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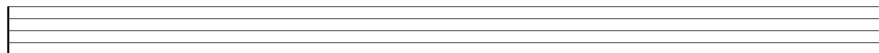

Samuel Barber

SAMUEL BARBER'S ORGAN MUSIC

Iain Quinn

The publication of three previously unpublished early organ works of Samuel Barber (1910–1981) in the hundredth year since his birth allows an opportunity to consider his output afresh for an instrument he knew well from his childhood years. Known to millions through the broadcast, concert and film media, Barber's most-played work, the *Adagio* from the String Quartet, op. 11 (1936) has remained a familiar voice to contemporary ears 75 years after its composition. Indeed it could be fairly suggested that it has become to America what Elgar's *Nimrod* has to the British; a piece that can summon up the rawest of emotions within its first bars whilst being imbued with an unquestionable national identity.

Barber came from an especially musical family, with a mother who was a pianist, an aunt, Louise Homer, a leading contralto at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City and an uncle, John Homer, who was a composer of art songs. After starting to teach himself the piano when six years old, Barber began writing from the age of seven, had formal piano instruction from the age of nine and attempted an opera at ten. However, his formal general musical education began at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia when he was 14. Although the exact nature of his organ training is unclear, he did manage to secure a post early on at Westminster Presbyterian Church, West Chester, Pennsylvania, his home town. However, it was not a happy tenure and he left the post following an argument for not holding the chords long enough at the end of hymn stanzas.[1]

During his boyhood a strong friendship developed with Mr. and Mrs. Pierre du Pont.[2] Pierre Du Pont 1870–1954) – a great-great-grandson of the French economist Pierre Samuel du Pont de Nemours – was the sometime Chairman and President of General Motors and a prominent philanthropist. Barber visited the palatial du Pont estate of Longwood Gardens in Kennett Square, Pennsylvania many times and on one visit the master of the house was able to introduce him to the great composer for the marching band, John Philip Sousa (1854–1932). The *Daily Local News* of 6 November, 1922 reported:

> Mr. Du Pont, seeing the lad, whom he knows and for whom he has great admiration, realizing that Sam is a musician of no mean note, came forward and took the boy up and introduced him to the March King.
>
> Sousa was pleased to talk to the chap and learning some fact as to Barber's musical ability, sat down and dashed off three lines of "The Stars and Stripes Forever". He signed the same and presented it to Sam, who is about the proudest boy in town, and would not part with his treasure for a good deal.

[1] Heyman, B. *Samuel Barber – The composer and his music* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 13.

[2] It is noted that there is some inconsistency in the spelling of du Pont, as on occasion is also appears as DuPont. As such in the present article the name will appear either as it has appeared in quoted texts or as 'du Pont'.

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In April 1925, Barber wrote his first organ work, *To Longwood Gardens*[3], and dedicated it to his gracious hosts, Mr. and Mrs. Pierre du Pont, as a thank-you for the concerts he had attended at their house, which included concerts on the large organ in the Conservatory Ballroom. He writes:

My dear Mr. duPont –
Ever since Longwood Conservatory's beginning, our family has enjoyed everything about it to the utmost. In it I have been able to hear the greatest organists of the world in incomparable surroundings – it has been a regular musical education that way. It is only natural that I should want to thank you for this great opportunity, and as music is my best expressor, I have tried to do it through my composition "To Longwood Gardens", dedicated to you and Mrs. duPont, and which accompanies this note. In it I have tried to express two things: I have sought to appreciate Longwood, and to express thanks for it. But it is essentially in the third person, and so my own thanks must be subordinated to the music theme – Longwood's influence on anyone.

I've painted a picture of one entering the conservatory for the first time, or for the hundreth time, and of the thoughts which confront him. Entering, he hears the organ, with, perhaps, Dupré or Courboin at the console, playing a majestic chorale of some master. The chorale becomes louder, and he, too, grows restless, and surveys the scene awaiting him. And now my music must express the confusion of his thoughts, which the flowers, the perfumes, the music, and all the beauty have awakened. It is too wonderful to understand, and too impossible.

Slowly he tries to collect his scattered thoughts and gradually a great Peace envelops him. From somewhere a sparrow sings, but the sparrow, because of his surroundings has been transformed into a nightingale!

All this becomes merged into a little "grazioso" melody of peace, and after a while, in this same mood, the composition closes. The visitor has found peace in a new world, and only a faint recollection of the first theme reminds him of that which he has left.

And now I must apologize for my music. I have never studied composition and so it is a perfect paradise of blunders and faulty constructions. Mother, not being an ardent admirer of the music of today, thinks some of the harmonies a bit too modern. I don't know how you like the modern style, but I am sure that there is nothing ancient about Longwood!

Please don't think, Mr. duPont, because of all this voluminous commentary that I believe my composition is at all serious or worth anything. I surely don't. And probably, within a few weeks, I shall be ashamed to have signed my name to it, and then I should have to write to you and ask you to burn it up!

At least, perhaps, I have achieved my purpose of thanking you; but whether I have or not is for you to decide.
Sincerely yours,
Samuel Barber

April eighteenth
I've just played it on your organ this afternoon and I've put in the stop registrations as I used there.

On 21 April 1925, Pierre du Pont replied:

Mr dear Sam:
Mrs. duPont and I feel quite elated in having received your composition "To Longwood Gardens" dedicated to us. I am sure that it will meet with approval when played, I shall turn it over to Mr. Swinnen, but I should like to hear your rendering of it also. Many thanks for your kindness and thought of us. [4]

Firmen Swinnen (1885–1972) first performed the piece at Longwood Gardens on Sunday, 10 May 1925 and then again on Saturday 23 May.

[3] Barber, Samuel. *To Longwood Gardens*. Autograph, 1925. Library of Congress, ML96. B267. Barber, Samuel. *Music for Organ* (New York: G. Schirmer, 2010).
[4] Samuel Barber letters, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Delaware

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Swinnen[5] had been organist at Antwerp Cathedral until the outbreak of war, at which point he moved first to the United Kingdom, where he enjoyed a prominent recital career, and then ultimately to the USA. He became organist at the Rialto Theatre[6] in New York City and later the Rivoli Theater.[7] In the age of the silent film, Swinnen was a noted exponent in the art of improvisation. The large theater organs of the time, complete with stops for percussion instruments, allowed for a variety of style that would not have been so prevalent in his previous cathedral life but that he seems to have thrived on nonetheless. The new organ at Longwood would have been a special delight in this regard. As Lundberg writes of the Du Pont estate:

> Then there is Longwood, residence of Pierre du Pont, surrounded by a 1000 carefully tended acres which includes six acres of glassed-over tropical gardens; in these orangeries are separate orchard houses for the growing throughout the year of peaches, nectarines, and exotic fruits. The house has nearly two hundred rooms and more than one hundred servants, including the gardeners who are employed there. A feature of the establishment is an organ of ten thousand pipes to transport which required fourteen railroad freight cars. According to *Fortune*, the volume of this regal instrument is sufficient to fill three cathedrals. The building was especially constructed to contain the apparatus, whose attendant is Firmin Swinnen, former organist at the Antwerp Cathedral; underlying the organ are large 72-horsepower blowers that required installation of special power lines. The organ pipes give out into the indoor gardens, to which the public is admitted occasionally at a small charge which goes to local charities and helps reduce Du Pont taxes. The conception behind the arrangement is that one may wander with one's guests in tropical gardens, enjoying the perfumes of rare plants as one is beguiled by music.[8]

Whilst the nature of the house organ may seem extraordinary to the modern reader, it is worth noting that it was only the size of the instrument at Longwood that made its presence exceptional. In the early 20th century the house organ was a typical feature in many homes of the wealthy. In New York City, the famous families of Carnegie, Cartier, Gershwin, Romberg, Schwab, Tiffany, Vanderbilt and Woolworth, all had instruments installed in their residences.[9]

[5] Firmen Swinnen: T. Scott Burhman, *The Complete Organ Recitalist*, ed. H. Westerby (London, 1927). 'From a Belgian cathedral to a moving picture theater is some jump – many would say, some drop. He dabbled for a while, but very early found himself and created an art of his own. He was transferred to the Rivoli, a few blocks farther north, and there made himself famous. His method was improvisation by the hour, day, week, month, and year – any amount, in any style. Now and then he would descend to a page or two from some printed piece the general music director of the theaters thought would make a good theme for the hero or heroine. Mr. Swinnen never tired either himself or his audience. He was not picturesque and reposeful, like Dr. Mauro-Cottone is. He was happy, melodic, rhythmic, care-free, he improvised his little *Chinoiserie* (published by Fischer) as a sudden inspiration in the midst of a scene; the next time he enlarged it, and by the end of the week – picture programmes run one week in the big Broadway houses – he was playing *Chinoiserie* pretty much as the printed score has it. That was his style to perfection: not music for the text-book, but music for the heart – and for the feet, for he was always rhythmic. It was Mr. Swinnen who played the organ solo part in the concerto version Mr. Frank Stewart Adams made for the opening Allegro of Widor's Fifth Symphony, and brought down such a storm of applause that he had to take the spot six times before the show could go on. Few men can improvise musically interesting caprices, scherzos, toccatas, and gavottes by the hour. Mr. Swinnen has no imitators. Now he has retired from the theater and is Concert organist at the great Du Pont estate.' This extract is available at **http://www.theatreorgans.com/southerncross/Journal/NewYork.htm** (accessed 21/4/10).

[6] The Rialto Theatre, 1481 Broadway, NW corner of 42nd Street, was demolished in 1998. Further information can be found via the website **http://www.nycago.org/Organs/NYC/html/RialtoTheatre.html (accessed 21/4/10)**.

[7] The Rivoli Theatre, 1620 Broadway, between 49th and 50th Streets, was demolished in 1987. Further information can be found via the website cited in footnote 6.

[8] Lundberg, F., *America's 60 families* (New York: The Vanguard Press, 1937) , p. 420.

[9] For further information, the reader is directed to Rollin Smith's studies of several of these instruments in *The American Organist*.

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Barber's own description of *To Longwood Gardens* helps us understand this early but substantial work and from it the reader will have already gathered that it is sectional in construction. That said, whilst not in any sense a symphonic poem, it is clearly a piece intended to be full of aural imagery, replete with contrast and not lacking in creative spirit from the young composer.

The unifying musical motif of the work is found in the three notes of the opening anacrusis (D–G–G flat). After the opening chord progression is heard twice – the second time with the addition of the pedal – the piece, although still without a clear tonic as it concludes on an A minor first inversion chord, continues into a *più mosso* section of descending sequences for four bars on the manuals. A pedal G compliments the subsequent sequence, which is similar but now for the left hand with a rising scalic pattern. After a half-diminished chord on D over a G pedal fermata, the opening motif returns with the prior dynamic level of *forte* is increased to *fortissimo*. The harmonic progressions heard in the opening line are now further developed through a chromatically descending bass line which leads to the conclusion and segue into the second section at b. 24. Here follows an *alla Marcia*, where – with the customary four-square bass line – one is unavoidably reminded of the Sousa connexion to Longwood. However, through this section (bb. 24–32) one sees the slightly awkward doubling of right and left hands at the octave, a compositional technique arguably more suited to the piano than the organ. The near-palpable ebullience of this section is in stark contrast to the intensity of the opening bars of the piece.

However, at b. 33 an *Agitato* section of moto perpetuo chords in triplets begins over a C pedal. The harmonic language is once again heightened through basic step-wise and largely root-position chordal patterns over a pedal note which culminates in an ascending scale from D minor to E major (bb. 39–41), at which point the pedal finally moves to E. The relative drama of this interlude is heightened by a crescendo from *mezzo forte* to *fortissimo* that does not subside for most of the following page of the score. At b. 45 the pedal note is removed and after a lengthy and now far more chromatic series of sequences, the opening motif returns at b. 51, now beginning on B and *largo maestoso*.

At bar 55 the piece enters a section that to performer and listener alike is *misterioso*. Here the opening motif is heard *pianissimo* in tonal imitation and with a greater chromaticism than previously employed. It may well be this section that Barber's mother felt 'a bit too modern'.[10] The initial two-bar interlude, begun on A sharp, is repeated but now with a starting pitch of D and the marking *più forte*. On the upbeat to b. 59 the texture is reduced to a single line and, for the first time in this already rather improvisational work, the marking *ad libitum* is added. Bars 59–65 allow for a freedom of style that, along with later points in the piece, would have doubtless brought a smile to Swinnen's face, for there is a distinct flavour of the silent movie about them – the scene being set and the lights being dimmed.

At b. 66, the longest section of the overall piece begins with the marking *Andante grazioso*. Here Barber enters fully into the full kaleidoscope of sound that the Longwood Gardens organ afforded, with the celestial strings of the harp stop, heard in ascending arpeggios in the relatively sedate tonality of D flat major. The accompaniment in place, Barber introduces a broad seven-bar tune that immediately brings to mind one of the more luxuriant solos of the salon style. The pedal line continues

[10] Samuel Barber letter, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Delaware.

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to reassert the harmony on the first beat of each bar during this three-four section, whilst at b. 82 the right hand is given an unusually awkward mini-cadenza before the previous material is repeated.

Despite the relative tempestuousness of the opening strains of the piece, the work continues towards its conclusion in relative calm and tranquillity. There are no more dramatic gestures and no sudden or abrupt shifts of style. Rather, the performer and listener are treated to a graceful melody with minor harmonic inflections until the final page is reached. At b. 115 the degree of harmonic motion is slowed considerably. The initial three-note motif is heard again in the soprano voice – now beginning on A flat – in a simple developing pattern that ultimately allows the tonality to settle (via a chromatically descending accompanimental figure with the harp stop) again in D flat major. The final line is pure theatre; a descending figure of semiquaver chords for two bars, followed by a D flat pedal and then a subdued first inversion tonic chord with a fermata.

The style of writing in *To Longwood Gardens* merits some discussion. Whereas Barber's other organ works could clearly find a happy place in many a church service, here we have a work that – not merely by title – has, by the composer's own admission, a clear sense of the secular programmatic world about it. Although sectional, the individual parts would not likely find an easy audience amongst the clergy or their congregations – and in any event Barber never even suggests the piece would serve in this context. However, to 'place' the piece we need to appreciate the role of the organ in American society the 1920s.

Firstly and arguably most importantly in the context of this work, there is the importance of the organ in film. In the year this piece was written, American audiences were drawn to the silent films of Charlie Chaplin (*Gold Rush*) and seeing Lon Chaney in *The Phantom of the Opera*. The previous year had seen the release of John Ford's *The Iron Horse*. So if we conjecture that Barber would have hoped, if not assumed, that his piece would be played at Longwood, we can equally draw the conclusion that he was well aware of the average visitor's impression of the organ in contemporary media. When one hears the organ, one hears the story and one understands the message. (One might easily argue in this case that the role of the silent film organist was equal to the director in conveying the plot of a given script.)

Further, the symphonic dimension of the tonal palette of a large organ such as Longwood would have been especially fortuitous. After all, Leopold Stokowski reigned supreme at the helm of the Philadelphia Orchestra and if any musical endeavour was going to come close to recreating the 'Philadelphia Sound' that would ultimately became known throughout the world, a large organ and a well-known organist were probably as good an acquisition as a cultivated philanthropist such as Du Pont could make.

As such, although *To Longwood Gardens* was indeed a 'gift' for the kindnesses shown to the young composer, it is fair to suppose that despite his youth Barber already knew how to write for a captive audience. Indeed, one can easily imagine people walking by Longwood and stopping to listen to one engaging section of the piece after another, until finally the 'big tune' emerges with the additional trimmings of the harp stop, no less!

Barber's understanding of the instrument, as in later works, is very consistent. All notes are clearly written within range and, with the rarest of exceptions, there is a keen understanding of organ technique. Although Barber did benefit from instruction in the organ, there is no evidence that it was lengthy or that a substantial amount of repertoire

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was studied. However, all the essential ingredients are found in this early piece. A curious fact emerges, though, in relation to Barber's comments, as the manuscript held at the Library of Congress bears only minor suggestions for organ registration[11]. The employment of the harp stop is specified, as are the dynamics. However, this is in marked contrast, as we shall see later, to his *Prelude and Fugue in B minor*, which was registered in a considerable detail. Performers can argue the benefits of this either way. On the one hand there is the tradition – especially in France – of writing in very detailed registrations, thus creating an inevitable school of thought (or conversely doubt) on how to execute a piece correctly if an instrument cannot supply the requisite stops. On the other hand, fewer stipulations allow for a greater sense of freedom to the performer that can produce pleasantly contrasting interpretations.

Given the contrast in approach between *To Longwood Gardens* and the *Prelude and Fugue in B minor*, some questions are worth considering; did Barber place implicit trust in Swinnen, assuming he was going to be the first to play the piece in public?; did Barber perhaps feel uncomfortable in limiting the registrations to specifics, given the wide tonal palette of the Longwood organ; or did Barber simply wish to be pleasantly surprised by whatever emerged? Although we're unable to know the answers conclusively, I would suggest that Barber likely knew Swinnen's playing well and quite simply trusted him with his piece. Although the young composer was not beyond presenting his work himself, he may well have deferred to someone who was already a well-known organist.

The *Prelude and Fugue* [12] dates from Barber's student days at the Curtis Institute of Music on Rittenhouse Square in Philadelphia. Barbara Heyman notes in her conversations with Nellie Lee Bok (daughter-in-law of Curtis's founder Mary Louise Curtis Bok) that Barber was the second person to enter the Institute when it opened on 1 October, 1924.[13] Mary Bok's philosophy of music and the importance of education, not least of the child prodigy, helped to shape many musicians from a tender age. Born in 1876, she was the daughter of Louisa Knapp and the publisher Cyrus H. K. Curtis, after whom the school was named. In opening the Institute, she sought counsel from several of the greatest musicians of the age including Carl Flesch, Josef Hoffmann, Willem Mengelberg and Leopold Stokowski. Bok's philosophy was grounded in a thorough course of comprehensive musicianship.

> It is my aim that earnest students shall acquire a thorough musical education, not learning only to sing or play, but also the history of music, the laws of its making, languages, ear-training and music appreciation.
>
> They shall learn to think and to express their thoughts against a background of quiet culture, with the stimulus of personal contact with artist-teachers who represent the highest and finest in their art.
>
> The aim is for quality of the work rather than quick showy results.[14]

By modern expectations Barber's ten-year association with Curtis may seem quite extraordinary, but Bok's pedagogical approach allowed for an education few institutions could even consider rivalling. Heyman notes that Barber received special encouragement from Bok, not only in support of his musical studies, but in terms of career advancement.

[11] It is fair to assume that there was an earlier draft of this piece that quite possibly included more detailed registration.

[12] Barber, Samuel. *Prelude and Fugue*. Autograph, 1927. Library of Congress, ML96. B267. Two autographs: Prelude and Prelude and Fugue. Barber, Samuel. *Music for Organ* (New York: G. Schirmer, 2010).

[13] Max Aronoff, later of the Curtis String Quartet and a member of faculty, was reputed to have been the first to enter.

[14] Catalogue of the Curtis Institute of Music, 1924.

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It is perhaps not surprising that the relative elevation of Barber at Curtis in both musical and social circles was noticed by other students. Of his experience with their mutual composition teacher Rosario Scalero,[15] Ned Rorem writes:

> …I didn't see eye to eye with my teacher, Rosario Scalero. He was an unsuccessful composer, though he'd successfully guided both Barber and Menotti, his two prize pupils. He was their sole teacher. But they were a lot younger when they first went to the maestro in the '30s, whereas I was already nineteen and had ideas of my own.[16]

Described later by Rorem as a 'Philadelphia intellectual',[17] Barber was given a rigourous training at Curtis. During his time as a student of Rosario Scalero he came into contact with Carl Weinrich,[18] later Director of Music at Princeton University Chapel and an editor of many contemporary organ works. After being composed in 1927, and shown to George Antheil[19] in Vienna, the *Prelude and Fugue* was premièred by Weinrich at Curtis in a *Programme of Original Compositions by Students of Rosario Scalero in Composition* on 10 December, 1928. On the same programme, Barber was the pianist for a performance of his Sonata in F minor, for Piano and Violin.[20]

The *Prelude and Fugue* allows us a fascinating glimpse in to this early period. The prelude is written in the style of a trio. Indeed the ostinato rhythmic figure in the pedals almost suggests a string trio, save perhaps for the expansive ranges of the manual parts. Marked *Andante, quasi Adagio. Molto sostenuto* the steady 3 / 4 crotchet pulse in the pedal anchors a hauntingly beautiful duet above. As with the subsequent fugue, the manual range employed is quite large and the piece further requires at least a two-manual instrument in order to avoid a collision of the hands. The style of writing is of a tonal canon which alternates with brief interludes that occasionally employ imitation. Harmonically, the musical language, with its beguiling approach to chromaticism, brings to mind the later organ works of Brahms and the more simple-textured pieces of Max Reger.

The prelude is in two sections, with the first concluding at b. 19 on the dominant. At b. 20 – with the marking *a tempo, ma sempre quasi adagio* – the pedal begins on the dominant tonic of F sharp. The remaining 28 bars allow for a development of the material already presented and a greater use of independent counterpoint. A tonal canon reappears in two more extended sequences at bb. 37–39 and 40–42 as the piece moves towards a conclusion with a threefold repetition of the opening motif. The prelude concludes, unresolved, in dominant key of F sharp major.

[15] Natale Rosario Scalero (1870–1954) was an Italian composer, teacher and violinist. He had been a student of Eusebius Mandyczewski (1857–1929) who was a member of the Brahms circle and who had been entrusted by the late composer as curator of his estate. Scalero taught at the Mannes School of Music in New York City and later the Curtis Institute of Music.

[16] Rorem, N. *Other Entertainment* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 192.

[17] Rorem, p. 224

[18] *New York Times*, obituary, D25, New York edition, 15 May 1991: 'Carl Weinrich (1904–1991) was born in Paterson, New Jersey, and graduated from New York University and the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. He was the director of music at the University Chapel at Princeton from 1943 to 1973 and taught organ at Princeton, Wellesley College, Vassar College and Columbia University. He was known for his recitals and recordings of Bach, and he was a leader in a revival of Baroque organ music in the United States in the 1930's. He was also interested in contemporary music. He performed new organ works and edited Schoenberg's "Variations on a Recitative" (Op. 40).'

[19] **http://www.antheil.org/** (accessed 21 April 2010) ; a website devoted to the life and work of the author, composer, inventor and pianist George Antheil (1900–1959)

[20] The remainder of the programme included compositions by Muriel Hodge, David Barnett and Carl Bricken. The *Prelude and Fugue in B minor* was the first piece on the programme and the only organ work. Heyman notes in was the first time Barber's music was heard at Curtis (Heyman, p. 62).

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In further considering the Prelude we are reminded that Barber's study was extremely traditional, even by the standards of the day. He had a thorough knowledge of both Renaissance and Baroque styles and his realizations of Bach chorales and counterpoint exercises attest to his ability in these fields. However, the Prelude offers us perhaps a glimpse in Barber's much-noted sense of humour.[21] For whilst there is a clear originality in the work, there is also a pleasant acknowledgement to past traditions: the use of canon, of an ostinato 'string' line for the pedal part, of a 4–3 suspension (b. 19) as well as the continuous use of imitation and counterpoint, and of a hemiola at the very end. As such Barber affords himself a subtle dalliance into the practices of the past whilst maintaining – not least through the use of chromaticism – a thoroughly original work.

The Fugue – *Andante con moto* – has a three-bar subject that is followed by an especially low entry of the second voice at b. 4 with the low F # on the manuals. The third voice entry at b. 7, a fourth above, continues the gradual ascent of register with the fourth voice entering on the F # below middle C at b. 10 and then the fifth voice entering on B at b. 13. It would be curious to know what Scalero made of this slightly unorthodox writing, with such a dense texture emerging in the lower register. However, the following quote of Menotti may shed some light on his views towards fugue writing in general.

> With fugues, for example, when I told him, 'But Maestro, I have never written a fugue', he answered, 'Don't be ridiculous, do you think that Bach had someone to teach him how to write a fugue? Just look at his fugues; you have eyes, you have ears'. He was very sharp about that … And if your fugue had a dull theme, he wouldn't even look at it. He would say, 'How can you write a fugue on such a dull theme? Go home and write another one'.[22]

These remarks perhaps go some way to clarifying that if the piece were well constructed and not 'dull', it was likely to meet with Scalero's approval and the position of Barber's work on a concert entirely filled with music of his students reinforces this suggestion.

The writing in the fugue is generally very idiomatic for the instrument, with the exception of some arguably impossible stretches for the right hand of a thirteenth at b. 22 and elevenths at bb. 24 and 54. The writing would not present the same issues to a pianist, as the upper voices could still sound whilst the lower ones moved by use of the sustaining pedal. However, on the organ this would present some obstacle to maintaining the legato touch this style of piece seems to demand.

Aside from the slightly angular nature of the subject with its octave ascent followed by a seventh descent, it is the registrational demands that deserve some attention here. We know that Barber commented on writing in the registrations at Longwood – albeit with few details – and so we can assume that, with his keen ear, he had fairly exact ideas for the first performance of this work at Curtis. However, what is slightly unclear from the manuscript is which of the markings were made by Scalero, Weinrich or by Barber himself. The expression markings added are believed to be in Scalero's hand. This noted, it is fair to assume that the registrations were in keeping with Barber's own predilections concerning the performance of his music and the organ. Irrespective of which hand notated the instructions, the information provided is not only precise – not to say fastidious – but also allows the modern performer a backward glance towards the performance practice of the day.

[21] Menotti noted he was 'very funny and charming, with a wonderful sense of humour that could set people laughing for hours', BBC Broadcast, 23 January 1982, interviewed by Peter Dickinson.

[22] Heyman, pp. 35–36.

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Prior to the *orgelbewegung*[23] movement's impact on the American musical scene, the relatively symphonic interpretation of the great fugues of the Baroque era may be regarded as a common occurrence. For example, rather than merely set a registration and then continuing for the duration of the piece, the stops were instead modestly adjusted at regular intervals. Indeed one notes that in the present fugue a complimentary registration has already occurred by the entrance of the fourth voice. Barber employs all four manuals of the Curtis organ – a large instrument with a rich tonal palette of stops and a huge dynamic range – and keeps the listeners' attention throughout with a careful readjustment of stops as the piece develops. Overall though it is massive crescendo from *pianissimo* to *fortississimo*, concluding – with another nod to the Baroque – with a stretto made all the more dramatic by the slowing of the tempo to *adagio*. Whereas many composers have tended to treat 'student fugues' as mere exercises, this is a true contribution to the repertoire. Indeed the care and attention shown to the registration alone illuminate the fact that Barber took this opportunity very seriously.

His next organ work, the *Chorale for a New Organ*,[24] appears in 1936. It was written for the new Kilgen instrument at Westminster Presbyterian Church in West Chester, Pennsylvania, where Ruth Thomas was organist for 40 years. At 23 bars it is easily Barber's shortest organ work and it would be easy to see it as a rather rudimentary or purely functional piece. Titled 'chorale', one might conclude that Barber had the traditional bar form in mind when he decided on repeating the first section, albeit with an increase in the dynamic range from *forte* to *fortissimo*; the concluding 'B' section is marked *fortississimo*.

Marked *adagio* and centred on the key of D minor, the *Chorale* once again shows a full understanding of the instrument, not least in the division of voices from left hand to pedal, which are wholly independent. The phrases are clearly marked and the melody, whilst not in any sense obviously singable, nonetheless has an ebb and flow to each phrase. The homophonic texture is very largely four-part, although it expands to as many as seven voices with pitches being doubled at the octave. The final three bars in the final *piú lento* section effectively use augmentation for the last six chords, complete with moving inner voices. The final chord however has an element of curiosity to it. Firstly, the pedal part is in two voices; low D and the A above. One some organs this can produce the gentle effect of a 32 ft. foundation pitch (one octave below the customary 16 ft. pitch which is an octave below the written score); but on most instruments this use of doubling would generally produce an unwelcome and unexpected drone to the listener. That said, Barber also ends with an unusually low chord in the left hand, so it is quite possible that on the instrument of Westminster Presbyterian Church this was overall a thoroughly convincing effect. The other query over the last bar rests with the crescendo that is marked. As one foot would generally be required to operate a Swell box, the question of how the crescendo was to be achieved if both feet were already employed remains something of a mystery. (It should be noted that the organ of Westminster Presbyterian Church did not have the facility to create a crescendo through a manual device, as was the case on a small number of larger symphonic instruments.)

[23] A substantial article on this movement/revival has been contributed by the late Lawrence Phelps, and can now be found at the link **http://lawrencephelps.com/Documents/Articles/Phelps/ashorthistory.shtml** (accessed 21 April 2010)

[24] Barber, Samuel. *Chorale for a New Organ*. Autograph, 1936. Westminster Presbyterian Church, West Chester, Pennsylvania. Barber, Samuel. *Music for Organ*. New York: G. Schirmer, 2010.

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It is perhaps no surprise that a transcription of the famous *Adagio* from the *String Quartet*, op. 11 (1936) would be made for the organ – an instrument capable of long sustained lines akin to the bowings of the original string instruments. The success of the *Adagio* came in part from Toscanini's NBC broadcast of the orchestral version on 5 November 1938, but also from later hearings at the radio announcement of the death of Franklin D. Roosevelt and for famous funerals and memorials, most recently in the joint session of the Polish Parliament and Senate (2010). The arrangement of the *Adagio* is the work of William Strickland,[25] then Assistant Organist at St. Bartholomew's Church on Park Avenue, New York, who had been 'bowled over'[26] by the Toscanini broadcast. He eventually met Barber in 1939 at a private musicale in New York.[27] (Strickland would later conducted the première of the choral work *A stopwatch and an Ordnance Map* during his time as head of the Army Music School at Fort Meyer, Virginia.)

Although Barber had been relatively despondent about Strickland's arrangement when first presented with it, Strickland nonetheless retained the copy, which was eventually published in 1949. In a letter to Strickland Barber wrote:

> Schirmers have had several organ arrangements submitted of my "Adagio for Strings" and many inquiries as to whether it exists for organ. I have always turned them down, as, although I know little about the organ, I am sure your arrangement would be best. Have you got the one you did before, if not, would you be willing to make it anew? If so, will you ever be in N.Y. on leave, so I could discuss it with you and hear it? If it is done at all, I should like it done as well as possible, and this by you. They would pay you a flat fee for the arrangement, although I don't suppose very much. However, that is their affair. Let me know what you think about it. It does not have to be done immediately, although they are rather insistent. [28]

The published arrangement includes registration suggestions for both a Pipe Organ and a Hammond Organ, as was commonplace for many new organ publications at that time. However, beyond that the performance suggestions are surprisingly minor and as such there were few limitations, if any, that the publishers placed on their potential buyers. Here was a well known piece that could easily be taken into the repertoire of almost any organist, anywhere.

It was to be 22 years before the material for the next original solo organ work emerged: *Wondrous Love: Variations on a Shape-Note Hymn Op. 34* (1958).[29] In the summer of 1957, whilst in Rome completing the orchestration of his opera *Vanessa*, Barber met Richard Roeckelein, organist of the cardinal parish of Christ Episcopal Church, Grosse Pointe, Michigan. Later that year the idea had emerged to commission a piece for the inauguration of a new organ at the church built by Walter Henry Holtkamp, Sr. The instrument was to be of three-manuals and

[25] *New York Times* Obituary, 25 November, 1991: 'Mr. Strickland was born in Defiance, Ohio, and moved with his family to New York City, where he began studying the organ at the age of 10. He attended the Cathedral Choir School at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. As a teen-ager, he became the organist of Christ Church in Bronxville, N.Y., and Calvary Episcopal Church in Manhattan. In 1946, he helped to found the 60-member Nashville Symphony Orchestra, serving as its first conductor for five years. In the 1950's, he was the conductor of the Oratorio Society of New York. Working with the State Department, he conducted concerts of American music in Europe and the Far East. A number of American pieces he conducted were recorded. In 1955, he conducted the inaugural concert in a fund-raising series to preserve Carnegie Hall. In 1956 he conducted a concert for the 60th anniversary of the American Guild of Organists. In his later years, he specialized in electronic music and in adapting the scores of Charles Ives to it. (William Remsen Strickland 1914–1991).'

[26] Heyman, 175

[27] ibid.

[28] Heyman, 175–176.

[29] Barber, Samuel. *Music for Organ*. New York: G. Schirmer, 2010.

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in the classic design which Holtkamp favoured in that era. After agreeing to the commission, Barber visited Grosse Pointe to acquaint himself with the church, during which Roeckelein passed on a copy of some Bach chorale preludes which demonstrated how Bach had used musical gesture to symbolize human emotions. [30]

However, Barber eventually selected the well-known tune of 'What wondrous love is this, oh! my soul!' from the *Southern Harmony* (1835) collection. At the front of the published edition the choral version is printed with the following note, quoting in part from the Gospel of John (3:16):

> The authorship of the words and music are unknown. The words represent the great manifestation of the love of God for the world, in giving His only begotten Son to die for the world and that all who believe in him shall not perish but have everlasting life. No greater love has ever been expressed in the world than this. This tune is one of the stirring melodies of the old sacred songs and it is yet loved and highly appreciated by the church people in many sections of the country. Tune was printed in the "Southern Harmony," 1835, page 282.[31]

In the presentation of the theme (*In moderate tempo*), Barber moves the tenor tune to the soprano voice, although he retains a four-part texture. The first variation uses the Baroque affectation of 'sighing seconds' (signifying weeping) – Roeckelein may well have discussed Bach's usage of affect when he passed on the edition of chorales – whilst the tune is retained in the soprano voice. The second variation, set as a trio, places the tune in crotchets in the pedals and in diminution and canon in the manuals. The thoroughly jovial nature immediately brings to mind the typically full-blooded singing of the 'Sacred Harp tradition'. By dramatic contrast the third variation begins with a pedal drone of an open fifth, with the tune in the left hand and an embellished melody of triplets in the right hand. Although the drone is replaced with just one pedal note within three bars, the hollow sound established is then reinforced by a sequence of open fourths in the left-hand in the subsequent line.

The concluding section, with a quaver pulse of 66, is perhaps the most significant case of word-painting found in Barber's organ writing. In a style reminiscent of the Baroque fantasia, a few notes of each phrase are taken as a cell to be embellished. In this instance the tune is not easily traceable to the listener whilst the tonal language has moved beyond the early part of the piece to be somewhat reminiscent of later Brahms. Chromaticism is employed, most notably with the descending stepwise series of fourths in the left hand. The overall musical effect is one of great poignancy – and perhaps even Passiontide devotion – as Barber rather hauntingly brings the work to a close with a *tierce de Picardie*.

The score offers us another glimpse into Barber's concepts of organ registration. It is clear that not only did he favour contrasting tonal colours for each variation (as one would expect in the performance of a Baroque work), but also favoured a more orchestral (Romantic) approach as well. The concluding variation has no fewer than eight registration changes, plus dynamic shifts through adjustments of the swell box. Indeed the closing page looks somewhat similar to the *Prelude and Fugue in B minor* for the detail expressed. This observation owes as much to the performance practice of many organists of the time as it arguably does to Barber's own instincts. However, what we can be certain of through the published markings in *Wondrous Love* is that Barber clearly

[30] Heyman, 400–401.

[31] Barber, *Wondrous Love – Variations on a Shape-Note Hymn* (New York: G. Schirmer, Inc., 1959).

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understood the instrument and its capabilities. As we shall see later, his knowledge of the instrument's repertoire is further illuminated by his detailed account of music to be performed at his own funeral.

Barber's penultimate contribution to the organ literature was by far the largest, the *Toccata Festiva*, op. 36 (1960) for organ and orchestra.[32] This commission must have had great personal significance to the composer. It was written at the request of Mary Zimbalist for the opening of the new Aeolian-Skinner organ of the Philadelphia Academy of Music. The organ was donated by Mary Zimbalist in memory of her father, Cyrus H. K. Curtis.[33] As such, Barber was writing for an instrument he had been familiar with from his earliest compositions, with a commission for one of the most important orchestras in the country – and indeed in his home State – and all in relation to Mary Zimbalist, who had done so much to further his career at multiple points. Indeed, so grateful was Barber that he declined the report commission fee of $2,000.[34]

Although Aaron Copland's *Symphony for Organ and Orchestra* (1924)[35] had been in the repertoire for some time, the Barber work was an important departure. As neither a symphony nor concerto, the composer was freed from some of the customary constraints and expectations. However, there was also the curious innovation of the new organ's design. The Aeolian-Skinner Company of Boston had built an instrument that was heralded as 'a lordly example in the royal tradition'[36]and at the point of its installation was the largest movable pipe organ in the world, weighing 200,000lb with 4,102 pipes across 3 manuals and pedals, with a total of 73 stops. The idea behind the installation was to have an organ that could be moved on and off stage as needed for performances.

The *Toccata Festiva* exists in two editions; one for full orchestra and organ and the other for strings, trumpet, timpani and organ. In the words of the contemporary British composer Nicholas Maw

> *Toccata Festiva* is a big occasional piece full of flourishes and fanfares. The orchestra is large, with a percussion section of four players. The organ part will sound brilliant but is not unduly difficult, except for the pedal cadenza where the player needs fleetness of foot to get over all the notes in time.[37]

The organist for the first performance was Paul Callaway,[38] the famed organist of Washington National Cathedral, although curiously the composer only invited him to play it one month before the première.[39] The concert took place on 30 September 1960 and was a double celebration as Euguene Ormandy was also celebrating his twenty-fifth season as conductor. The work was said to have received 'tumultuous applause'.[40] It was subsequently played again by Callaway in the reduced orchestral version with Richard Dirksen conducting the National Symphony Orchestra on Washington, DC on 23 May 1961.

[32] Barber, Samuel. *Toccata Festiva*. New York: G. Schirmer, 1960.
[33] *New York Times*, 25 September, 1960. The programme also included Saint-Saëns's Symphony No. 3 and Beethoven's Seventh Symphony.
[34] Heyman, 405.
[35] Perlis, V., **www.boosey.com** (accessed 21 April 2010). Koussevitzky became music director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra just as Copland was returning from France to America in 1924. He asked Copland to compose a large orchestral work with organ for Boulanger to play with Walter Damrosch in New York and with him in Boston. 'I had never heard a note of my own orchestration', exclaimed Copland, 'but Nadia and Koussevitzky both said, "You can do it!" I will never forget the thrill of the glorious sound of the orchestra playing my own music for the first time'.
[36] Whiteford, J., Aeolian Skinner Company of Boston, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 10 October 1960.
[37] Maw, N., *The Musical Times*, vol. 103, No. 1429, March 1962, 181.
[38] Paul Callaway OBE (1909–1995) obituary, *The Musical Times*, Vol. 136, No. 1829 (Jul., 1995), 386.
[39] Heyman, 406.
[40] de Schauensee, M. *Philadelphia Bulletin*, 1 October 1960.

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Barber's final work for organ is almost contemporary with the *Toccata Festiva* and is a transcription by the composer himself; a setting of *Stille Nacht* (1960),[41] taken from the orchestral suite *Die Natali*, op. 37 (1960). Opus 37 is scored for full orchestra, including percussion with bells, celesta and cymbals. It was the second commission Barber received from the Koussevitzky Music Foundation for the Boston Symphony Orchestra. However, it took him six years to begin writing the piece, during which time he was engaged writing the opera *Vanessa*. *Die Natali* is dedicated to Serge and Natalie Koussevitsky and Barber started to compose it at Capricorn, completing a first draft in 1960.[42] The piece is a stylish collage of different, but well-known, Christmas carols that is much in the style of the contemporary American Christmas symphony concert with each subsequent tune flowing effortlessly from the previous material. However, far from a saccharine tournée of the well-trodden path, Barber offers counterpoint, canon and double canon in the course of his piece and each is noted as a 'choral prelude'.

The orchestral première took place under Charles Münch on 22 December 1960, with a repeat performance on the 23rd. *Stille Nacht* (*Silent Night*) is the final section. As Barber noted in a letter that he 'particularly like[d]' the variations on 'Silent Night'[43] it is not especially surprisingly that, given his own affinity for the instrument, a transcription soon followed. It is an interesting piece in that the melody is treated with a modest amount of rhythmic freedom which allows a certain spaciousness to the overall setting.

Samuel Osmond Barber II died on 23 January 1981. As one could anticipate from a man of taste and refinement, specific requests had been left for his funeral that included particular organ works, interestingly only of J.S. Bach.

> the following Bach chorales (the chorale should be played first, followed by the chorale-prelude; page references are to the Barenreiter edition now located in the library of my apartment in New York, New York): "Das alte Jahr vergangen ist (p. 49); "Christ, Du Lamm Gottes" (pp. 66–67); "O Mensch, bewein dein Suende Gross" (p. 75); "Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ (p. 119); and other such works or works of mine, if any, as my Executors shall choose.[44]

The funeral was held at First Presbyterian Church, West Chester, Pennsylvania on 26 January 1981, with subsequent memorial services on 9 February at St. Bartholomew's Church, Park Avenue, New York and on 3 May 1981 at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, New York.

Through the recent publication of the complete organ works [45] we are now able to fully assess the composer and his contribution to the literature. As the works are spread across his life and are comparatively few in number, it is fair to note that the styles and musical language vary somewhat. However, from the earliest works – each an elegant and valuable contribution in its own right – to the thrilling *Toccata Festiva* and beyond, we find a composer whose output for the instrument is marked with integrity and a keen sense of ingenuity. Indeed several works represent not only significant contributions to the literature of American organ music, but also offer us a window into the time capsule in which they were written. In this regard *To Longwood Gardens* is perhaps the most interesting work of all to musicologists, being thoroughly programmatic and, indeed, written at a time when the association of the

[41] Barber, Samuel. *Music for Organ*. New York: G. Schirmer, 2010.
[42] Heyman, forthcoming thematic catalogue.
[43] Philadelphia Orchestra Archives, letter 16 November, 1979.
[44] Will of Samuel Barber, p. 2, Records of the New York State Surrogate's Court, cited in Heyman, 508.

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organ in entertainment was considerable in the lives of many, and where the culture of the house organ reigned supreme amongst the 'great and the good'.

It is hoped this article will move the reader to discover in their own way the great riches of Barber's music, both for the organ and beyond, as we remember him in this anniversary year and treasure the legacy he left to the musical firmament.

The words of Gerald Manley Hopkins (1844–1889), so beautifully set for choir by Barber, sum up much of the composer's presence in the realm of 20th-century music and the affinity still shared for his work.

I have desired to go
Where springs not fail,
To fields where flies no sharp and sided hail
And a few lilies blow.

And I have asked to be
Where no storms come,
Where the green swell is in the havens dumb,
And out of the swing of the sea.[46]

[45] Barber, S., The Organ Works, G. Schirmer, Inc/Hal Leonard, 2010.
[46] Manley Hopkins, G., *Heaven-Haven*.

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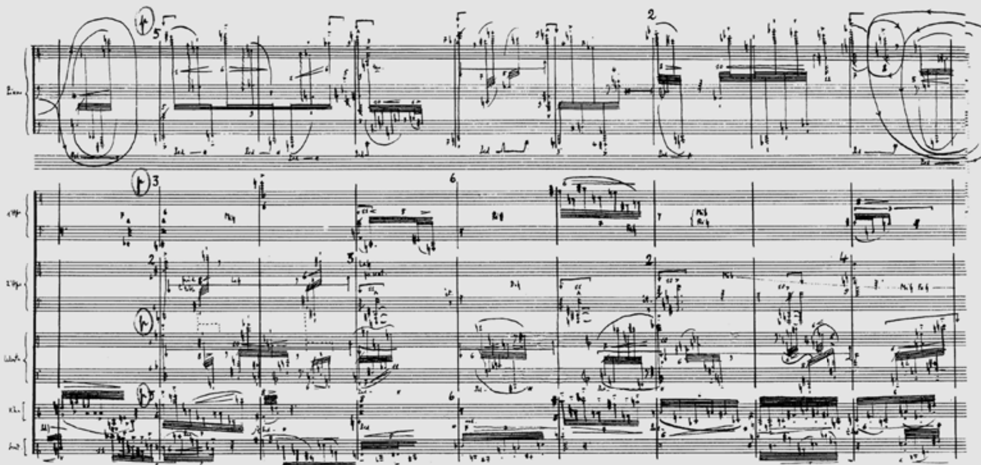
Pierre Boulez – Tombeau

Facsimile edition now available

Unlike the world première of *Marteau sans maître* (1952-55), that of *Tombeau* for orchestra (1959), which took place in Donaueschingen on 17 October 1959, passed almost unnoticed – outshone by Pierre Boulez's unexpected triumph as a conductor when he stepped in to replace Hans Rosbaud at the head of the Südwestfunk-Sinfonieorchester. Originally conceived as an individual tribute to Prince Max Egon zu Fürstenberg, who died suddenly in spring 1959, the work was ultimately included in the Pli selon pli cycle (1957-62, 1983, 1990).

To celebrate the composer's 85th birthday and the 50th anniversary of the world première, the Paul Sacher Foundation and Universal Edition have now published the two original manuscripts of the score for the first time: the pencil draft and a fair copy in different coloured inks. These fine examples of high-quality reproductions are also the earliest evidence of Boulez's friendship with Paul Sacher. The composer presented the scores to Sacher in the early 1960s.

The facsimiles are prefaced by an introduction, which places the work in a historical and aesthetic context and takes a look at the compositional techniques used. It is illustrated by a selection of manuscripts from different stages of the creative process, as well as other related documents.



Pierre Boulez
Tombeau
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