebrow” framework from which to understand the critical

¹ Boulez, P. *Stocktakings from an Apprenticeship*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991, 141-143.

² Sall, A. “Who’s Afraid of the American Middlebrow? Samuel Barber, Modernist Discourse, and the Great Divide,” ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2021, 2.

reception of modern music.³ Peter Franklin, in his 1985 book *The Idea of Music: Schoenberg and Others*, describes the casting of twentieth-century modernists into an opposing role against traditionalists as a “mythic picture,” alluding to an oversimplification of the reality of the cultural and musical environment of the era.⁴ Only in retrospect have the occurrences of the twentieth century acquired a new sense of clarity and the importance of its events come under more serious contemplation.

It is certainly true, consequently, that our generation has inherited a musical landscape derived from a synthesis of styles, techniques, and traditions, which we must now contextualize in order to progress. Samuel Barber, one of America’s most prominent twentieth-century composers, appears to embody the very idea of stylistic synthesis, his body of work a living representation of the “middlebrow” that Sall describes. Barber, dismissed as a traditionalist by contemporaries and modernists of the era, remained one of the most performed composers during his lifetime and one of few American composers of the period who survived exclusively from commissioned work.⁵ It is of great interest, then, to analyze how Barber’s characteristic style emerged through the unification of his commitment to traditional compositional techniques with the experimentalist attitude of the period in which he lived.

The scope of this report is to discuss concise examples in Barber’s oeuvre where contemporary technique and Romantic lyricism intersect, as a means of establishing additional framework around the musical sentiment of the twentieth century. This is achieved through the analysis of two short pieces for solo piano, *Nocturne, Op. 33*, and *Ballade, Op. 46*, which are

³ Sall, “Who’s Afraid of the American Middlebrow?” 4-5.

⁴ Franklin, P. *The Idea of Music: Schoenberg and Others*. London, The MacMillan Press, 1985, xiii.

⁵ Heyman, B. *Samuel Barber: The Composer and His Music*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

representative of Barber's mature compositional style. In part, this analysis will be founded in the early analytical work of Wathen, who, in his 1960 dissertation *Dissonance Treatment in the Instrumental Music of Samuel Barber*, describes Barber's unconventional extensions of dissonance treatment as an offshoot of his conventional compositional standards.⁶ As both *Nocturne* and *Ballade* postdate Wathen's research, they do not factor into his dissertation, and are therefore good candidates for further study. In order to acquire a thorough understanding of these works, however, additional analytical methods will be required, particularly in *Nocturne*, where Barber's reliance on the twelve-tone row factors heavily into the conception of the music.

The musical discoveries of the twentieth century, or any other stylistic period, are necessarily the outcome of a musical inheritance from preceding generations. Discussing such questions as form, style, and technique in the work of a composer naturally implies a need to establish a conceptual framework from which to understand the individual's proposed solutions to compositional problems. According to Franklin, twentieth-century music was dependent largely upon the late nineteenth century's creation of "a music that functioned as an expressive image of the human mind in its most modern aspect."⁷ Furthermore, Franklin states "the outcome of our consideration of composers' ideas, alongside the art that these ideas conditioned, might well be a renewed respect for both progressive and conservative branches of serious modern music."⁸

As the passing of time provides new perspectives on the twentieth century's monumental body of musical work, it is important to consider our own conceptions of musical thought and

⁶ Wathen, L. "Dissonance Treatment in the Instrumental Music of Samuel Barber," ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 1960, ii.

⁷ Franklin, *The Idea of Music*, xv.

⁸ Franklin, *The Idea of Music*, xv.

how those are inevitably shaped by the current musical climate as well as by that of the previous generation. Now, in a period that appears to be under the pull of compositional conservatism, let us not disregard the efforts and discoveries laid before us. Instead, we must proceed deliberately to edify our esthetic consciousness, unifying the musical sensibility and knowledge of an entire era with our own individual voice. In the backwash of ideological divisions, we are left in search of a plausible synthesis.

Biographical Notes on Samuel Barber

Samuel Osmond Barber II was born on March 9th, 1910, in Westchester, Pennsylvania. His hometown, near Philadelphia, reflected the socially conservative values of its population, which was primarily Quaker.⁹ He was raised in a prominent family in the community, and his father, a physician, member of the West Chester School Board, and president of the board of trustees of the First Presbyterian Church of West Chester, was said to be a reserved individual who held high expectations for his son.¹⁰ Barber was, however, also born into a family of notable musical talent. His aunt, Louise Homer, a famous opera contralto, and his uncle, Sidney Homer, an accomplished composer, had great influence over the young Samuel, who was inspired to create and perform original works of music from a young age.¹¹

It was at the age of nine that Barber declared his intentions to become a composer through a letter to his mother, stating:

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. 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 II¹²

⁹ Kokkinopoulou, D. "The Impact of World War II on the Artistic Output of Germany, the Soviet Union, and the United States: A Study of Piano Works by Hans Pfitzner, Sergei Prokofiev, and Samuel Barber." ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2017, 18.

¹⁰ Heyman, B. "Samuel Barber: A Documentary Study of His Works. (Volumes I and II)." ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 1989, 10.

¹¹ Grove Music Online. "Barber, Samuel." Accessed July 8, 2022.

¹² Heyman, Samuel Barber: The Composer and His Music, 1992, 7.

By the age of fourteen, he had played as the church organist in the Westminster Church in West Chester, had composed music for piano and organ, a suite for violin, a cantata, a number of songs, and his first opera, and was accepted into the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia on an endowment from Mary Curtis Bok, the founder of the school.¹³ Throughout the following years, Barber would prove to be an exceptional student, excelling in composition, conducting, voice, and piano.¹⁴

Under the guidance of Rosario Scalero, professor of composition at the Curtis Institute, and the influence of his uncle Sidney Homer, Barber developed a conservative taste for music that was to shape his musical output for the rest of his career. In his early years at the Curtis Institute, Barber showed great interest in the music of Brahms, likely instilled in him by his professor; Scalero himself had known Brahms, and studied under Eusebius Mandyczewski, a close associate of Brahms.¹⁵ The formation of Barber's personal taste in music was further guided through the development of a close friendship with Gian Carlo Menotti, a classmate of Barber's at the Curtis Institute who would become a lifelong figure in Barber's life, and an advocate of more conservative styles of music.¹⁶ During these formative years at the Curtis Institute, Barber and Menotti took an openly antimodernist stance toward the experimental attitude of the era. Barber looked, rather, to nineteenth century, early European modernists such as Debussy, Ravel, Strauss, Scriabin, and Sibelius, for inspiration in his work.¹⁷ Thus was born

¹³ Kokkinopoulou, "The Impact of World War II on the Artistic Output," 2017, 19-20.

¹⁴ Baker, T. "Barber, Samuel." Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians. 7th edition, revised by Nicolas Slonimsky, New York: Schirmer Books, 1984.

¹⁵ Pollack, H. "Samuel Barber, Jean Sibelius, and the Making of an American Romantic." The Musical Quarterly. Oxford University Press, 2000, 175.

¹⁶ Pollack, "Samuel Barber, American Romantic," 2000, 176.

¹⁷ Heyman, Samuel Barber: The Composer and His Music, 1992.

Barber's own sense of modernism, adapted to fit the necessities of the musical environment of the twentieth century while maintaining a personal musical ideology.

Barber's unique style was appreciated, if not admired, in some concert music circles, earning him global recognition and multiple prestigious awards throughout his career. In his youth, Barber received the Joseph H. Beams Prize, twice, for his unpublished violin sonata and the overture *The School for Scandal*, Op. 5, the Pulitzer traveling scholarship, and the Prix de Rome for his *Cello Sonata*, Op. 6. At the peak of his career, he was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from Harvard and two Pulitzer Prizes, the first for his opera *Vanessa*, Op. 32, and the second for his *Piano Concerto*, Op. 38.¹⁸ In addition to this, his *Adagio for Strings*, Op. 11, became one of the most popular American works of concert music of the twentieth century.¹⁹

Barber's career can predominantly be divided into the early, middle, and late years, in which a clear stylistic evolution in his writing occurs and provides key insight into the nature of Barber's compositional processes.²⁰ In his early years (1910-1941), Barber's compositions were characterized by his deep interest in Romanticism, yet elements of compositional innovation were still to be found. For example, in his *Serenade for Strings*, Op. 1, Barber makes use of triadic harmony in new ways largely unseen in the nineteenth century, as well as demonstrating an affinity for unusual form and phrasing.²¹ These early innovations foreshadowed some of the more adventurous compositional practices that he would later employ.

During the middle years of his career (1942-1952), Barber embarked on a period of greater musical experimentation, incorporating the use of twelve-tone rows, enhanced

¹⁸ Kokkinopoulou, "The Impact of World War II on the Artistic Output," 2017, 22-31.

¹⁹ Heyman, Samuel Barber: The Composer and His Music, 1992.

²⁰ Han, J. "Stylistic Transformation of Samuel Barber's Piano Works." ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2021, 2.

²¹ Pollack, "Samuel Barber, American Romantic," 2000, 177.

chromaticism, and rhythmic fluidity through successive meter changes into his work. In his *Capricorn Concerto, Op. 21*, considered one of his most modern compositions, Barber contrasts an extended use of modern technique with added emphasis on Baroque style elements.²² It is at this point that Barber seems to reach full maturity in his work, demonstrating an ability to masterfully intertwine elements of the modern idiom into his highly refined, Romantic style. As his contemporaries began to take notice of these developments in his work, the reactions were conflicting. Some appreciated his “ability to balance Romantic sensibilities with more experimental techniques,” while others considered these efforts to be “fraudulent and insufficiently modern.”²³ Nonetheless, it is this very ability that allowed Barber to find a compositional middle ground during a period of artistic polarization.

In the later years of his career (1952-1981), Barber reaffirmed the Romantic identity in his music, yet continued to incorporate elements of the modern idiom including post-tonal progressions and chromatic melody.²⁴ However, due to the failure of his second opera *Antony and Cleopatra, Op. 40*, commissioned for the opening of the Lincoln Center and the new Metropolitan Opera House in 1966, Barber’s productivity was greatly affected, and he struggled with alcoholism, depression, and creative blocks for the remainder of his life.²⁵

The importance of Samuel Barber’s work has not been lost on recent generations of composers, musicologists, and critics. Barber’s synthesis of musical style, the outcome of the blending of his personal musical influences and the experimental atmosphere of the twentieth

²² Antonova, O. “Capricorn Concerto by Samuel Barber: Content and Genre-Style Dimensions.” *Scientific Herald of Tchaikovsky National Music Academy of Ukraine*, no. 130, 2021, 8.

²³ Sall, “Who’s Afraid of the American Middlebrow?” 2021, ii.

²⁴ Han, “Stylistic Transformation of Samuel Barber,” 2021, 2.

²⁵ Grove Music Online. “Barber, Samuel.”

century, establishes a middle path during times of polarization. As the melding of styles and cross-cultural elements continues to move to the forefront of modern-day concert music, a greater appreciation of Barber's compositional achievements can be obtained. Barber, always true to his musical desires, sets a precedent for composers interested in the synthesis of musical style and technique. Further analysis of representative works from Barber's repertoire will provide additional insight into the inner workings of his compositional style.

Nocturne, Op. 33

Nocturne, Op. 33, was composed and published in 1959, a year after Barber received his first Pulitzer Prize in Music for his opera *Vanessa*. The short piece for solo piano was premiered that same year by the emerging concert pianist John Browning, who took note of the manuscript during a visit to Barber's home.²⁶ The piece was written in "Homage to John Field," who is credited with the creation of the Nocturne and the subsequent popularity of the genre. This homage, however, appears to be more strongly founded in the interest of historical recognition than out of a desire to imitate Field's particular compositional approach.²⁷

In *Nocturne*, Barber employs a unique compositional language that is more likely influenced by the early works of the Second Viennese School than by Field²⁸, incorporating elements of extended common practice tonal harmony with contemporary serial techniques. In this music, these seemingly opposing methods work together as a means of reenforcing certain elements of the row form as well as the implied tonal centers. Although Barber had begun to make use of serial technique in his work nearly a decade before, it is in *Nocturne* where the strongest reliance on the tone row is evidenced, and nearly the entirety of the motivic and melodic content in the piece is a result of serial technique.

²⁶ Heyman, "Samuel Barber: A Documentary Study," 625.

²⁷ Young, L. "The Solo Piano Music of Samuel Barber." ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 1989, 154.

²⁸ Young, "The Solo Piano Music of Samuel Barber," 54. Though Barber maintained a clear commitment to common practice tonality throughout his career, it must be noted that he was drawn to certain elements of post-tonal art music in Europe and specifically the work of Arnold Schoenberg and Alban Berg. Specifically, Barber's serial work demonstrates alignment with the emotional intensity of Schoenberg and the free adaptation of pitch serialization of Berg.

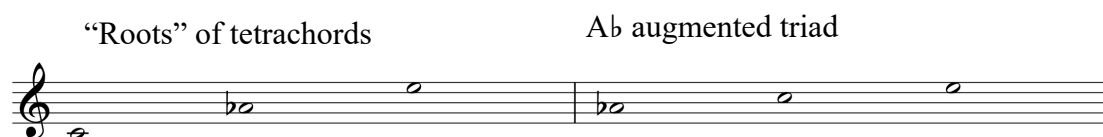
The Row Form

Two twelve-tone rows and their corresponding permutations are utilized by Barber to create embellished, free flowing melodic lines that carry above the piece's extended-tonal foundation. It appears that the serial elements in this work are carefully designed to accentuate certain features of the lyrical, emotionally charged quality of Barber's compositional style, rather than obscure them. These structures will be examined in detail below. The tone rows used in this piece share significant similarities in their formulation, each constructed of an individual tetrachord transposed by four semitones, resulting in twelve distinct tones. In addition, both rows begin on C, and their tetrachords are "rooted" on the same pitches. A reorganization of these pitches results in an A $\flat$ augmented triad, which holds significance in relation to the implied A $\flat$ tonality of this piece, as well as to certain sequential patterns which appear later in the music. Figures 1 and 2 demonstrate the tetrachord design of Rows I and II, and the relationship of the A $\flat$ augmented triad to the row structure.

Figure 1. Tetrachord structure of Tone Rows I and II



Figure 2. Relation of A^b augmented triad to tone row construction



The resulting tone rows demonstrate significant symmetry throughout, and each provide special emphasis on certain intervallic relationships within the row, allowing for a more efficient implementation into an extended-tonal setting. To better understand the internal makeup of each row, Figure 3 demonstrates the results of a process of tone-row imbrication by groups of four.

Figure 3. Row imbrication by four

Row I

Row I is a 12-note tone row. The notes are: C4, D4, E^b4, F4, G4, A^b4, B^b4, C5, D5, E^b5, F5, G5. The row is divided into five groups of four notes each, with the last group being incomplete. The intervallic groupings are: (0136), (0136), (0136), (0136), (0136) for the first five groups, and (0127), (0235), (0127), (0235), (0127) for the last five groups. The row ends with "etc..."

Row II

Row II is a 12-note tone row. The notes are: C4, D4, E^b4, F4, G4, A^b4, B^b4, C5, D5, E^b5, F5, G5. The row is divided into five groups of four notes each, with the last group being incomplete. The intervallic groupings are: (0235), (0369), (0235), (0369), (0235) for the first five groups, and (0136), (0136), (0136), (0136), (0136) for the last five groups. The row ends with "etc..."

The most prevalent cardinal four set class in both Row I and Row II is set class 4-13, of prime form (0136).²⁹ The interval vector of set class 4-13 is 112011, which holds a preference for interval class three. In addition, Rows I and II each contain set class 4-10, of prime form (0235). The interval vector of set class 4-10 is 122010, which again, emphasizes interval class three. Within Row I there is one additional cardinal four set class in its construction not seen in Row II; set class 4-6, of prime form (0127). The interval vector of set class 4-6 is 210021, which, contrary to the other two set classes intrinsic to Row I, emphasizes interval class one and interval class five, respectively. Likewise, Row II contains an additional cardinal four set class not seen in Row I; set class 4-28, of prime form (0369). This set class, with interval vector 004002, emphasizes exclusively interval class three and interval class six.

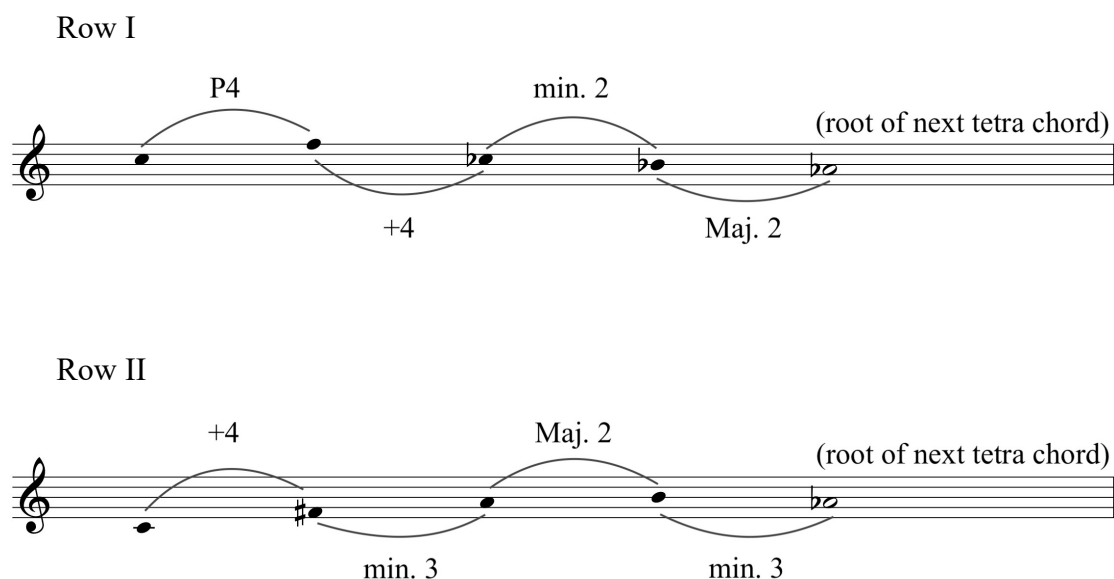
Translated to the language of common practice tonality, the most prevalent intervallic relationship found within both tone rows, and likewise within the piece's melodic, and consequently, harmonic architecture, is the minor third.³⁰ This is followed by an equal dispersion of intervallic relationships of the minor second, the major second, the perfect fourth, and the augmented fourth. Figure 4 demonstrates the intervallic makeup, in terms of interval class, of the tetrachords used in the construction of Rows I and II, respectively. This is of considerable interest in relation to Barber's developing melodic and harmonic language, as other works of the

²⁹ Forte, A. *The Structure of Atonal Music*. Yale University Press, 1973, 179-181. Note: set names, prime forms, and interval vectors included in this text are labeled in accordance with information provided by Allen Forte in Appendix 1 of his seminal work *The Structure of Atonal Music*.

³⁰ Though the underlying harmonic architecture of *Nocturne*, specifically that of the arpeggiated left-hand accompaniment, is not governed by the twelve-tone row forms, the quality of the harmonic and row design used by Barber in this music seems to have been developed in parallel, both placing a shared emphasis on particular intervallic relationships inherent to the music. By this logic, Barber knowingly designed a row form that would complement his individual harmonic language, allowing serial technique and extended triadic harmony to work collectively towards a unified harmonic goal.

period show a preference for precisely these intervallic relationships outside of the serial context.³¹ It must be noted that the design of the tone rows used in *Nocturne*, made exclusively to feature elements of triadic, quartal, and secundo harmony, further demonstrates a desire by Barber to uncover a middle ground where traditional and modern compositional practices could coexist harmoniously.

Figure 4. Intervallic makeup of tetrachords from Rows I and II



Formal and Tonal Structure

The formal design of *Nocturne* portrays a clearly delineated ternary structure, specifically ABA', and includes a brief coda. The piece is broadly established within the key of Ab Major, with the tonal element finding its foundation in the arpeggiated triadic harmony of the left-hand accompaniment. The tonal scheme utilizes common-practice harmonic devices to

³¹ Young, "The Solo Piano Music of Samuel Barber," 137.

facilitate modulations of key center by the mediant periodically throughout the A and A' sections of the music. At times, dominant-tonic relationships are established between accompaniment and row form, extending the relationship between tonality and row and allowing for the occurrence of unusual harmonic modulations in the tonal plane.

Section A of the work, mm. 1-19, introduces the row forms along with the thematic material of which the piece is comprised. As previously mentioned, the piece begins in the key of A $\flat$ major, modulating to C major in m. 6. A modulation to C minor in m. 11 occurs with the first repetition of the primary theme and is followed by a modulation to E $\flat$ major in m. 15. In section A the relationship between theme, tonality, and row is established, where structural developments in all three planes happen in parallel.

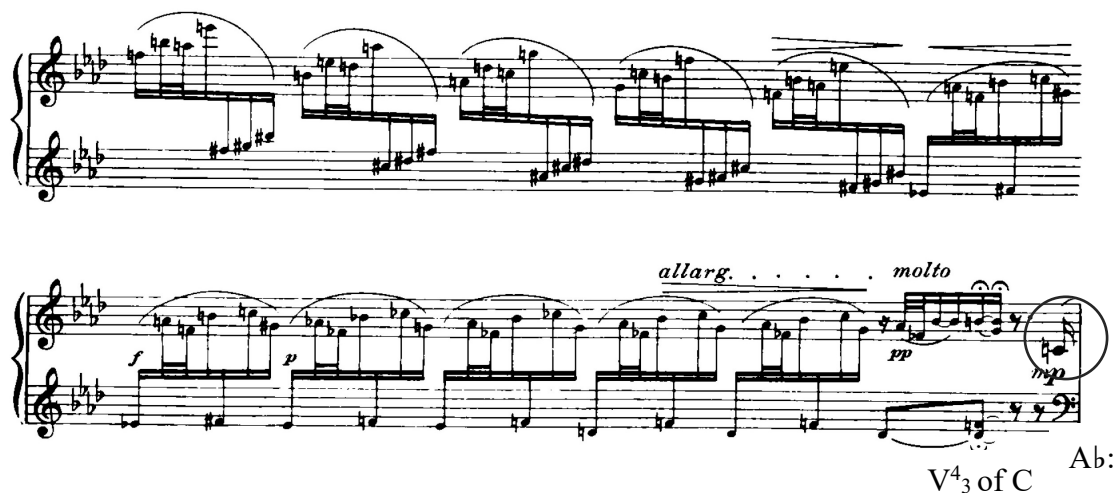
The B section, mm. 20-29, acts as a developmental section and is primarily modulatory, partially obscuring the previously established sense of tonal center. Motivic material from the primary theme is expanded upon, and the texture becomes more fugal in nature. Here, the insistent triadic accompaniment from the opening is cleverly folded together with melodic fragments from the piece's primary theme, creating a more symmetrical distribution of musical material between both hands. The texture of the music becomes opaquer, as separation between the previously described planes is significantly reduced. This further enhances the developmental quality of Section B, creating departure from the opening texture on multiple levels.

Section B culminates in a long, unmeasured cadenza, which moves sequentially downward from its climatic highpoint. This chromatic denouement of sorts ultimately comes to rest in a half cadence on a V 4_3 of C. The pitch C is the first in P0 of Tone Row I and allows the music to return to not only the original theme but, consequently, to the piece's A $\flat$ tonal center, as

seen in Figure 5. This gesture is another demonstration of the interplay between the tonal and serial structures incorporated by Barber in this music.

Figure 5. Interplay of tonality and row form

Nocturne, Op. 33, m. 29 – Cadenza



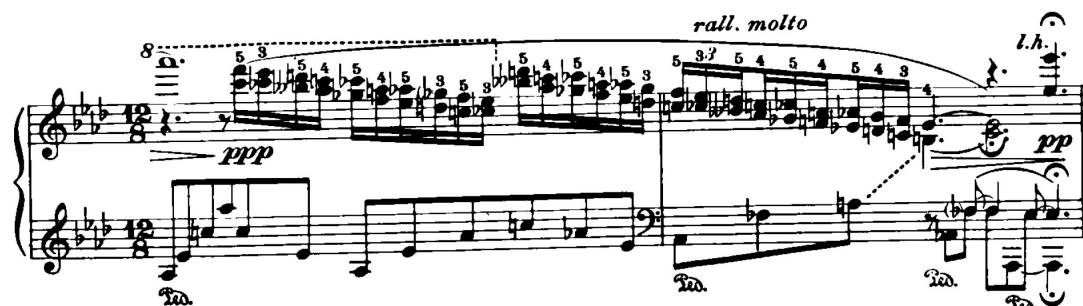
Section A' features similar thematic material to the opening, and the return of the flowing, triadic accompaniment in the left hand thoroughly grounds the listener in familiar territory. In Section A', greater a departure from the established row forms can be noted, although this occurs primarily as a result of additional embellishment notes and the underlying row forms remain intact. There is, however, notable variation in the tonal centers that the music modulates to, and, as a result of this, the row forms that are selected. In m. 35, the first harmonic modulation of Section A' occurs, directing the music to the tonal center of F minor. This motion to the submediant is contrary to the original modulation to the mediant of the opening section. This acts in preparation of the arrival of the A $\flat$ tonic in m. 40, allowing the music to modulate in

a manner that is analogous to the opening section's final modulation from C to Eb, upward by a minor third. The tone rows used in A', then, are selected in correlation to this harmonic variation.

The Coda, although brief, introduces a line of descending sixteenth-note dyads that expands over three octaves, finally coming to rest on an Ab major triad. This series of dyads is constructed of one octatonic collection, offset and super-imposed upon itself. Figure 7 demonstrates an interchanging series of perfect fourth and major third intervals which occur as a result of this structure, and as previously demonstrated, hold significance in the harmonic construction of this piece as a whole.

Figure 6. Intervallic qualities of octatonic structure in Coda

Nocturne, Op. 33, mm. 44-45



Intervallic relationship of dyads as result of super-imposed octatonic scale



Motive, Theme, and Row

Nocturne is based on one overarching theme, which is comprised of several smaller motivic cells. The division of the theme into two primary subthemes, Theme 1.A and Theme 1.B, holds the strongest correlation to the musical phrasing, the modulation of tonal centers, as well as the organization of row forms. Figure 7 shows each of these subthemes in the context of the music, along with the row forms used in their construction. This example demonstrates the relationship between theme, tonal center, and row form, which remains consistent in the A and A' sections.

In both Sections A and A', Theme 1.A is comprised entirely of row forms from Tone Row I and its permutations, while Theme 1.B is comprised entirely of row forms from Tone Row II. Only in Section B is this method abandoned, as motives from Theme 1.A are combined with elements of Row II, and, ultimately, the row form is relinquished entirely, in favor of motivic sequencing. This process is congruent with the conception of Section B as developmental and allows the music to travel furthest from its established norms.

This sequential process begins at m. 25, where an augmented triadic structure, comprised precisely of pitches Ab, C and E, establishes the roots for the upward movement of a four-note motivic cell. The motivic cell used in this gesture originates in Theme 1.A and is represented rhythmically in Theme 1.B. The motive is characterized by a dotted eighth note followed by three sixteenth notes, and a rising melodic contour. Although exact intervallic proportions of this motivic figure are not maintained in Section B, it is the rhythmic quality and contour of this figure that characterizes the relationship. Figure 8 demonstrates the origin of this underlying motivic structure and displays its function, as well as that of the augmented triad, in the context of the forementioned sequential passage.

Nocturne, Op. 33, mm. 1-10

[illegible]

Figure 8. Motivic cell from Theme 1.A in developmental context

m. 5, Theme 1.A



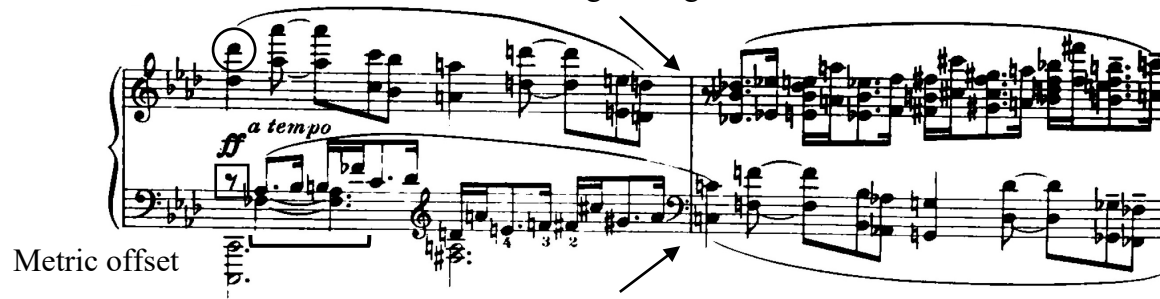
Nocturne, Op. 33

mm. 25-29, sequential passage of Section B

Augmented triadic structures



Exchange of register



Four note groupings



Upon arrival to E, as demonstrated in Figure 8, the rhythmic cell is dropped in favor of a single sustained tone. The entire process is repeated in m. 26 a minor third below, rooted on pitches F, A, and D $\flat$ (enharmonically C $\sharp$), maintaining the augmented triadic structure. There is a delayed arrival to D $\flat$ on the downbeat of m. 27, which creates an elision with the next phrase. This rhythmic motive of a dotted eighth note followed by three sixteenth notes is metrically offset in m. 27 by means of an eight-note rest. This creates rhythmic space, allowing for the introduction of a descending countermelodic line as shown in Figure 8, ultimately resulting in a more densely packed compound rhythm, adding further intensity to the passage. It is worth noting that at this moment, the motivic cell under analysis moves to the lower stave of the system, arriving at its lowest note A $\flat$ ₄, and rises four times by a four-semitone interval before the end of the bar, at which point the motive is truncated. In m. 28, the rising motivic cell and the newly introduced countermelody exchange hands and continue to expand in an outward direction. The augmented underlying structure of the motivic cell is lost, and Barber reverts to transpositions of the major second, the perfect fourth, and the minor third respectively, consistent with the intervals previously chosen for the underlying design of this piece. By m. 29, the dotted eighth note followed by three sixteenth notes pattern is also relinquished in favor of a continuous sixteenth note line. Nonetheless, the four note groupings and the rising contour of the previous motivic cell are maintained.

It is also of interest to note that in this passage, Barber introduces a new tetrachord into the music that is not present in either of the tone rows; set class 4-Z29, of prime form (0137). This is not particularly significant, other than the fact that it is the first departure from the established set classes previously outlined in the music. This, again, is consistent with the developmental nature of this passage, and the inclusion of additional new set classes occurs in

the following measures preceding the arrival of the cadenza in m. 29. Within these two variations of the sequential passage that occurs between mm. 25-28, chromatic saturation is realized, which, although not a result of the row form itself, is in alignment with the musical effect of the work as a whole.

Barber is not strict in his implementation of pitch serialization in *Nocturne*, and instances of repetition, omission, or anticipations of pitches within the row forms are not uncommon. Usually, these adjustments are made either to better fit the melodic line at hand or to create a stronger emphasis around an implied tonal center. Figure 9 shows two examples where the row form is altered to fit the musical narrative. Although the examples feature different row forms, in both cases, the A $\sharp$ of the respective row is substituted for A $\flat$. As a result, these row forms contain only eleven distinct pitch-classes, with the A $\flat$ occurring twice in the phrase. It is also interesting to note that Barber often repeats the same note that starts the row immediately following the last note of the form, creating additional emphasis on certain pitch-classes in the context of the music. Both examples analyzed in Figure 9 subscribe to this method.

The construction of *Nocturne* relies heavily on pitch serialization devices, and a close interdependence between tonal and post-tonal techniques is established. In *Nocturne*, Barber demonstrates one approach to reconciling the philosophical disparity that had swept through concert music circles in the twentieth century. As a result, an interesting sense of freedom within the limitations imposed by serial technique is obtained, and the row form acts as a device for the purpose of melodic invention rather than as rigid structure.

Figure 9. Examples of alterations to the row form in the context of *Nocturne*

Nocturne, Op. 33, mm. 10-12

Repetition of A $\flat$ in row
(replaces A $\natural$)

Row I – P7

f *appassionato* *sempre f*

p

G at beginning and end of row

P ₇	G	C	G $\flat$	F	E $\flat$	A $\flat$	D	D $\flat$	B	E	B $\flat$	A	R ₇
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Nocturne, Op. 33, mm. 13 – 15

Repetition of A $\flat$ in row
(replaces A $\natural$)

Row I – R3

E $\flat$ at beginning and end of row

mf *p*

P ₃	E $\flat$	A $\flat$	D	D $\flat$	B	E	B $\flat$	A	G	C	G $\flat$	F	R ₃
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Ballade, Op. 46

Ballade, Op. 46 is the final addition to Barber's concise repertoire of music for solo piano. It is one of the last works composed during his lifetime, with only two additional compositions following, *Essay for Orchestra No. 3, Op. 47*, and *Canzonetta for Oboe and Strings, Op. 48*. In 1974, the Van Cliburn Foundation asked Barber to compose a short piano piece for its Fifth International Quadrennial Piano Competition, to be held in 1977 in Fort Worth, Texas.³² In a letter from the foundation, it was requested that "A Ballade be written in the beauty and difficulty of the Samuel Barber style," although it is not certain whether the title for the music originated from the foundation or from Barber himself.³³ This short piece, of only eight minutes in duration, proved to be an exceptional challenge for Barber, requiring a period of eight to nine months for its completion.³⁴

The commission came amid what would be a six-year period of musical inactivity in Barber's career when his morale was at its lowest. During this time, he was battling depression and alcoholism, largely in relation to the recent sale of his long-time home "Capricorn" in Mt. Kisco, New York, and an ongoing separation from his partner Gian Carlo Menotti.³⁵ In addition, his career, which had reached its most elevated heights in the 1962-63 season with the premiere of his *Piano Concerto, Op. 38*, and the subsequent reception of his second Pulitzer Prize as well as a Music Critics' Circle Award³⁶, was facing its first serious decline in the eyes of public favor. His second opera, *Antony and Cleopatra, Op. 40*, commissioned for the opening of the new

³² Heyman, "Samuel Barber: A Documentary Study," 769.

³³ Heyman, "Samuel Barber: A Documentary Study," 769.

³⁴ Heyman, "Samuel Barber: A Documentary Study," 770.

³⁵ Heyman, "Samuel Barber: A Documentary Study," 756.

³⁶ Heyman, "Samuel Barber: A Documentary Study," 652.

Metropolitan Opera House in 1966, was a failure of “catastrophic” proportions, where staging and mechanical issues plagued the highly anticipated premier. Critics responded with harsh reviews regarding the music, the libretto, and the production as a whole.³⁷ In addition, there was a progressive decline in the number of Barber orchestral works on programs of American symphony orchestras during the late 1960’s, possibly due to the fact that concert programs began to reflect the public’s interest in “new music” and embraced anti-romantic and anti-expressionist tendencies.³⁸ If this weren’t enough, much of the work composed during the peak of Barber’s career, including *Prayers of Kierkegaard*, Op. 30, the five-song cycle *Despite and Still*, Op. 41, *The Lovers*, Op. 43, and *Three Songs*, Op. 45, among others, remained unrecorded and largely ignored until after his death.³⁹ The man who had benefited from decades of continual rise in popularity and international reputation was facing adversity beyond that which he had previously known.

The title and nature of *Ballade* are comparable to that of Barber’s *Nocturne*, Op. 33, as both pieces are written in nineteenth-century genres brought to the height of their popularity by Chopin.⁴⁰ Historically, the Ballade was in part developed as a musical correspondence to the literary form of the *ballad*, a narrative of legendary or historical events involving violence, the supernatural, and generally a tragic conclusion, told in simple verse through a large number of short strophes.⁴¹ The arrival of a commission for such a piece seems fitting, given the recent chain of troubling events in his personal life. It appears that by means of Barber’s highly

³⁷ Heyman, “Samuel Barber: A Documentary Study,” 665.

³⁸ Heyman, “Samuel Barber: A Documentary Study,” 708.

³⁹ Heyman, “Samuel Barber: A Documentary Study,” 794.

⁴⁰ Sifferman, J. “Samuel Barber’s Works for Solo Piano.” ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 1982, 95.

⁴¹ Kirby, F. E. *A Short History of Keyboard Music*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1966, 224.

developed musical voice, and through the lens of his solemn emotional state, the literary needs of this music could be met. The result is beautiful and unsettling work.

Like *Nocturne*, this piece is not meant to be an imitation of the nineteenth-century genre, but rather is presented as a modern expression of an established form. In this case, *Ballade* seems to find inspiration in the impressionistic work of Debussy or Ravel rather than in the tradition of Chopin or Brahms.⁴² The harmonic and metric ambiguity, chromaticism, and unresolved dissonance that characterize this piece further contribute to its impressionistic quality.⁴³ Experimentations with form further point to an ongoing effort by Barber to reconcile elements of classic design with contemporary values.

Form and Motive

Ballade is written in a flowing 6/8 meter and, though it is not fast (the dotted quarter note holds a pulse of 40 beats per minute), creates a constant sensation of turbulence beneath the waters. The music is based off a single, descending four-note chromatic motive, which influences melodic and harmonic design alike. As the music unfolds, this descending line, originally presented within an interval of three semitones, is expanded internally to occupy a four-semitone interval space, as demonstrated in Figure 10. The presentation of the motive in either of these states, then, begins to take on structural significance in the music itself. Barber establishes a back-and-forth relationship between intervals of three and four semitones in other aspects of the music as well, including the piece's harmonic progression and underlying tonal design. Barber's interest in the intervallic relationship between interval classes 3 and 4 is

⁴² Sifferman, "Samuel Barber's Works for Solo Piano," 95.

⁴³ Young, "The Solo Piano Music of Samuel Barber," 171.

prevalent in much of his work, including *Nocturne*, as demonstrated in the previous chapter's analysis.

Figure 10. Underlying pitch-class relationships of primary motive in *Ballade*



Ballade is constructed of a deeply rooted ternary form (ABA), where three-part structures permeate the music on multiple levels. Broadly, the form consists of an opening A section in C minor, which introduces thematic material while actively shifting through tonal centers, a B section of a developmental quality, and a return to the Section A as a literal repetition. Ternary form is common in much of Barber's repertoire, however, the literal repetition of Section A at the end of the piece is uncharacteristic of his writing and is potentially the result of his declining mental and physical health.⁴⁴ Of greater interest, however, is the manner in which Barber further incorporates ternary structure into the overarching form.

Section A, mm. 1-33, is itself comprised of an internal aba' form and a "coda," as described by Sifferman.⁴⁵ This short coda at the end of the section functions not only as a transition into Section B, but also as the unresolved conclusion of the entire work, given the literal repetition of Section A at the close. The music opens with a tempo marking of "Restless," quite possibly a reflection of Barber's own sensation of "restlessness" during this period in his

⁴⁴ Heyman, "Samuel Barber: A Documentary Study," 774.

⁴⁵ Sifferman, "Samuel Barber's Works for Solo Piano," 101.

life. Resolution is continually negated by forementioned means of ambiguity, modulation, and non-functional harmonic relationships, which seems to parallel many of the unresolved personal and professional issues facing the composer during the period. Whether a not a biographical link exists in the music is beyond the scope of this report, however, this tempo marking is well founded, accurately portraying the musical narrative. Three-part form adds to this narrative, becoming essential to the piece's motivic and harmonic development and providing structure for the music's agitated nature.

Section A subsection a., mm. 1-11, which in the context of this report will be labelled as A-a., is most evidently distinguished by an eighth-note anacrusis in its thematic material and features a large degree of contrast in harmonic density over the course of its measures. The music opens in the key of C minor and establishes the pieces descending four-note chromatic motive twice in the upper voice, before a direct modulation to A minor in m. 3. The motive is transposed down a minor third in parallel with the key center and is stated twice more before rising an octave for a third statement above a more densely packed harmonic accompaniment. Figure 11 demonstrates the piece's primary motive in the context of Section A-a.

In mm. 6-9, the C minor tonality is once again implied and the primary motive returns in its original register, while the harmonic texture thins. The harmonic progression, however, becomes more ambiguous, comprised primarily of non-functional dominant chord structures with a flattened fifth, built over linear root relationships of the third. The previously implied tonal centers of C minor and A minor move further into the background in mm. 8-9 of Section A-a., in favor of harmonic structures derived of linear relationships, synthesized over roots which outline an A $\flat$ diminished seventh chord and an A $\flat$ minor seventh chord respectively, as seen in Figure 12.

Figure 11. Motive in context of Section A-a.

Ballade, Op. 46, mm. 1-5

Primary motive

Motivic transposition

C min: i

A min: i

Textural growth

mp

pp *sostenuto* *mf*

Figure 12. Harmonic development in context of Section A-a.

Ballade, Op. 46, mm. 6-9

a tempo

Altered dominant structures

C min: i

Outline of Ab dim. 7

Outline of Ab min.

f

ff

There is a textural change and an augmentation of the motive in mm. 10-11, and the harmonic density increases to include the section's most extended triadic harmony. Once again, the harmonic progression of these measures is built upon on an outline of a B half diminished seventh chord in third inversion in the bass, finally coming to rest on an F Major chord in root position. This section concludes with a short cadenza of rising four-note clusters of prime form (0145). Figure 13 demonstrates this harmonic progression and the arrival of the cadenza.

Figure 13. Motivic augmentation and cadenza, Section A-a.

Ballade, Op. 46, mm. 9-11

Motivic Augmentation

Outline of B half dim. 7

Section A-b., appearing from mm. 12-22, is based on the same short chromatic motive of the opening, however the eighth-note anacrusis has been retracted to the downbeat, altering the emphatic points of the phrase. The motive is extended, occurring only twice in the first four bars of the subsection, and expanded to encompass the interval of the major third, as previously

demonstrated in Figure 10. Parallel harmonic motion to chromatic neighbor chords, and the introduction of a new sixteenth note rhythmic figure, which takes on motivic importance in the development section of the piece, further enhances the texture of the passage. The features of the motivic evolution of Section A-b., exemplified in mm. 12-15, are shown in Figure 14.

Figure 14. Motivic development, Section A-b.

Ballade, Op. 46, mm. 12-18

Parallel neighbor motion Rhythmic development Intervallic expansion of motive

ff marcato *singing* *pp*

poco rit. *espr.*

distant *f*

F: C min. D Maj. C min. B quartal B Maj.

The clearly established key center of F Major in mm. 12-15, is exchanged for a non-functional harmonic progression between alternating D Major and C minor seven chords in mm. 16-18, with a final cadence on a B Major triad. Immediately prior to this arrival, Barber makes use of a well-defined, five-part B quartal structure in an inverted state, with A in the bass. Arrival to the B major triad is by means of upward motion by a major second in the bass, and, contrarily, downward motion in stepwise fashion in the upper voices. Section A-b. closes with a return of the material verbatim as seen in mm. 12-15. This internal three-part organization within Section

A-b. is reflective of the ternary form of the piece on yet another level, and the literal repetition of the material from mm. 12-15 is similar to that of the literal repetition of Section A as a whole at the close of the work.

The arrival of Section A-a.' occurs in mm. 23-29, acting as a condensed restatement of material from Section A-a. This subsection includes some rhythmic variation as well as an *allargando poco a poco* passage in its last few measures. The harmonic texture thins once more, reminiscent of the opening measures of the piece, and the tonal centers are once again C minor and A minor, with a final resolution to A Major. The coda of Section A, mm. 30-32, consists of alternating harmonic structures of an enharmonic chromatic mediant relationship over a sustained pedal chord of the notes A and E, demonstrated in Figure 15. This passage concludes Section A on a chord quite distant from the pieces opening C minor tonality. The slowing tempo and pianissimo dynamic emphasize the dramatic quality of the passage.

Figure 15. Transitional passage, Section A-coda

Ballade, Op. 46, mm. 30-32

Alternating harmonic structures (A min. – Db Maj.)

sost. ped. *

It is of interest to note that each subsection as seen within Section A contains within itself a smaller ternary form. This was alluded to in the previous analysis of Section A-b., but it is true of all subsections. These low-level divisions are evidenced through motivic and harmonic development, dynamic changes, and textural evolutions. The specifics of these smaller ternary divisions found within Sections A-a., A-b., and A-a.', respectively, need not be explicitly discussed for the purpose of this report, however, a complete outline of the smallest ternary division within *Ballade* can be found in the analysis realized by Sifferman.⁴⁶ Barber, thus, presents ternary structure three levels deep within the music. By these means, the seemingly simple form of *Ballade* takes on deeper meaning, attesting to a certain degree of detail in the planning of the work's design.

The contrasting B section, mm. 33-56, is written with an "Allegro con fuoco" tempo marking. It features sixteenth note melodic figures present throughout nearly the entirety of the section, and the contour of both the melody and bass is largely based on intervals of the second and third. The motivic material used in Section B is primarily derived from material in Section A-b., mm. 12-15, as previously discussed. The motivic material generated in these measures appears primarily in the bass and tenor voices but is also introduced in other voices as the development progresses. Further parallels can be drawn between the neighbor note motion of this section with that of Section A-b. Figure 16 demonstrates these parallels in Section B's opening, mm. 33-39.

⁴⁶ Sifferman, "Samuel Barber's Works for Solo Piano," 102.

Figure 16. Motivic content of Section B-c.

Ballade, Op. 46, mm. 30-39

B-c.

The musical score for Section B-c of *Ballade, Op. 46, mm. 30-39* is presented in four systems. The first system includes a box labeled "A-a., coda" and a bracketed section labeled "Neighbor note motion" and "Motivic cell from A-b.". The second system includes a bracketed section labeled "Motivic cell, change of voice". The third system includes a bracketed section labeled "Motivic cell, change of voice". The fourth system includes a bracketed section labeled "Motivic cell, change of voice".

The B section, as previously mentioned, can also be divided in three parts, Sections B-c., B-d., and B-e. Section B-c., mm. 33-39, presents material to be found over the course of the developmental section of *Ballade*, based on the elements previously described in Figure 16. Section B-d., mm. 40-47, continues in a similar way, while introducing an insistent Eb pedal and

progressively thickening the contrapuntal and rhythmic texture through the inclusion of additional voices and sixteenth note triplets in the melodic line. Section B-e., mm. 48-52, is reminiscent of the cadenza in Section A, mm. 10-11, where a two-part texture presents a rising sixteenth note pattern over rhythmically augmented chordal structures. This passage is demonstrated in Figure 17.

Figure 17. Section B-e., similarities to cadenza of Section A

Ballade, Op. 46, mm. 47-50

Rhythmic augmentation of chord structure

B-e.

The musical score for *Ballade, Op. 46, mm. 47-50* is presented in two systems. The first system shows the beginning of the section, with a piano accompaniment featuring a rising sixteenth note pattern in the right hand and a more static bass line in the left hand. The melody in the right hand is marked *sub. mp* and *cresc. poco a poco*. A box labeled "B-e." highlights the beginning of the section. The second system shows the continuation of the section, with the piano accompaniment becoming more complex and the melody reaching a *ff* (forte) dynamic. The score is in G major (one sharp) and 12/8 time.

The B section closes in mm. 53-56 in a short “recitative,” as described by Sifferman⁴⁷, based on the same motive used throughout the proceeding section. This is shown in Figure 18. The design is reflective of the short “coda” found at the conclusion of Section A. These

⁴⁷ Sifferman, “Samuel Barber’s Works for Solo Piano,” 106.

measures, written as *allargando e morendo* at a piano dynamic, come to rest on the pitch B $\flat$, as a dotted half note with a fermata. This momentary repose is swept away by the return of Section A, with a tempo marking of “Restless, as before,” and the agitated quality of the music once again takes command. The literal repetition of Section A does not feel tiresome, in part due to the well-conceived formal design and unconventional harmonic relationships woven into the music.

Figure 18. Section B-e., “recitative”

Ballade, Op. 46, mm. 51-56

The musical score for Section B-e. of *Ballade, Op. 46*, mm. 51-56, is presented in a piano (p) dynamic. The score is in 3/4 time and features a 'rit.' (ritardando) marking. A 'Motivic cell, A-b.' is indicated, and the tempo marking 'allarg. e morendo' is present. The score is labeled 'B-e. (cont.)' and 'Recitative, close of Section B'.

Harmonic Progression

It is of particular interest in the analysis of *Ballade* to consider how Barber’s harmonic language, by this point an accumulation of nearly an entire life’s work, demonstrates a negation of functional harmonic relationships, yet maintains a broadly tonal setting. In common practice tonal harmony, chords would generally progress in such a way as to define tonal centers based on root relationships within established frameworks.⁴⁸ Barber was evasive of standard harmonic

⁴⁸ Wathen, “Dissonance Treatment, the Music of Samuel Barber,” 121.

practices throughout much of his career and sought to imply tonal relationships through unconventional means. According to Wathen, Barber's primary use of extended tertian chordal structures allowed for harmonic irregularities, such as quartal chords, polyharmony, and bitonality to hold significance in his work.⁴⁹ Wathen argues that Barber considers any non-chord tone outside of the common chord as dissonant and treats it as such, thus influencing his approach to handling harmonic and contrapuntal dissonance.⁵⁰ According to this hypothesis, Barber embraces dissonance as a norm, implementing dissonant harmonic structures into his music on an almost continual basis. Contrast, then, is created through the establishment of regularity in terms of a degree of dissonance, which in context is usually based on seventh chords, and the subsequent introduction of harmonic irregularities.⁵¹

In the case of *Ballade*, Wathen's hypothesis seems to be valid, as evidence of this type of harmonic treatment is well established. As previously mentioned, development along the lines of harmonic contour seems to play a major role in the underlying narrative of the music, more so than individual harmonic relationships on a chord-to-chord basis. The first two iterations of the motive at the opening of the piece, mm. 1-2, are supported entirely by triadic accompaniment. As the passage progresses, sevenths and ninths are added to the accompaniment in mm. 3-5, and an additional thickening of the texture in m. 5 occurs through partial doubling at the octave. Similarly, in mm. 6-10, four statements of the four-note chromatic motive are given four independent harmonic treatments, creating a passage of progressive harmonic development.

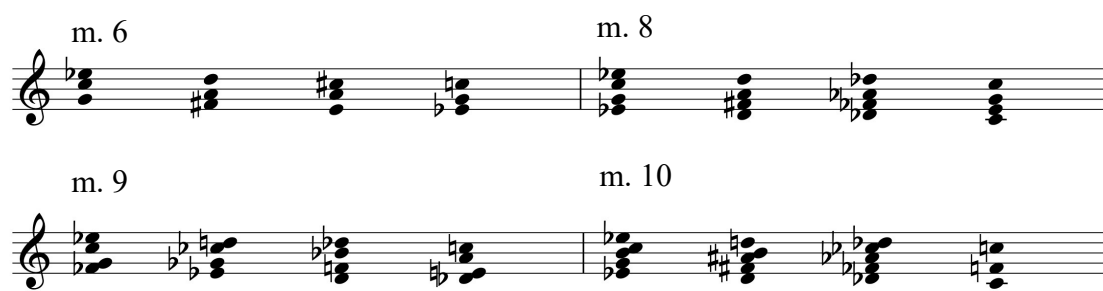
⁴⁹ Wathen, "Dissonance Treatment, the Music of Samuel Barber," 134.

⁵⁰ Wathen, "Dissonance Treatment, the Music of Samuel Barber," 1.

⁵¹ Wathen, "Dissonance Treatment, the Music of Samuel Barber," 135.

Figure 19 demonstrates the harmonic quality of these measures. This technique is utilized throughout *Ballade* as whole, as a means of reinforcing the musical narrative.

Figure 19. Reharmonization of motive, mm. 6-10



As mentioned, there are almost no instances of standard functional harmonic relationships in *Ballade*, with only a few exceptions. Roman numeral analysis of the work proves to be futile, revealing only distant chordal relationships. Other relationships, then, appear to hold more significance in terms of the piece's harmonic progression. Persichetti, in his *Twentieth-Century Harmony*, describes harmonic progression broadly to be the result of the direction of motion of outer voices, while inner voices define the quality of the chordal structure.⁵² In addition, he argues that chord progressions in tonal music of the twentieth century establish functionality apart from traditional standards of common practice tonality. For example, chordal function can be established through relationships built on cycles of major and minor thirds, or major and minor seconds.⁵³ Persichetti describes progressions based on the interval of the perfect fifth to have strength, those based on the interval of the third to have softness, on the interval of

⁵² Persichetti, V. *Twentieth-Century Harmony: Creative Aspects and Practice*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1961, 189.

⁵³ Persichetti, *Twentieth-Century Harmony*, 185.

the second to have blandness, and on the interval of the tritone to have ambiguity.⁵⁴ In *Ballade*, as well as in *Nocturne*, Barber seems most drawn to the interval of the third as a means of establishing harmonic progression, however, the interval of the second seems to hold comparable importance and acts in contrast to relationships of the third. The music does, in fact, appear to present softness among the unrest, and harmonic motion based on the interval of the second seems to pale the dissonant color palette, allowing for a softer harmonic edge.

The harmonic progression appears to be established in a manner that is concurrent within Persichetti's premise. In the context of the music, particularly in Section A, harmonic shape is defined by contrary motion in the outer voices, where the bass voice is broadly on an upward trajectory while the upper voice tends to move downward. The bass moves primarily by relationships of the interval of the second and third, while the upper voice is based on the descending chromatic motive and its variations therein. Internal voices often move, but not always, in parallel motion with the upper voice, by intervals of the major and minor second, resulting in chord connections of a highly chromatic nature. Neighbor note motion also plays a role in the harmonic progression of Section A, particularly in that of Section A-b., where outer voices move in contrary motion by intervals of the minor second, before returning to the note of origin. Figure 20 demonstrates an example of this parallel neighbor relationship, as seen in mm. 12-13. Section B, on the other hand, is of a more contrapuntal nature, where vertical harmony is established through the linear motion of independent motivic lines, and, thus, does not fit as neatly into a contour-based harmonic analysis as outlined by Persichetti.

⁵⁴ Persichetti, *Twentieth-Century Harmony*, 184.

Figure 20. Chord connection, Section A-b.

Ballade, Op. 46, mm. 12-13

Outward parallel neighbor motion

The image shows a musical score for two staves, treble and bass clef, in 6/8 time. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The score is annotated with arrows and text indicating semitone intervals between chords. Above the treble staff, arrows point to intervals of 1 semitone, 3 semitones, and 4 semitones. Below the bass staff, arrows point to intervals of 1 semitone, 3 semitones (bass), and 6 semitones. The first measure is marked *ff marcato* and the last measure is marked *pp*. The word "singing" is written above the treble staff in the middle measures.

Analyses of other Barber works have shown similar tendencies towards contour based harmonic design, particularly in the later period of his career. For example, the *Piano Concerto, Op. 38, Mvmt. I*, features a transitional passage of diverging outer voices, where two blocks of chords move in an inward-outward, neighbor-like fashion, in contrary motion of one another, ultimately arriving at a cadence and the subsequent presentation of thematic material.⁵⁵ In a comparable, yet inverse way to *Ballade*, the top voice moves chromatically outward, while the bass moves downward in thirds. Furthermore, in the context of the first movement of the *Piano Concerto*, Barber establishes tonality by means of hierarchical relationships to a tonic state, apart from common practice functional standards.⁵⁶

The harmonic connection in *Ballade* frequently integrates an element that Persichetti defines as parallel harmony. Parallel harmony occurs when all voices in a succession of chords move in the same direction. This includes strict parallel motion, in which all chords are identical

⁵⁵ Hayden, P. "The Use of Tonality in Four Concertos by American Composers." ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 1982, 4.

⁵⁶ Hayden, "The Use of Tonality in Four Concertos," 5.

in their construction, as well similar motion, in which the chords change as the voices move freely in the same direction.⁵⁷ Parallel harmony takes on melodic implications, its direction guided by the needs of the melodic line, while its intervallic construction by the textural demands of the musical narrative.⁵⁸ Parallel harmony can become tiresome if its use is extensive, however the skilled composer can renew harmonic freshness in music of this nature by a variety of means.⁵⁹ Persichetti describes several such methods, seven of which are present in the score of *Ballade*.

Barber may have recognized the compositional problems associated with such harmonic palettes and was very direct in his efforts to shape the harmonic design according to the needs of the underlying musical narrative. It must be noted that, in practice, Barber's use of parallel harmony is not absolute in terms of Persichetti's definition, however, the parallel relationships that exist within the harmonic progression cannot be ignored. The methods utilized by Barber to create variety in passages of parallel harmonic structures, in the rationale of Persichetti, include 1.) the addition of contrary motion in one voice, 2.) alternating between strict and similar parallel motion, 3.) change of register, 4.) variation in harmonic density, 5.) the diversion of attention by means of ornamentation, 6.) inserting passages of non-parallel harmony, and 7.) setting two sets of parallel chords in contrary motion. All of these variations are exemplified in the A section of *Ballade*, apart from the insertion of passages of non-parallel harmony, which does not occur with any significance until Section B. Figure 21 provides a description of these variations in the context of the score.

⁵⁷ Persichetti, *Twentieth-Century Harmony*, 198.

⁵⁸ Persichetti, *Twentieth-Century Harmony*, 198.

⁵⁹ Persichetti, *Twentieth-Century Harmony*, 199-201.

Figure 21. Harmonic freshness in parallel progressions

Ballade, Op. 46, mm. 1-5

Note: Numbers correspond with Persichetti's techniques for harmonic variation, as outlined in the preceding paragraph.

The image shows a musical score for the first five measures of 'Ballade, Op. 46'. The score is in 6/8 time and B-flat major. It features a piano accompaniment with a treble and bass staff. The following techniques are annotated with numbers and circles:

- 1.) Contrary motion, bass: A circle around the bass line in measure 1, showing a descending eighth note followed by an ascending eighth note.
- 2.) Similar motion: A circle around the treble line in measure 2, showing a descending eighth note followed by an ascending eighth note.
- 2.) Strict motion: A circle around the treble line in measure 3, showing a descending eighth note followed by an ascending eighth note.
- 5.) Ornamentation: A circle around the treble line in measure 4, showing a descending eighth note followed by an ascending eighth note.
- 3.) Change of register: A circle around the treble line in measure 5, showing a descending eighth note followed by an ascending eighth note.
- 4.) Variation of harmonic density: A circle around the treble line in measure 5, showing a descending eighth note followed by an ascending eighth note.
- 7.) Chords in contrary motion: A circle around the treble line in measure 5, showing a descending eighth note followed by an ascending eighth note.

Dynamic markings include *mf* in measure 1, *pp* in measure 4, *sostenuto* in measure 4, and *mf* in measure 5.

Treatment of Dissonance

It is fair to say that dissonant events in *Ballade* are predominately established through harmonic construction, with occasional occurrences of contrapuntal dissonances. If Wathen's hypothesis on Barber's treatment of dissonance stands, then, as previously mentioned, any tone that is not of the underlying chord structure can be described as dissonant. Although harmonic progression is derived of unconventional technique, the chords themselves can largely be deduced to triadic structures, with a few exceptions. Apart from the basic triad, chords with sevenths and ninths are the most frequent, with the occasional appearance of an eleventh or thirteenth chord. Minor seventh flat five, or half diminished chords, seem to hold particular importance in the harmonic progression of this music, along with dominant chord structures. Altered dominant structures also occur, particularly that of the dominant seventh flat five chord.

More dissonant structures are formed when the bass and upper voices act contrapuntally, creating intervallic relationships that imply clusters or polychords rather than triadic formations. Some of these events have previously been discussed in this analysis, and examples of these linear dissonances can be seen in Figures 12 and 15.

In an extensive analysis of dissonance treatment in Barber's early work, which includes selections from Op. 1 – 31, Wathen draws several interesting conclusions in relation to Barber's incorporation of harmonic dissonance, which parallel much of the attitude shown by Barber towards tonality in *Ballade*. Firstly, Barber's harmonic usage does not generally progress in such a manner as to define tonal centers.⁶⁰ This is accurate, in terms of traditional functional harmony, however, if modern analytical methods are used, such as in the context of the ancillary analysis, Barber does seem to imply tonal centers by unconventional means. Secondly, Wathen states that the relationship of dissonant seventh chords to the harmonic progression, when not functional, is through the presence of common tones.⁶¹ Though this may be the case in Barber's earlier works, *Ballade*, on the other hand, appears not to follow this model. Common tones between chords within the progression do occur, however, proportionately are very rare. This is likely a result of the ongoing parallel design in the harmonic progression of this music.

The appearance of quartal harmony mixed into passages of tertian harmony in *Ballade* seems consistent with Barber's usage of quartal chords in other works, as described by Wathen, where chords built of fourths are never the primary feature but rather a compliment to the surrounding tertian harmony.⁶² Wathen describes the dominant seventh flat five chord structure

⁶⁰ Wathen, "Dissonance Treatment, the Music of Samuel Barber," 121.

⁶¹ Wathen, "Dissonance Treatment, the Music of Samuel Barber," 123.

⁶² Wathen, "Dissonance Treatment, the Music of Samuel Barber," 124.

as a favorite harmonic tool of Barber's, who incorporated it into much of his repertoire, as in *Ballade*.⁶³ Finally, polychords are somewhat rare in Barber's work, and are usually arrived at through the aggregate of linear motion in the vertical plane or over a sustained pedal.⁶⁴ In *Ballade*, the coda of Section A exemplifies this, where a pedal chord of the notes A and E is sustained below the linear arrival of a D $\flat$ major triad, resulting in a polychordal sonorous quality.

From the esthetic point of view, interval consonance and dissonance are determined by the composer's ear.⁶⁵ By increasing or decreasing consonance and dissonance, the composer can manipulate the shape of phrasing, establish cadential significance, and differentiate sections of music.⁶⁶ An established norm allows for contrast in the sensation of dissonance or consonance, at which point the manipulation of this norm becomes a powerful tool in the creation of the musical narrative. In *Ballade*, Barber masterfully establishes, and subsequently alters the music on multiple planes. A counterpoint of concept becomes the ultimate tool at his disposal, unifying the efforts of the independent elements to achieve greater meaning in the musical context. Like much of Barber's work, *Ballade* seems to speak as an abstraction of human emotion in the musical plane.

⁶³ Wathen, "Dissonance Treatment, the Music of Samuel Barber," 134.

⁶⁴ Wathen, "Dissonance Treatment, the Music of Samuel Barber," 129-130.

⁶⁵ Persichetti, *Twentieth-Century Harmony*, 194.

⁶⁶ Persichetti, *Twentieth-Century Harmony*, 194.

Conclusion

In 1962, Barber was invited to Russia as the first ever American composer to attend the biennial Congress of Soviet Composers, at which he was asked to speak on his methods and philosophies of composition.⁶⁷ At this conference, before an audience of hundreds of composers from Russia and other Eastern European countries, Barber declared that too much interference with a composer was as unwise as too much encouragement, and, ultimately, made a plea for the necessity of experimentation in a composer's development.⁶⁸ Barber's thoughts were at odds with some of the perspectives held by other speakers at the event, who seemed to prescribe to a more structured approach to compositional instruction. Barber's words were well received, however, and the community of composers around the conference seemed to embrace him and his work. In fact, he was made aware that several of his works were already published in Russian editions, and was awarded composition royalties, a first for an American composer in the Soviet Union.⁶⁹

Just as experimentation appears to be a compositional value upheld by Barber as essential, he also expressed a belief that a composer must have the courage to be an individual, exposing an image of one's innermost self through musical creation. It is difficult to speculate on how a composer might have developed particular philosophies regarding creation and self, however, it is plausible that these sentiments were instilled in Barber during his formative years by influential figures in his life.⁷⁰ Nonetheless, Barber's desire for individual expression through

⁶⁷ Heyman, "Samuel Barber: A Documentary Study," p. 642.

⁶⁸ Heyman, "Samuel Barber: A Documentary Study," p. 643.

⁶⁹ Heyman, "Samuel Barber: A Documentary Study," p. 643.

⁷⁰ Kokkinopoulou, "The Impact of World War II," p. 34.

music is a recurring topic in much of the literature surrounding his life and work. In his own words, Barber argues in favor of individuality, stating:

“I think that what’s been holding composers back a great deal is that they feel they must have a new style every year. This, in my case, would be hopeless... I just go on doing, as they say, my thing. I believe this takes a certain courage.”⁷¹

Whatever his motives, it can be argued that Barber remained true to his individual voice and a unique expression of self throughout the entirety of his career.

Martina Arroyo, the operatic soprano who premiered Barber’s concert scene *Andromache’s Farewell, Op. 39*, in 1963, spent a great deal of time working closely with him in preparation of the debut. Over the course of several months of private rehearsal in Barber’s home, she began to acquire a sense of where the composer’s true interest in musical performance lie. Apart from the work’s technical aspects, Barber and Arroyo would spend hours discussing the psychological implications of the music and the text, searching for the dramatic implications of the work as a whole. In an interview more than two decades later, Arroyo shares that “[Barber] tended toward reaching the inner person, and that takes time you see.”⁷² Arroyo further describes balancing the technical demands of this particular work with the complexity of the emotions depicted in Euripides’ Greek tragedy as “a difficult thing for a singer to do beautifully,” and conclusively states, “I think Mr. Barber was very concerned with beauty.”⁷³

Barber was also concerned with public perception and sought to appeal to broad audiences. In response to his first major radio performance in 1935, which featured an hour of Barber’s music broadcast across the nation on WJZ, the composer shared “I am glad of this

⁷¹ Kokkinopoulou, “The Impact of World War II,” p. 34.

⁷² Heyman, “Samuel Barber: A Documentary Study,” p. 661.

⁷³ Heyman, “Samuel Barber: A Documentary Study,” p. 662.

opportunity to perform my music on the radio when all types of people from different parts of the country are listening, for to such an audience I address my work.”⁷⁴ As a result of this particular radio performance, in fact, the young Barber gained almost instant recognition as a gifted composer, singer, and pianist. It was this pivotal moment that set his professional career in motion. Soon thereafter, Barber was offered his first recording agreement with RCA Victor and was awarded two major traveling scholarships.⁷⁵

Barber’s highly visible public career seems to counteract descriptions of Barber as an intimate and introverted composer, who, according to those who were close to him, was deeply affected by criticism.⁷⁶ On more than one occasion, Barber received disapproval for “swimming against the tide of modernism,”⁷⁷ yet there is evidence that he was in fact quite interested in developments in modern technique. While working on his *Piano Concerto, Op. 38*, for example, he maintained scores of Schoenberg, Webern, Berg, Boulez, and Copland open on his desk, along with an autographed photo of Stravinsky.⁷⁸ In a description of his late composition *Essay for Orchestra No. 3, Op. 47*, Barber describes the work as “absolutely abstract music, which is essentially dramatic in character,” and that in its creation he sought “above all, to create a unity.”⁷⁹ It is difficult to know which musical currents pulled Barber the hardest, or why. However, it appears he was quite informed on the contemporary compositional language of his generation, and openly adapted modern elements into his work, as the previous analysis in this report has demonstrated.

⁷⁴ Heyman, “Samuel Barber: A Documentary Study,” p. 186.

⁷⁵ Heyman, “Samuel Barber: A Documentary Study,” p. 187.

⁷⁶ Heyman, “Samuel Barber: A Documentary Study,” p. 702.

⁷⁷ Heyman, “Samuel Barber: A Documentary Study,” p. 711.

⁷⁸ Heyman, “Samuel Barber: A Documentary Study,” p. 636.

⁷⁹ Heyman, “Samuel Barber: A Documentary Study,” p. 783.

Ultimately, Barber's sound is a product of the social and historical framework in which he lived and an innate human desire for approval. In a period where technical innovation was idealized, it is not surprising that Barber, too, sought to implement modern developments into his compositional style. Kokkinopoulou defends this point of view, stating:

Composers... are often at the mercy of their environment. What distinguishes artists is that their creative output can be seen as a reflection of their place in history; for some composers, the question of why they wrote in a given style, and with what aim, may be answered by a variety of contextual reasons, such as societal pressure.⁸⁰

Barber speaks on this phenomenon in his own life, as well. In an conversation recorded towards the end of his life, he states that "one physical component that makes my music sound as it does is that I live mostly in the country."⁸¹ Han searches for a deeper answer, suggesting that Barber's sound is resultant of an adjustment of the composer's "innermost Romanticism" to meet the demands of musical pressures implied by modernism, this way incorporating new technique and contributing his own particular innovations.⁸² Analysis of the music shows that Barber indeed explored the possibilities of extending nineteenth-century Romantic musical tradition through the incorporation of twentieth century technique.

Quite possibly, the truth lays somewhere in the middle. Of primary interest to this report, rather, is to obtain a better understanding of the context in which music was created in the twentieth century, both in terms of specific compositional technique and of cultural significance. Through a broader understanding of the past, we may be able to acquire a more informed view of the present, and more wisely direct future trajectories. As each generation has sought to learn from, and later break away from, preceding generations in order to establish a unique

⁸⁰ Kokkinopoulou, "The Impact of World War II," p. 3.

⁸¹ Heyman, "Samuel Barber: A Documentary Study," p. 767.

⁸² Han, "Stylistic Transformation," p. 93.

individuality, we too, are called to do the same. This is not out of rebellion, but rather, with a desire to explore the unknown and expand on the teachings provided to us. If it is for the betterment of the arts and the arts to come, is it not done out of love?

The artist, in an act of genius, is “miraculously able to attain (and communicate in the work of art) to the essential stillness of pure contemplation,” this way becoming a “clear mirror of the inner nature of the world.”⁸³ In the words of George Rochberg, music, “renewed by regaining contact with the tradition and means of the past,” will “re-emerge as a spiritual force with reactivated powers of melodic thought, rhythmic pulse, and large scale structure.”⁸⁴ Samuel Barber’s music longs to be a force of such ideal nature, and, occasionally, it is. Regardless, Barber arguably succeeds in striking an ever-delicate balance between esthetics, poetics, tradition, and experimentation in musical creation across the entirety of his career. His broad repertoire of chamber, orchestral, piano, and vocal works provides insight on how to compose music with precise technique and an individual voice, adapted to fit the musical needs of a period. In learning these lessons from the work of Barber and others, an opportunity is presented to unify and expand the knowledge surrounding compositional practice in all music. Presently, in a globalized and diverse community, let us uncover our similarities and celebrate our differences. This, in the musical context, is a synthesis of style.

⁸³ Franklin, *The Idea of Music*, 8.

⁸⁴ Rochberg, G. *The Aesthetics of Survival: A Composer’s View of Twentieth-Century Music*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1984, 160.

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Appendix 1 - Row Form Matrices of *Nocturne, Op. 33*

Twelve-Tone Matrix, Row I

	I ₀	I ₅	I ₁₁	I ₁₀	I ₈	I ₁	I ₇	I ₆	I ₄	I ₉	I ₃	I ₂	
P ₀	C	F	B	B $\flat$	A $\flat$	D $\flat$	G	G $\flat$	E	A	E $\flat$	D	R ₀
P ₇	G	C	G $\flat$	F	E $\flat$	A $\flat$	D	D $\flat$	B	E	B $\flat$	A	R ₇
P ₁	D $\flat$	G $\flat$	C	B	A	D	A $\flat$	G	F	B $\flat$	E	E $\flat$	R ₁
P ₂	D	G	D $\flat$	C	B $\flat$	E $\flat$	A	A $\flat$	G $\flat$	B	F	E	R ₂
P ₄	E	A	E $\flat$	D	C	F	B	B $\flat$	A $\flat$	D $\flat$	G	G $\flat$	R ₄
P ₁₁	B	E	B $\flat$	A	G	C	G $\flat$	F	E $\flat$	A $\flat$	D	D $\flat$	R ₁₁
P ₅	F	B $\flat$	E	E $\flat$	D $\flat$	G $\flat$	C	B	A	D	A $\flat$	G	R ₅
P ₆	G $\flat$	B	F	E	D	G	D $\flat$	C	B $\flat$	E $\flat$	A	A $\flat$	R ₆
P ₈	A $\flat$	D $\flat$	G	G $\flat$	E	A	E $\flat$	D	C	F	B	B $\flat$	R ₈
P ₃	E $\flat$	A $\flat$	D	D $\flat$	B	E	B $\flat$	A	G	C	G $\flat$	F	R ₃
P ₉	A	D	A $\flat$	G	F	B $\flat$	E	E $\flat$	D $\flat$	G $\flat$	C	B	R ₉
P ₁₀	B $\flat$	E $\flat$	A	A $\flat$	G $\flat$	B	F	E	D	G	D $\flat$	C	R ₁₀
	RI ₀	RI ₅	RI ₁₁	RI ₁₀	RI ₈	RI ₁	RI ₇	RI ₆	RI ₄	RI ₉	RI ₃	RI ₂	

Twelve-tone Matrix, Row II

	I ₀	I ₆	I ₉	I ₁₁	I ₈	I ₂	I ₅	I ₇	I ₄	I ₁₀	I ₁	I ₃	
P ₀	C	G $\flat$	A	B	A $\flat$	D	F	G	E	B $\flat$	D $\flat$	E $\flat$	R ₀
P ₆	G $\flat$	C	E $\flat$	F	D	A $\flat$	B	D $\flat$	B $\flat$	E	G	A	R ₆
P ₃	E $\flat$	A	C	D	B	F	A $\flat$	B $\flat$	G	D $\flat$	E	G $\flat$	R ₃
P ₁	D $\flat$	G	B $\flat$	C	A	E $\flat$	G $\flat$	A $\flat$	F	B	D	E	R ₁
P ₄	E	B $\flat$	D $\flat$	E $\flat$	C	G $\flat$	A	B	A $\flat$	D	F	G	R ₄
P ₁₀	B $\flat$	E	G	A	G $\flat$	C	E $\flat$	F	D	A $\flat$	B	D $\flat$	R ₁₀
P ₇	G	D $\flat$	E	G $\flat$	E $\flat$	A	C	D	B	F	A $\flat$	B $\flat$	R ₇
P ₅	F	B	D	E	D $\flat$	G	B $\flat$	C	A	E $\flat$	G $\flat$	A $\flat$	R ₅
P ₈	A $\flat$	D	F	G	E	B $\flat$	D $\flat$	E $\flat$	C	G $\flat$	A	B	R ₈
P ₂	D	A $\flat$	B	D $\flat$	B $\flat$	E	G	A	G $\flat$	C	E $\flat$	F	R ₂
P ₁₁	B	F	A $\flat$	B $\flat$	G	D $\flat$	E	G $\flat$	E $\flat$	A	C	D	R ₁₁
P ₉	A	E $\flat$	G $\flat$	A $\flat$	F	B	D	E	D $\flat$	G	B $\flat$	C	R ₉
	RI ₀	RI ₆	RI ₉	RI ₁₁	RI ₈	RI ₂	RI ₅	RI ₇	RI ₄	RI ₁₀	RI ₁	RI ₃	