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Selective Annotated Bibliography

By Juliet Levy

November 2019

Amy Beach and Ralph Vaughan Williams, both composers of the late 19th, early 20th centuries, composed unaccompanied choral settings of William Shakespeare's "Over Hill, Over Dale," from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Vaughan Williams' setting received far more attention in reviews and in general academia, while Beach's work goes relatively unnoticed. As two composers known for representing their nationalities, for being talented composers of a wide variety of genres, who lived around the same time, and whose main instrument was not voice, I posit that a comparison between the two settings would be valuable and enlightening as well as also bring Beach's work more awareness. In this essay, I will conduct a musical comparison between the works, describe the circumstances the composers faced while writing the works, and use the history of American part-song and women's music clubs to speculate on the background behind Beach's op. 39, as there is little to no history behind its composition.

Beach, Amy M. and Ednah Aiken. "Amy Beach, Composer, on 'Why I Chose My Profession.'" In *Music in the USA: A Documentary Companion*. Edited by Judith Tick and Paul Beaudoin. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008, 323-329.

One of the most valuable sources in the study of women composers is their own writings, which are often hard to come by. In this essay, Beach, herself, discusses the beginnings of her career and her family life. This source will be important in order to characterize her feelings about herself and her career. Perhaps the most compelling aspect of this essay is that Beach is not fully sincere, or is maybe confused or influenced by her husband, in that she claims that her husband did not slow down her performance career, which the editor informs us is false. These kinds of perspectives are important for speculating Beach's influences and personality.

Block, Adrienne Fried. *Amy Beach, Passionate Victorian: The Life and Work of an American Composer, 1867-1944*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Block's biography on Amy Beach is rich with detail and will be indispensable for any information regarding Beach's life. *Passionate Victorian* includes many images of Beach, concert programs, and other sources to help illustrate the composer's life. Block's work also is one of the few that makes mention of Beach's works for solo unaccompanied women's chorus, which will be necessary in order to support any historical statements made about her op. 39.

———. "Why Amy Beach Succeeded as a Composer: The Early Years." *Current Musicology*, no. 36 (Fall 1983): 41–59.

In this more focused essay on Beach's career, Block provides an in-depth analysis of the composer's circumstances as a woman composer in her different spheres. Block chronicles the

public's perception of Beach and her impact on the musical public of Boston and the United States in general. This analysis will provide valuable context for Beach's compositional career. Blunsom, Laurie K. "Gender, Genre and professionalism : the songs of Clara Rogers, Helen Hopekirk, Amy Beach, Margaret Lang and Mabel Daniels, 1880-1925." P.h.D. diss, Brandeis University, May 1999. PQDT.

Blunsom's dissertation covers a variety of topics that relate to the history of Beach's op. 39, which has not been given in-depth study. Using Blunsom's discussion of Women's musical clubs (who would have performed op. 39) and women in Boston will allow for more context for the time Beach's op. 39 was written and give more room for speculation as to the history behind the work.

Conte, David. "Ralph Vaughan Williams's 'Three Shakespeare Songs': An Analytical Guide for Conductors and Composers." *The Choral Journal* 42, no. 9 (April 2002): <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23554404>.

David Conte provides a performance guide for Vaughan Williams' piece, which will be useful for its analyses of performance and theoretical technique. Apart from the performance and theoretical techniques, Conte provides quite a bit of background information and qualitative perspectives on *Three Shakespeare Songs* which will add to a discussion of the reception of Vaughan Williams' work.

Hicks, Val. "Compositional Practices of Ralph Vaughan Williams as Revealed in Selected Choral Works." M.M. thesis, University of Southern California, June 1969. PQDT.

Besides providing another perspective on techniques in Vaughan Williams' choral writing including "Over Hill, Over Dale," Hicks' thesis brings more commentary on his choral style in general as it relates to his *Three Shakespeare Songs*. This will be helpful when comparing the choral styles of Beach and Vaughan Williams and the techniques they use, both as non-singing composers.

Jenkins, Walter S. *The Remarkable Mrs. Beach, American Composer: A Biographical Account Based on her Diaries, Letters, Newspaper Clippings, and Personal Reminiscences*. Edited by John H. Baron. Warren, Mich: Harmonie Park Press, 1997.

Jenkins' colorful biography is the only source I found that provides any specific historical background to Beach's op. 39. Beyond this crucial information, Jenkins does a great service to the reader by including letters, reviews, and other primary source materials for greater understanding of Beach's life.

McGuire, Charles Edward. "'An Englishman and a Democrat': Vaughan Williams, Large Choral Works, and the British Festival Tradition." In *The Cambridge Companion to Vaughan Williams*, edited by Alain Frogley and Aidan J. Thomson, 121-35. Cambridge Companions to Music. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

McGuire's essay on Vaughan Williams' large choral works chronicles the composer's circumstances behind his choral works as well as the story behind his beginnings as a choral composer. In addition to this, McGuire also describes how Vaughan Williams' choral works interact with his nationality and discusses his works' inclusion in British music festivals. This essay will be useful in order to contextualize Vaughan Williams' choral compositions and how they relate to his nationality.

Reigles, Barbara J. "The Choral Music of Amy Beach." P.h.D. diss, Texas Tech University, May 1996. PQDT.

Similar to Schroeder and Conte's guides on Vaughan Williams, Reigles provides a detailed performance guide for Beach's choral works. Not only does she make the reader aware of the technical aspects performers would be concerned with, but also Reigles describes the overall trends of American choral music (sacred and secular) during Beach's time. Reigles' history of American part-songs (the genre of op. 39) as well as her section on secular American choral music of the time will be particularly useful when discussing Beach's op. 39 and speculating the reason for its creation.

Schroeder, David. "The late unaccompanied choral works of Ralph Vaughan-Williams: A conductor's analysis and performance guide." D.M.A. diss., University of South Carolina, 2012. PQDT.

Schroeder's performance guide to Vaughan Williams' unaccompanied works pays attention to details within *Three Shakespeare Songs* that are specific to unaccompanied choral works. Like Conte's guide, Schroeder specifically discusses the third song in *Three Shakespeare Songs*, "Over Hill, Over Dale," and focuses on the music theory related aspects of the work and goes on to discuss performance considerations. This guide will support a comparison between the technical aspects and performing style of Vaughan Williams and Beach's settings.

Strimple, Nick. "Choral Music in the Twentieth and Early Twenty-first Centuries." In *The Cambridge Companion to Choral Music*, edited by André De Quadros, 43-60. Cambridge Companions to Music. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Amongst all the works cited here, Strimple's essay is the only one that includes history of both Beach and Vaughan Williams. The inclusion of both of these composers as representative of choral music during the 20th century validates my effort to compare their works as being from two contemporaneous composers. Strimple's essay provides historical context to all of the choral composers mentioned and presents their compositions as borne from their circumstances as composers living during the world wars and other global changes from the 20th century.

Tick, Judith. "Women as Professional Musicians in the United States, 1870-1900." *Anuario Interamericano De Investigación Musical*, 9 (1973): 95-133.

Tick's article presents an in-depth view of the hardships faced by women musicians during the last 30 years of the 19th century. Investigating many sides of the issue, women

instrumentalists, women composers, and women ensembles, Tick discusses the effects of early feminist and anti-feminist movements on women in music. This resource will prove useful when discussing Beach's agency as a composer and musician, especially because the time period lines up with the beginnings of her career as well as the year she published op. 39.