A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE CHORAL WORKS OF ROY HARRIS

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the North Texas State Teachers College in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

By

Katharine E. Crawford, B. M., B. A.

Kilgore, Texas

August, 1942
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for the Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability of the Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources of Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. BIOGRAPHY OF ROY HARRIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. A SURVEY OF HARRIS' CHORAL WORKS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmony and Tonality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhythm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counterpoint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice Spacing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STYLE OF ROY HARRIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. PREDICTION OF HARRIS' PLACE IN AMERICAN MUSIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure  | Description                                                                 | Page |
---------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
1        | An Upward Progression with One Descending Interval to Make an Assertion     | 16   |
2        | Straight Upward Progression to Make an Assertion                            | 16   |
3        | Graphic Aspect of the Tears Motive                                          | 17   |
4        | The Graphic Idion Suggesting the Movement of the Waves of the Ocean         | 18   |
5        | Example Showing Harris' Long Melodic Line                                   | 18   |
6        | Measure one Is a Germ Theme; Succeeding Measures Are Theme Reconstitutions  | 19   |
7        | A Lengthy Theme, Showing Reconstitution in Various Ways                     | 20   |
8        | Opening Interval of a Fourth                                                | 20   |
9        | Opening Interval of a Fourth                                                | 20   |
10       | Interval of a Fourth in the Melodic Line                                    | 21   |
11       | Diminished Fifths in Sequence with Perfect Fourths in the Melodic Line      | 21   |
12       | Octave Skip in Melodic Line                                                 | 22   |
13       | Octave Skip in Melodic Line                                                 | 22   |
14       | Modal Line in the Melody -- b^b to a^b to b^b rather than the Usual b^b to a Natural to b^b | 23   |
15       | Fifth in bass; third in bass                                                | 24   |

iv
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16. Major Seventh Chord (g b d f #) in Outer Voices with Melody in Inner Voices</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Major Seventh (face) in Second Inversion (c in bass)</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Use of Pedal Point in Various Voices</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Cross Relation with Effect of Chromaticism</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Shifting of Meter by Note Values Instead of by Signature</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. A Broken Bar to Simplify an Irregular Meter</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. A Four-beat and a Three-beat on a 6/8 Meter</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Triple Meter Against Duple Meter</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. A Four-beat Meter Phrased as a Three-beat Meter</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Three Meters Running Simultaneously</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Shifted Accents from the One and Three Beats to the Two and Four Beats</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Tie Across the Bar</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Tie Across the Bar</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Eighth-note, Eighth-rest Combination at a Phrasing Point</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Quarter-note Phrase Replaced with Eighth-note, Eighth-rest Combination for Variety</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Quarter-eighth Sequence in 3/4 Time -- Syncopation</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Use of Triplets</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Use of Triplets</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Use of Triplets</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Use of Canon</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. Example of Canon at the Fifth</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. Canon at the Fourth</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. Style of Imitation in Which the New Entrance, with the Exception of the Soprano, Begins with the Last Note of the Preceding Entrance</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Example of Descending Imitation</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. Solo Voices in Canonic Entrances</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. Triple Fugue Example: Theme Stated by First Bass and Tenor in Unison, by Soprano and Alto in Unison Next, and by Second Bass Last</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. Voice Spacing Showing Unusual Distances Between Soprano and Alto</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. Unusually Close Spacing of Voices</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44. Parts Written out of the Natural Range of the Voices</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45. Vertical Spacing at Intervals of Fourths and Fifths in Accompaniment with the Melody</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46. Antiphonal Singing Between Male and Female Voices</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The Problem

Roy Harris is an American composer who has contributed and is still contributing to the field of modern music. This study is concerned with his choral music and the substantiation of the fact that his contributions in this field are outstanding and are expressive of a living Americanism. It is also the purpose of the study to examine and analyze the choral works of this notable Oklahoma composer and teacher in an effort to determine what Harris has to say musically and his method of expressing himself.

Need for the Study

Students and scholars of today find it difficult to collect material in the form of biographical notes, criticisms of works, and general activities of contemporaries. For this reason research is often discontinued, leaving perplexing questions unanswered. Many students of modern music are in urgent need of compact findings on pioneering and daring modern composers. To these students a study
such as is now presented would prove fact-revealing and
time-saving. It would be definitely helpful to choral
singers, since it includes an exploration of the more
modern vocal efforts of an American composer and offers
present-day choral groups a field of music quite different
from the conventional type of choral composition. Such
harmonic structure and contrapuntal treatment as are found
in Harris' choral works will be of interest to aspiring
young students of composition and modern harmony. Although
the study is one of choral compositions in particular, at-
tention is called to the extremely broad field of writing,
whereby students of such interests may note similarities be-
tween vocal and instrumental works. It is the belief of
the writer that when auditors avail themselves of opportuni-
ties to hear these works, applying themselves studiously
and thoughtfully, Harris' pen will have aroused an emphatic
demand for more of such genuinely individual and truly
American contributions to twentieth-century music.

Reliability of the Data

Prior to the actual work on this endeavor, Wilfred C.
Bain, head of the Music Department of North Texas State
Teachers College, Denton, Texas, approved the table of con-
tents, which outlines the procedure followed. Besides the
biographical sketch of the composer, the plan called for an
examination of the choral works of Roy Harris, with specific
examples of the stylistic elements found in the study and analysis of them. The complete list of compositions for voices was obtained directly from the composer himself, and copies for study were secured from the publishers.

The purpose of this study is one of objectivity. The analysis of musical content is with the intent of delving deeply into the choral works of this modern composer, seeking to discover the ideas introduced and the composer's methods.

For further verifications of any conclusions drawn, letters were written to twenty-five prominent choral composers and conductors of this country, asking for their personal evaluation of Harris' choral works. Excerpts from this correspondence may be found in Chapter V.

Sources of Information

Since Roy Harris is still living, much of the information about him was necessarily obtained from magazine and newspaper articles. Even material from these sources was scarce. The Musical Quarterly, Modern Music, Time, Newsweek, and Scribner's Magazine each supplied valuable facts gathered from study and observation, as did the section on music, art, and drama of the Sunday edition of the New York Times, and Reviews and Criticisms of Roy Harris, a booklet published by G. Schirmer, Inc., New York. Other musical magazines contributed biographical facts and information as to Harris' activities up to the present date.
Supplying the most current sources of information were the expressions of contemporary choral composers about Harris' choral compositions. These are considered of unusual importance in evaluating the composer's work.

No personal acquaintance was ever effected between the composer and the writer, but the correspondence with him provided facts unobtainable elsewhere. Harris' references to several articles lately published about himself and his works proved helpful, as did his answers to questions asked about his life and musical career.

Procedure

Method of investigation. -- Following are the preliminary steps to the study:

1. Collection of bibliographical material on the problem.

2. A study of the critical literature in the general field of modern choral music.

3. A detailed study of the scores of the composer's choral music to determine the characteristics of each element of style, and the selection of examples to illustrate the various characteristics.

Method of presentation. -- In Chapter I the problem, the need for the study, the reliability of the data, the sources of information, and the procedure are given. In Chapter II is given the biography of the composer. In
Chapter III the analyses of the choral works with reference to melody, harmony, tonality, meter, rhythm, counterpoint, voice spacing, and form are given. Also included are characteristic examples of each. Following the title of each figure is given the name of the composition, the page, the score, and the measure from which the illustration is taken, together with the name of the publisher of the selection. For example, Fig. 1 is taken from "Freedom, Toleration," page two, score one, measures one to three; and this composition is published by Mills Music, Inc., New York. All references to all works refer to Roy Harris.

In Chapter IV a study of Harris' choral style is presented. In Chapter V the writer deals with the opinions of Harris' choral works as expressed by leading choral composers and conductors of America. Chapter VI contains the summary and conclusions.
CHAPTER II

BIOGRAPHY OF ROY HARRIS

Roy Harris, born in Lincoln County, Oklahoma, February 12, 1898, is the child of Scotch-Irish American parents. We are told by David Ewen that, curiously enough, like Abraham Lincoln, on whose birthday Harris was born, he first saw the light of day in a log cabin. Pioneer blood flows rich in his veins. His parents had gone in an oxcart with gun, axe, flour, and sugar, and staked out a claim in the last land rush.\(^1\)

The frontier home in Oklahoma soon proved its disadvantages, and when Harris' mother could no longer stand the constant attacks of malaria, the family moved on to California to live permanently. Harris was six years of age at this time, and it was in California that he lived the life of a farmer. He studied piano with his mother when he was eight, but he dropped his music when he went to high school. At eighteen he became an independent farmer and learned to play the clarinet as an avocation. Up to the time Harris was twenty-six years old, he watched the primitive settlement

\(^1\) David Ewen, Composers of Today, p. lll.
he called home grow into a large city.

The piano lessons from his mother, who played "by ear," aroused within him a ceaseless urge for musical self-expression which, at twenty-five, motivated the decision to make music his life-work. His general education was comparatively limited, with a lack of schooling in music up to his twenty-fifth birthday. He did, however, spend two years at the University of California, where his first interest was philosophy. He promptly deserted this field when he found philosophy to be mere "word juggling." He turned gropingly toward music because it had an absolute value for him.

When the first World War began, Harris entered the army as a private. In 1918, when he was released from the army, he supported himself with a truck-driving job. This job, oddly enough, reverted back to his early farm life, since it involved the distribution of some three thousand pounds of butter and three hundred dozen eggs a day. His work was supplemented with intensive study at night. It was during this interlude in his life that Harris decided he wanted to become a musician; and with this one thought in mind, he saved enough money to go to New York. Shortly afterwards he returned to California to study with Arthur Farwell.

---

2 Reviews and Criticisms of Roy Harris, G. Schirmer booklet, p. 3.

3 "Log Cabin Composer," Time, XXVI (November 11, 1932), 36.
In 1926 Harris went abroad to study with Nadia Boulanger in Paris. Here the composer Harris showed for a time the influence of the French modernists who sat at Boulanger's feet, but he soon got over these petty Parisian tricks and proceeded to compose in his own way.\(^{4}\)

For two years Harris had a Guggenheim Fellowship, and he remained abroad until 1929. During his stay in France there occurred an accident which the composer felt was the turning point in his career. According to David Ewen, late in the year 1929 Harris had the misfortune to fracture his spine, and he was confined to a hospital for six months.\(^{5}\) This incident forced him to return to America for a major operation. While recovering he had no access to a piano. This was the turning point in his career because it freed him permanently from the tyranny of the piano. Up to that time he had not been able to compose away from the keyboard. The long stay at the hospital showed him that he could compose freely without being at a piano. Harris feels that his accident put him ten years ahead artistically. Without the shackles of the piano, his composing was ten times quicker, and at the same time much more lucid.

By this time in Harris' career, counterpoint had gained the upper hand. John Howard Tasker contends that Harris

\(^{4}\)"Home-Grown Composer," *Time*, XXXV (April 8, 1940), 45.

\(^{5}\)Ewen, *op. cit.*, p. 111.
tries to bring modernism to classic conceptions -- not to the strict forms of tradition, but to the subtler spirit of classicism.\textsuperscript{6} In addition, his own background -- prairies, cowboys, bronchos, and California valleys -- all combine to make his music something that no one but himself could write.

In regard to Harris' progress, Henry Cowell writes:

That which makes one consider Harris very seriously is his steady progress, unbroken (each work is better than the one preceding), his utter seriousness and sincerity, his constant aim at the highest forms. Also, it would seem that one who has begun with such abject roughness of style, who has had to work furiously to carve out for himself each slightest improvement, whose smallest achievement has meant hard application, may have a chance through the very knowledge of his foundation which the focusing of his attention on every detail has given him, to advance further in the composer who has natural facility to too great a degree.\textsuperscript{7}

If such a person exists as a United States composer who has attained an authentically United States symphonic style, "a spare, gangling, tawny Oklahoman named Roy Harris may well be the man. Harris is as independent as a Panhandle cowhand, as dryly American as the Dust Bowl where he spent his childhood."\textsuperscript{8} He appeared in 1926 in Eastern concert halls with a somewhat homemade and crude symphonic

\textsuperscript{6}John Tasker Howard, \textit{Our American Music}, p. 573.
\textsuperscript{7}Ewen, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 110.
\textsuperscript{8}"Home-Grown Composer," \textit{Time}, XXXV (April 8, 1940), 45.
piece, and with one look, critics pronounced him "music's own Joaquin Miller."  

The year 1929 saw the first public appearance of a Harris choral work. This was the "Whitman Suite" for women's voices and two pianos, which was given "by the Women's University Glee Club in New York City."  

The Pasadena Music and Arts Association extended Harris a fellowship for creative work in 1931. The following year he went to New York, and it is from that time that his wide reputation dates. John Tasker Howard says: "The nerve centers of American musical activity are still in the East, whose citadels Harris set out to capture." He continues by saying that Harris is no "shrinking violet; he believes unreservedly in himself and he has the good fortune to make others share his faith."  

The composer's "Song for Occupations" is one of the seven works written by American composers on commissions from the League of Composers. It had been performed by the Westminster Choir in concerts abroad prior to its first New York hearing in 1934. The text comes from Walt Whitman's poem of the same title, while the work, according to a note by the composer, "expresses his belief that the workers

9Tbid.  
10Roy Harris, letter to the writer, February 11, 1942.  
11Howard, op. cit., p. 656.
(including mental as well as manual workers) are the most important part of any civilization."

Symphony for Voices (1936), which was composed for the Westminster Choir, marked a new step in choral music. It is in effect a vocal symphony in three parts. Following its performance, a Washington critic wrote:

Overpowering is this endless soaring over a cantus firmus in the first and second parts of the work entitled "Song for All Seas, All Ships," and "Tears," in the latter of which he achieves an extraordinary effect by combining the spoken word with song. With this work created, we need no longer search for a great American composer. He is found.

Folk-Song Symphony for orchestra and chorus, written during the winter of 1939, was heard in its first complete performance by Cleveland, Ohio, listeners in January, 1941. Part of it had been performed and broadcast at an Eastman Festival in Rochester in the spring of 1940; but because Artur Rodzinski, conductor of the Cleveland Symphony, was a friend of Harris, "Cleveland got first crack at the whole work." The long work is a five-movement setting of United States songs, with interludes of two dance tunes. The songs used are "When Johnny Comes Marching Home"; "Oh, Bury Me not on the Long Prairie"; "The Dying Cowboy"; "Oh, Pappy'll Tie My Shoes"; "De Trumpet Sounds It in My Soul"; and "The Gal I Left Behind Me."

12Reviews and Criticisms of Roy Harris, G. Schirmer booklet, p. 8.
13Ibid.
14"Folk-Song Symphony," Time, XXXVII (January 6, 1941), 34.
The Folk-Song Symphony moved critic Herbert Elwell to write:

Forty-five minutes swept by like a second and left one listener with the excited consciousness of having heard something like the American continent rising up and saying hello. This music is nothing if not one hundred per cent U. S. A. 15

Many honors have been bestowed upon Roy Harris, and each has been justly deserved. He was twice appointed to the Guggenheim Fellowship (1928-1930). His "Second String Quartette" was chosen by the Pro Arte Quartette of Belgium to represent contemporary music in the Chicago World's Fair (1933) "Hundred Years of Chamber Music" series. Harris received the highest vote for an American composer in the Columbia Broadcasting System's 1935-1936 poll. His "Third String Quartette" was selected by the Roth String Quartette to represent contemporary American music in the International Conference of Musicologists in New York City in 1939. He was awarded first honors for the most important score, Folk-Song Symphony, in 1940 by the Committee for Appreciation of American Music. It was also in 1940 that Harris received the certificate of honor for outstanding contributions to American music by the National Association of Composers and Conductors. This year marked the publication of Singing through the Ages in two volumes, of which Harris was a co-author. He contributes articles to Scribner's Magazine,

Harris has served as head of the composition department of the Westminster Choir School. He has been composer-in-residence at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, since 1941.

Both Victor and Columbia have made recordings of Harris' works. Victor has recorded "Second String Quartette"; "When Johnny Comes Marching Home"; "Three Variations on Theme"; Symphony for Voices; "Poem for Violin and Piano"; "Chorale for Six Strings"; and Third Symphony. Columbia has made recordings of "Concerto" for piano, clarinet, and string quartet; "Symphony 1933"; "Four Minutes and Twenty Seconds"; "Trio" for piano, violin, and violoncello; and "Song for Occupations." Among these recordings are the two choral works which Harris considers his best; namely, Symphony for Voices and "Song for Occupations."16

In describing the composer, Isaac Goldberg writes: "Roy Harris looks and sounds his Western origin. He is rather spare in build, and his voice has the barest suggestion of both lisp and twang."17 He has fair hair and eyes of bluish gray. He has the gift of listening. His diversions are tennis and chess. He is a radical, politically.

16 Roy Harris, letter to the writer, February 11, 1942.
17 Ewen, op. cit., p. 111.
Harris' greatest interest is in medieval music, of which he has made an intensive study. He feels that music has been on the decline since the time of Beethoven, and his reaction is especially strong against the music of Wagner, Berlioz, Liszt, and Richard Strauss. His is a belief in a new classicism, but he has no preferences among modern composers. He believes in the future of music. Harris says:

With the instruments which we have, and with our present musical system, we are destined to have one more great flowering of music, before we are compelled to change our scale systems and our instruments.18

---

18Ibid., p. 112.
CHAPTER III

A SURVEY OF HARRIS' CHORAL WORKS

To attempt a measure-by-measure analysis of Harris' choral works in their entirety would be a colossal undertaking, and it is questionable whether or not such an analysis would be feasible in a study of this nature. Since the purpose of this chapter is to determine Harris' stylistic aspects, the procedure is primarily concerned with the notation and discussion of specific examples of the most striking characteristics of his works. The deciding factors of his style include his method of dealing with melody, harmony, tonality, meter, rhythm, counterpoint, voice spacing, and form; therefore, it is with these particular elements in mind that the works are examined.

Melody

Harris has a natural wealth of melodies that seems to be inexhaustible. According to Arthur Parwell, Harris' first schooling in melody came during his early life in the West. "The broad horizon, craggy lines of mountain contours, winding streams and gracious curvature of tree branches,"1

---

were all his teachers; and a recognition of this fact is necessary if Harris' melody is to be understood. In his melodies he attains a rugged individualism, and he has many different tools which he employs to achieve this unique characteristic. One of the tools which he uses consistently is an upward progression of melody to make a definite assertion. Sometimes the upward movement contains one or more descending intervals; sometimes there are repeated notes in the upward progression. A typical example of the former type appears in Fig. 1, and an example of the latter type is given in Fig. 2.

![Fig. 1. -- An upward progression with one descending interval to make an assertion ("Freedom, Toleration," page two, score one, measures one to three, edition by Mills Music, Inc., New York).](image)

![Fig. 2. -- Straight upward progression to make an assertion ("Song for Occupations," page three, score one, measures one to two, edition by G. Schirmer, Inc., New York).](image)
The graphic aspect of Harris' melodic line, which is a most interesting one, is used enough to be termed characteristic. He makes the music on the page actually look like the thing he is expressing. For example, in the composition, "Tears," from the Symphony for Voices, the tears motive is directed downward to represent the falling of tears. Figure 3 gives the motive in several forms as it appears in the song.

Fig. 3. -- Graphic aspect of the tears motive ("Tears," page three, score one, measures three to five; and page five, score one, measure one, edition by G. Schirmer).

Another very effective use of the graphic idiom is shown in Fig. 4, where the movement of the bass part suggests the waves of the ocean.

The long melodic line is an outstanding characteristic in Harris' choral music because of the great frequency with which he uses it. Sometimes it moves alone, whereas at other times it is placed against a background of rich harmonic color. Figure 5 shows a twenty-measure melody length.
Fig. 4. -- The graphic idiom suggesting the movement of the waves of the ocean ("Songs for All Seas, All Ships," page ten, score two, measures one to four, edition by G. Schirmer).

Fig. 5. -- Example showing Harris' long melodic line ("Freedom, Toleration," page two, measures one to twenty).
The idea that a melody should "go somewhere,"\(^2\) which is discussed elsewhere in this thesis, is accomplished by Harris as an outgrowth of reconstituting a germ theme in countless variety, not only in respect to melodic line, but also in regard to harmonic and rhythmic treatment as well. Figure 6 shows how a three-note germ theme is developed into dramatic melody by restatement in many different ways as the composition unfolds.

![Germs](image)

**Fig. 6.** -- Measure one is a germ theme; succeeding measures are theme reconstitutions ("Tears," page two, score two, measures one to three; page three, score three, measure two; page five, score one, measures one and two).

The initial theme of "Song for Occupations" furnishes the basis for melodic variation in a more lengthy statement than the preceding example. Figure 7, which gives the theme and three restatements, shows how each differs while springing each time from the original.

\(^2\)Tbid., p. 24.
Fig. 7. -- A lengthy theme, showing reconstitution in various ways ("Songs for Occupations," page three, score one, measure one; page one, score two, measure one; page one, score two, measure four; page eight, score one, measure two).

The intervals in Harris' melodic line furnish the basis for an interesting study. His characteristic beginning interval is that of a fourth. Occasionally he uses a descending fourth, but he prefers the ascending fourth. Figures 8 and 9 show instances of the opening intervals as fourths.

Fig. 8. -- Opening interval of a fourth ("He's Gone Away," opening measure, edition by G. Schirmer).

Fig. 9. -- Opening interval of a fourth ("Songs for All Seas, All Ships," opening measure).

The melodic intervals used are principally major and minor seconds, major and minor thirds, perfect fourths and
fifths, major and minor sixths and perfect octaves. The fourths, fifths, and octaves are the most characteristic horizontal intervals, although augmented and diminished intervals are present in the melodic line. Figure 10 shows the interval of a fourth as found in the melodic line. The interval of a fourth appears thirty-one times in the composition from which the example is taken. It is comparably present in Harris' other choral works.

![Fig. 10. -- Interval of a fourth in the melodic line ("Songs for All Seas, All Ships," page three, score two, measures two and three; page three, score three, measure one).](image)

Intervals of fifths are just as common in these choral works as intervals of fourths. Figure 11 gives an example of diminished fifths in close sequence with perfect fourths.

![Fig. 11. -- Diminished fifths in sequence with perfect fourths in the melodic line ("Song for Occupations," page seven, score one, measure one).](image)
Harris' use of the octave skip in his melodies, both ascending and descending, follows the inflection of the text and aids forcefully in its expressiveness. Figures 12 and 13 show a typical use of the octave skip. The octave interval is used fourteen times in the melodic line of the composition from which the examples come. Harris also uses this interval in descending form.

Generally speaking, Harris' melodies move smoothly. His characteristic skips are usually purposefully for the inflection of words. The melodies range in mood from the humorous to the almost hysterical wail, attaining grand and noble sweep.

For the most part, Harris uses simple scales in the melodic line. He often alternates between major and minor scales in close sequences. An example is to be found in Fig. 5. For the first eleven measures he is constantly changing between G major and G minor.
The composer's treatment of melody reveals many uses of modal line which, as a departure from the conventional, is everywhere very effective. Figure 14 gives an example of modal melody and, incidentally, cadence. It is such small touches as this which give Harris' arrangement of the melody its ring of individuality.

![Image](image.png)

*Fig. 14. -- Modal line in the melody -- b^b to a^b to b^b rather than the usual b^b to a natural to b^b ("When Johnny Comes Marching Home," page seven, score one, measures two and three, edition by G. Schirmer).*

**Harmony and Tonality**

Since the treatment of tonality is a result of the treatment of harmony, the combination of tonality and harmony for discussion is appropriate. The two together constitute one field of analysis. Throughout Harris' choral music his tonality is very shifting, and apparently the question of constant tonality is unimportant. His lack of a key signature does not mean, however, that he fails to have a key orientation. He is essentially an atonalist, but he believes in an occasional addition of polytonality.

A typical chord arrangement finds the fifth or third in the bass. Figure 15 cites an example of the fifth in the
bass. This figure also shows a chromatic progression in the outside voices.

\[ \text{Heaven and Earth are full of Thy...} \]

Fig. 15. -- Fifth in bass (*); third in bass (**)
("Sanctus," page two, score two, measure four; page three, score one, measures one and two, edition by G. Schirmer).

An outstanding element in Harris' harmonic scheme is his use of dissonances. His characteristic dissonance is the major seventh. He is neither particular nor consistent about resolving them. He likes to reiterate the dissonance within the measure -- often for consecutive measures. This repetition evidences the fact that they are present for a purpose. Figure 16 shows the major seventh chord \((g\ b\ d\ f^\#)\) in the outer voices with the motto phrase "of ships sailing the seas" in the inner voices. The identical harmony extends through ten consecutive measures. Rhythmic variation prevents monotony.
Fig. 16. -- Major seventh chord (g b d f #) in outer voices with melody in inner voices ("Songs for All Seas, All Ships," page four, score three, measures one and two).

Further variation of the major seventh in its constant use in Harris' choral works is obtained by first and second inversions. Figure 17 shows the major seventh chord, face, in its second inversion, thus c in the bass. The soprano and bass sing the motto phrase, "a song for occupations," while all inner voices sing a vivid description of the work and the tools in a declamatory manner.

Harris' harmony is generally of a familiar sort. Once in a while he uses simple polychord effectively, but ordinary triads or secondary seventh chords with an occasional unusual passing tone constitute the bulk of his harmonies.
Fig. 17. -- Major seventh (face) in second inversion (c in bass) ("Songs for Occupations," page twenty-five, score one, measures two and three).

Pedal point is a characteristic harmonic device in these choral compositions. Figure 4 gives an example of pedal point in the alto voice. Figure 18 shows its use in various voices.

Cross relation as used by Harris gives a particular harmonic effect. It is not used as a progression in itself, but is used for its unusual relationship with the harmony. The chromaticism makes the usage unusual. Figure 19 illustrates this particular harmonic effect achieved through cross relation.
Fig. 18. -- Use of pedal point in various voices ("He's Gone Away," page eleven, score one, measures one to three).

Fig. 19. -- Cross relation with effect of chromaticism ("Sanctus," page three, score one, measure four; page three, score two, measures one and two).

Harris' harmonies do not move in any one characteristic progression. On the contrary, in his choral music he
evolves an emancipation of harmonic relationships, which results in a sharp originality. The chords move at intervals of fourths and fifths to a certain degree of regularity; chromatic harmonic progressions are often present; but the constant use of unison and open fifths is characteristic.

**Meter**

There is no predominant metrical scheme in Harris' choral compositions. Here, again, as in melody and rhythm, the text dictates the meter. Of the generally less frequent meters, Harris uses 5/4, 7/8, and 9/8 to great advantage in his musical expression of ideas. There is much shifting of meters, sometimes in rapid succession. It is characteristic of Harris to shift meters without indicating the change in the time signature. Figure 20 shows a very simple example of a shifted meter from 6/8 to 3/4 without any indication of the change in the signature. This is done for a broadening effect.

An unusual metrical device Harris uses is the broken line bar. He uses this device to help divide the long 7/8 rhythm, thus simplifying it. Figure 21 shows the manipulation of the broken bar.

Harris many times superimposes a four-beat and a three-beat on a basic 6/8 meter. This and other similar metrical schemes constitute a difficulty for the singers,
Fig. 20. -- Shifting of meter by note values instead of by signature ("When Johnny Comes Marching Home," page fifteen, score two, measures one to four).

Fig. 21. -- A broken bar to simplify an irregular meter ("Song for Occupations," page thirty-six, score one, measure three; page thirty-six, score two, measure one).
especially for younger and more inexperienced singers; but Harris is not one to sacrifice realistic portrayal of the words to mere singing ease. Figure 22 cites an illustration of a four-beat and a three-beat on a basic meter of 6/8.

Fig. 22. -- A four-beat and a three-beat on a 6/8 meter ("Song for All Seas, All Ships," page nine, score two, measures two to four).

A triple meter against a duple meter is a very common occurrence in Harris' metrical treatment. Figure 23 shows the triple meter of the inner voices against the duple meter of the outer voices.

Fig. 23. -- Triple meter against duple meter ("Song for Occupations," page thirteen, score two, measures three and four).
Harris makes extensive use of phrasing a four-beat meter as a three-beat meter. Figure 24 shows an example with a 4/4 time signature; the broken lines indicate the three-beat phrasing.

Fig. 24. -- A four-beat meter phrased as a three-beat meter ("Inscription," page ten, score one, measures one to eight, edition by G. Schirmer).

There are numerous instances where the composer has three meters running simultaneously. Figure 25 shows such an example.

Fig. 25. -- Three meters running simultaneously ("Song for Occupations," page sixteen, score two, measures one and two).
Rhythm

The medium of rhythm Harris presses to the utmost. His rhythmic scheme involves a constant variation. It is the rhythm that gives his choral works the superabundant energy which lifts the listener to new heights of vitality. As in melody, the text plays a great part in determining the rhythm. Harris always strives to make his music expressive to the highest degree, and he uses an infinite number of devices to do so. Rhythm is one of his most valued servants in this self-expression.

Harris uses syncopation freely. A characteristic pattern is illustrated in Fig. 26, in which the regular accents of the one and three beats are shifted to the two and four beats. The tenor part carries a further rhythmic variety of the accent on the last half of the one-count and the first half of the two-count.

The tie across the bar line is another example of syncopation which is prominent throughout Harris' choral works. Figures 27 and 28 show typical usages of this rhythmic device.

At a point of phrasing on a quarter value, the division of the value into an eighth note and an eighth rest is a unique feature of Harris' style. Seldom does he overlook an opportunity to do this. Figure 29 gives an example.
Fig. 26. -- Shifted accents from the one and three beats to the two and four beats. The * indicates a slight further variation ("Song for Occupations, page ten, score one, measures two to four).

Fig. 27. -- Tie across the bar ("Song for Occupations," page six, score two, measure two).

Fig. 28. -- Tie across the bar ("Song for Occupations," page thirty-two, score two, measures two and three).
eighth note-eighth rest combination at a phrasing point occurs thirty-five times in the first three pages of the sixteen-page composition from which the example is taken.

Fig. 29. -- Eighth note-eighth rest combination at a phrasing point ("Inscription," page two, score two, measures two to five).

Harris changes a quarter note to an eighth note and eighth rest for purposes of variety. In the "Song for Occupations" the motto phrase, "a song for occupations," which is used very often in the song, is alternately quoted in quarters and eighth note-eighth rest combination. Figure 30 gives an example of rhythmic means of contrast.

Fig. 30. -- Quarter-note phrase replaced with eighth note-eighth rest combination for variety ("Song for Occupations," page twenty-seven, score one, measures two to four).
In 3/4 rhythm, a frequent division of note values which is different from the regular arrangement is the quarter-eighth sequence as shown in Fig. 31.

Fig. 31. -- Quarter-eighth sequence in 3/4 time -- syncopation ("Song for All Seas, All Ships," page ten, score one, measures two and three).

Harris uses triplets extensively as a rhythmic variation. His resources in their treatment are so remarkable that there seldom appears an exact repetition of a triplet figure. He usually succeeds in writing each one in a different way. Figures 32, 33, and 34 give examples of the triplet.

Fig. 32. -- Use of triplets ("The Story of Norah," page twelve, score one, measure two, edition by G. Schirmer).

Fig. 33. -- Use of triplets ("Tears," page two, score two, measure four).
Counterpoint

Today Harris is the master of a resourceful counterpoint. "The fugue -- fugues are almost the hallmark of Harris' compositions -- has immense vigor." Counterpoint is in reality nothing more than harmonic equipment. Harris uses canon to the extent that it may be looked upon as characteristic. Figure 35 gives an example of canonic treatment.

Besides canon at the octave, there is also canon at intervals of fourths and fifths. Figure 36 gives an example of canon at the fifth, and Fig. 37 shows canon at the fourth.

Fig. 36. -- Example of canon at the fifth ("Freedom, Toleration," page three, score one, measure three).

Fig. 37. -- Canon at the fourth ("Song for Occupations," page thirty-five, score two, measures one to five).
Imitation in both free and exact styles is characteristic of Harris' choral music. The opening measures of a Harris free paraphrase give a style of imitation wherein the new entrance each time begins on the last note of the preceding entrance, with the exception of the soprano which enters at the interval of the fourth above, and simultaneously with, the alto. Figure 38 gives this example.

Fig. 38. -- Style of imitation in which the new entrance, with the exception of the soprano, begins on the last note of the preceding entrance ("Old Black Joe," page two, score one, measures one to four, edition by G. Schirmer).

Imitation in descending passages is a contrapuntal device used extensively by Harris. Figure 39 supplies an example of descending imitation of voices.
Fig. 39. -- Example of descending imitation ("He's Gone Away," page six, score one, measures two to four; page six, score two, measures one and two).

Harris obtains further contrapuntal variation by solo voices in contrapuntal entrances. Figure 40 gives an example.

Fig. 40. -- Solo voices in canonic entrances ("Song for Occupations," page thirteen, score one, measures two to four; page thirteen, score two, measures one to four).
Harris is an expert in counterpoint. In the song "Inscription," a triple fugue, his technical ingenuity in this line functions in its best form. Figure 41 shows the statement of the theme by the first bass and tenor with subsequent entrances of the soprano and alto in unison and the second bass at a fifth below.

Fig. 41. -- Triple fugue example: theme stated by first bass and tenor in unison (*), by soprano and alto in unison next (**), and by second bass last (***). ("Inscription," page one, first ten measures).
Voice Spacing

As a usual procedure, Harris' choral music conforms to the normal distance in voice spacing. A normal distance of voices is a fifth or sixth for the upper voices, and a fifth, octave, or tenth for the lower voices. An unusual voice spacing is shown in Fig. 42, where the distance between the soprano and alto is a tenth in the first measure and an eleventh in the last. This particular spacing, which seems to have the effect of majesty and adoration, is in perfect accord with the words.

![Musical notation](image)

Fig. 42. -- Voice spacing showing unusual distances between soprano and alto ("Sanctus," page three, score two, measures one to three).

Figure 43 shows an example of unusually close spacing of voices.
An item of extreme importance in writing choral music is the due consideration of the range of the voices for which the music is written. The natural compass for voices runs:

1. Soprano -- g' to A''.
2. Alto -- a to d''.
3. Tenor -- d' to g''.
4. Bass -- A to d'.

In some instances Harris takes his voices out of the range indicated above, but such cases are exceptional. Figure 42 shows an F for the bass part, which is a major third lower than the natural compass for the bass voice.
Most of the soprano writing is within the tessitura of the soprano voice; however, exceptions may be found here also. There are many notes that are above or below the average range, but Harris shows great finesse in approaching these notes. Figure 44 gives an example in which all voices are at least slightly out of their natural range, and the most taxing parts come in the soprano and tenor voices.

Fig. 44. -- Parts written out of the natural range of the voices ("Song for Occupations," page forty-one, score two, measures five to eight).

Harris very often writes sequences of eight to ten measures on the same note, and this note is either the extreme of the natural range or a whole step beyond. "Songs for All Seas, All Ships" has five and one-half pages of such sequences in the soprano voice, and only one page is
indicated as a solo. Figure 16 gives a typical instance of this very demanding soprano line.

A clever example of voice spacing is found in Fig. 45. The alternate fourths and fifths of the soprano and alto parts, and the fifths of the bass are accompanying the melody which is sung by the tenor.

Fig. 45. -- Vertical spacing at intervals of fourths and fifths in accompaniment with the melody ("Old Black Joe," page six, score one, measure three; page six, score two, measures one and two).

Harris uses parallel and unison motion very generously throughout his choral works. His method of writing parallel movement includes voices moving in unison, in fifths, and in fourths. Other intervals of parallel voice movement are present, but not to the extent that they may be termed characteristic. An example of parallel movement in octaves is found in Fig. 1.
Harris' choral scores show that he is very skilful at arranging antiphonal singing of parts between the male voices and the female voices. Many examples occur in his "Song for Occupations" for eight-part chorus of mixed voices. Figure 46 shows one of these usages.

Fig. 46. -- Antiphonal singing between male and female voices ("Song for Occupations," page twenty-eight, score one, measures one and two).

It is interesting to note the voice spacing in Fig. 45. The male voices are spaced at exactly the same intervals as the female voices. The first measure spacing between the bass and tenor parts is a perfect fourth (e\textsuperscript{b} to a\textsuperscript{b}); the spacing of the alto and soprano parts is also a perfect fourth (a\textsuperscript{b} to d\textsuperscript{b}). The second measure follows the same principles of spacing, but the interval is a perfect fifth. Harris is consistent in this type of spacing.
Form

According to Arthur Farwell, form is the strongest plank in Harris' platform. This critic says, "Through one hundred years of Romanticism (with certain Brahmsian reservations) music has talked about everything except music." He goes on to say that music has told tales, painted pictures, and made program comments to the extent that pure musical values have suffered.

Harris shuns programmaticism. He believes in the creation of music which speaks for itself, although repetition and contrast of melody, rhythm, and harmony have a definite part in developing the form of his choral works. He holds that form must be determined by content -- that music "must grow as a plant or animal grows -- along lines dictated by its own inner necessity."

The composer tries to develop everything from a germ-motive. His compositions evolve from the central idea. The original motive is stated often, but not in the same way; he interpolates notes between the notes of the theme, but by rhythmically stressing the thematic material, the design is kept intact. Melodic extension thus derived is Harris' chief means of developing form. Rhythmic patterns in infinite variety are a means of attaining unity and balance.

---

4Farwell, op. cit., p. 23.
The type of development through melodic extension requires a long time to unfold. This accounts for the unusual length of some of his compositions, especially for that of the "Song for Occupations." In this particular work there are thirty statements of the original theme, no two of which are identically stated. Figure 2 gives the original theme. Figure 7 gives four reconstitutions of this theme. Figure 17 shows a theme statement by bass and soprano with the inner voices giving descriptive passages. Figure 30 shows another theme variation. The most frequent combination of voices for theme statement is that of bass and soprano; the next most frequent is the combination of sopranos, altos, and basses. At no place in the composition does Harris state the theme without the first sopranos.

From the standpoint of phraseology, Harris' phrase lengths are outstandingly governed by the text. Because the phrasing is determined by the words, there is much variation in the length of the phrases in Harris' choral music.
CHAPTER IV

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STYLE OF ROY HARRIS

Harris' music is not easily understandable to the layman, but it is most interesting and may prove to be the connecting link between our modernistic adventuring and American music of the future.¹ Such was the expression in a letter to the writer from Archie Jones of the University of Texas in response to a request for his opinion of the choral works of Roy Harris.

A statement parallel to that of Archie Jones was made by Arthur Farwell: "Harris breathes his own musical air naturally, but it is an intense and concentrated air which others can scarcely bear without some effort and practice. To possess Harris, we must earn him."² Farwell says further that we cannot drift with indifference and thoughtlessness when hearing Harris' music, or tap a foot or finger with heedless continuity of even rhythm, or "find balm in any Gilead of soothing consonantal successions."

The two foregoing thoughts express a condition which is all too true concerning the average layman's opinion of

¹Archie Jones, letter to the writer, February 12, 1942.
²Farwell, op. cit., p. 30.
new ideas in an old field. History reveals that change, whether radical or slight, is always slowly effected. The choral music of Harris discloses a decided change in content from choral music of the past. The style is not a set style; Harris acts as if he were experimenting with the new.

Just as change is slow in being accomplished, so is public opinion slow in accepting that which has been changed. The works of Bach, Mozart, Wagner, Brahms, and numerous others remained unrecognized, and certainly unpraised, for many years after being written. The creators of such noble works were likewise unrecognized. But eventually these works of magnitude came into their own, and they have become a rich inheritance to the multitudes. History has proved another interesting fact: composers whose works have been immediately accepted have, in the majority of cases, just as quickly disappeared.

A composer has a choice to make which may be made knowingly or unknowingly. If he can consciously make this choice, so much the better. Such a choice, on the one hand, involves quick, easily understandable pieces of work, or, on the other, works along the line of that inner drive or artistic conception. He must choose immediate, short-lived success or be content to await the eventual recognition of works into which he has dared pour his innermost
convictions. The writer is convinced, after due study on the subject, that Roy Harris has chosen the latter path and, through his foresightedness and inborn talent, is literally pushing out musical boundaries, creating something of the new in our musical language. It is the responsibility of the people to manifest interest in the new and determine to grasp that which is being provided them in the field of modern music.

Roy Harris has attained the rank of a representative American composer. An idea advanced by Aaron Copeland, New York musician and author, is verification of this statement. In 1935 he started an educational campaign whereby composers might have one-man shows affording an entire evening for the performance of the major works of each of five composers to be selected. A philanthropic organization, desirous of remaining anonymous, gave financial aid and helped choose the five most important young American composers. Harris was one of the five chosen. The series offered the composers not only a hearing, but cash; and the idea was greeted with enthusiasm by audiences as well as composers. As a result of the Harris show, Harris became the man of the moment.

Harris compels us to think. He does not make use of any ordinary idiom. In listening to his music the listener feels that a vast intellect is always busy contriving,
devising, scrutinizing, and creating. In the words of
Arthur Farwell, "We seize upon comprehensible points only
to be cast the next moment upon the rocks of the incompre-
hensible." The average person does not grasp Harris' music, then, because he does not take the trouble to un-
derstand it.

Much of Harris' music has been described as "experimental, patchy, and gaunt." This may be true, but Harris is to be admired for the fact that he was undaunted in his beliefs concerning musical expression. Unlike some contemporary composers, he has clung to his belief that he could accomplish what he started out to do and what he must do. He has maintained his beliefs, correcting past mistakes, steadily improving his working facilities, and making his music clearer with every composition produced. A Chicago critic says that "something of the crudeness and strength of pioneer America had crept into this new work, and found it as completely outside European experience as the prairie morning itself."

Harris' compositions very definitely reflect the composer's pioneering spirit, often including bits of the "wild and woolly West" in his independent style. He has

---

3Ibid., p. 31.
4"Home-Grown Composer," Time, XXXV (April 8, 1940), 45.
5Ibid.
6Marion Bauer, Twentieth Century Music, p. 279.
succeeded in working out his own technique, disregarding the dictum of teachers and the rules of harmonic authority. He has blazed his own trail. He has considered, tried, and weighed the worth of time-honored regulations of harmony, taking what he pleased, and discarding whatever he chose. There is nothing machine-made in the music of this out-of-doors person who "misses his prairies and mountains when he is shut up in a city." In spite of the sophistication and self-consciousness of the ways and means of the musical world as a whole, the force -- the primitive something of the soil -- in his music will, in all probability, continue to be characteristically American, and not just typically Harris.

Henry Cowell says that "the form used by Harris is based fundamentally on a Beethovenesque concept of thematic developments." Continuing, he explains that Harris carries the idea on to new formal developments of his own, making this his field in which he is a creator rather than an imitator. Harris considers himself a contemporary classicist; and he studies the great composers constantly, searching for their strong principles. In his own words, "We Americans have a new, swift, strong, clear music in us and we can best express it with a broad knowledge of the resources of music as a living language."
Form today, in the general music mind, has degenerated to a painful extent. It has descended to the realm of the obvious and is merely a pattern of figures immediately discernible. If it is this type of form that is sought in Harris' choral works, it is most unlikely to be found.

It is the principle of form, a unity to which all elements are subsidiary, that is present in his music. It shall be found to such a degree as to challenge "that loose and flabby conception of form into which a century of romantic laxity has subtly and gradually seduced us."¹⁰

So clever is Harris at reconstituting the theme that many auditors never become aware of any continuity whatsoever. Such theme treatment is not the exception, but it is present in every work. It is fundamental with Harris, and it gives his art "unflagging inventive vitality of a stamp of which modern music is, to say the least, painfully innocent."¹¹ He develops form through melodic extensions, often interpolating notes between thematic notes, but keeping the thematic material clear by dynamic accents. He uses different tonalities next to each other; he detests sequence; he takes his time in his development; he likes unison passages, open fifths, octaves, and major sevenths; he often evades completely any feeling of tonality.

To Harris, melody comes next to form in importance.

¹⁰Farwell, op. cit., p. 20. ¹¹Ibid., p. 22.
To him a melody should develop constantly. "It should have a curve; it should have form and balance; and it is not a series of sequential motives." The broad open spaces, flowing streams, rugged outlines of mountains were his teachers of melody. "The difference, then, between Harris' melody and most of the melody which we hear is the difference between a range of hills and a row of trees trimmed as in an Italian garden."

Concerning Harris' novel melodic writing, Paul Rosenfeld says: "The continuity is assured by the pitch. Apparently atonal, Harris' melodies actually move about ground-notes that remain implicit even though the melodies never quite repose on them." Rosenfeld also expresses a belief that the looseness, irregularity, and curious homespun quality are derived from this half-voluntary practice.

Coupled with the melodies of his beloved West, Harris reverts to the old folk songs as the basis of many of his melodies. An outstanding example of his use of folk songs is his Folk-Song Symphony. In 1935 he said that he had enough melodies then in his notebook to last ten years. "Then his problem is to combine, juxtapose, develop, elongate them; in short, to rework them into significant form."

---

Critics have been consistently in accord with the belief that slower tempi with Harris yield a weaker music. These movements are somewhat leaning toward old-fashioned sentiment, and they seem out of keeping with the rest of his movements.

Harris believes that music should be and is becoming more and more melodic. His reason for this belief is the time spirit of the age which acknowledges the long lines in time and space arrangements. In the composer's own words, "Melody contains time and space; harmony and orchestral color do not."\(^{16}\)

Harris firmly believes that "harmony should represent what is in the melody, without being enslaved by the tonality in which the melody lies."\(^{17}\) This modernist, although a classicist, openly declares a belief in tonality, shocking as it might seem to many. He seems to have conquered polyharmony, thinking of the triad only as a harmonic unit. He has copied no school, as his very first works slightly indicated that he had done; but he has made a complete revaluation of triad harmonies. He has made these harmonies serve as a source of color to be transposed into music. Such resultant harmonies as a source of variety must not be weighed individually, or by separate notation, for they

---

16"Roy Harris, Contrapuntist," Literary Digest, CXVII (May 19, 1934), 24.

17Farwell, op. cit., p. 27.
do not sound as they appear on paper. They must be heard as a whole, in their proper rhythm. A seventh chord is not necessarily a seventh chord, but two overlapping triads, each going its own tonal way, and progressing simultaneously with each other. Harris is always conscious of the tones, whether they be present or implied, which supply the link of relation between the progressions. His harmonic color suggests to the listener that the scale system of today still has exploration possibilities not previously exhausted.

Embellishment, used as such, never appears in Harris' music. On the other hand, his music is wholly idea. It is a perfect antonym of rococo. He does not stop with merely a fugue; he goes beyond that. This composer finishes with a super-fugue -- a super-structure. A chief source of appeal is this broad contrapuntal swell.

The medium of rhythm serves Harris to the utmost. One of his favorite usages is the arrangements of groups and accents of small note values within the bar. His rhythmic scheme is constantly varying, and unexpected accents loom up almost anywhere, as do many different bar lengths. These rhythm alternations create energy and vitality which stir the soul.

Relative to an American music, this illustrious American says:

If we create an indigenous music worthy of our people, it will make its way swiftly and unfalteringly
whether it be a little more or less 'dissonant' or 'original' is of small import -- but it must have pulsing life stuff in it -- creative urge and necessity of continuity. It cannot be a scholarly mosaic of all the materials and forms of the last two hundred European years.

This thought is expressive of the style of Roy Harris. His compositions tell the same thing in music.

---

CHAPTER V

PREDICTION OF HARRIS' PLACE IN AMERICAN MUSIC

The attempt at prophesying Harris' rank in American music can only be based on the music he is writing, the opinions of it by those who may be classed as outstanding in musical status, taste, and achievement, and, to some extent, on the reception given it by its auditors.

Opinions of Roy Harris' choral works were sought from eminent choral composers and conductors through correspondence; and of the responses received, almost one hundred per cent were filled with praise and enthusiasm for these contemporary works. Certainly no feeling of petty jealousy seems to exist among present-day writers of music, a fact which is indeed commendable.

The reception by the public of Harris' music so far has been generally marked with enthusiasm. Arthur Farwell wrote of Harris in 1932: "Already a peculiar feeling of vitality attaches to the mention of his name, which in a fugitive way is coming to be regarded as a symbol of the most advanced modern musical thought."1 This statement

1Farwell, op. cit., p. 18.

58
about Harris' music was made ten years ago when the composer was in the infancy of his musical creation. The past decade has been a fruitful one, and his music has grown better and better, continuing to be characteristically American. He has become one of the most widely performed of modern composers, as well as one of the most recorded. This is nothing short of remarkable when consideration is given to the fact that Harris has not given the public easy music to listen to, but has made that public accept him on his own terms. He believes in himself without reserve, and has been successful in making others share this faith in him also.

The existence of a spirit of good fellowship among musical authorities was mentioned in the second paragraph of this chapter. This is illustrated by the fact that one person who was contacted, while disliking Harris' music, said that it was his policy to "uphold the right of all creative people to create and get paid for it." It is interesting to note that the writer of this statement is on the board of the SPA, the Song-writer's Protective Association, and of the Composers and Conductors Society.

The following letter came from John Finley Williamson, conductor of the very famous Westminster Choir, Westminster

---

2Howard, op. cit., p. 655.

3Geoffrey O'Hara, letter to the writer, February 13, 1942.
Choir College, Princeton, New Jersey. It is dated March 21, 1942, and is quoted in entirety:

Dear Miss Crawford:

Your letter came while I was on a tour with Westminster Choir. I have just returned and I am happy to tell you about Roy Harris's music.

His music is original to an extreme degree. His choral works have a thrill to them that we do not find in any other modern composer's works. They are still instrumental in character, and a good rendition of his works requires a splendid choir that can hold to absolutely true intonation. These works are dramatic and have great force but are not yet possible for the average choir.

Sincerely yours,

J. F. Williamson

The next letter, dated April 20, 1942, and quoted in part, is from J. Foster Barnes, director of choral music, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina:

My Dear Miss Crawford:

In answer to your letter of some weeks past will state that I think Roy Harris has written some very fine music. Even though I may not agree with everything he has done, I do think he is one of America's best contemporary composers.

Very truly yours,

J. Foster Barnes

Archie Jones, Professor of Music Education, University of Texas, Austin, Texas, in a letter dated February 12, 1942, has this to say:
Dear Miss Crawford:

Your request is a difficult one since Roy Harris is a good friend of mine. However, I will make a short statement and you will know whether or not it will be of any use to you.

Roy Harris is probably the most prolific composer of our time. He not only has written a great quantity of music but has composed in most of the fields of music. His orchestral works are probably better known than the others. Several albums of his works have been recorded, and it might be of interest that when the British Committee on Preservation of British Culture last year chose the one hundred pieces of music desirable to be preserved for all time in a place safe from bombing, they included the Harris Third Symphony. This and his Folk Song Symphony are probably best known. His music is not readily understandable to the layman, but is most interesting and may prove to be the connecting link between our modernistic adventuring and American music of the future.

Sincerely,

Archie N. Jones

From Alfred H. Meyer, Dean of Boston University College of Music, Boston, Massachusetts, the following words express confidence that Harris will occupy a high place among composers in the future as well as at the present time. This correspondence is dated February 16, 1942:

My dear Miss Crawford:

I consider Roy Harris one of our finest contemporary American composers. I believe his choral as well as his instrumental works will be given a high place by future historians.

Sincerely yours,

Alfred H. Meyer, Dean
The very famous composer of contemporary music, Darius Milhaud, Mills College, Oakland, California, in his communication of April 20, 1942, pays tribute to Roy Harris:

Dear Miss Crawford:

Thank you for your letter. I am very happy to have the opportunity of telling how wonderful I find the choral works of Roy Harris. I think his choral works are more important than his symphonic. He seems so "at ease" in writing choral music and his experiences in this field are very sure in the way he expresses himself. He has also a very pure and high sense of patriotic feeling that I like particularly.

Please excuse my very bad English writing.

Very truly yours,

Milhaud

Howard Hanson, director of the Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester, Rochester, New York, is a composer of note whose compositions are frequently performed in concert today. He writes on February 20, 1942:

Dear Miss Crawford:

Being primarily concerned with symphonic conducting I have conducted only one choral work of Roy Harris, The Folk Song Symphony, of which we gave the first performance. This work I liked very much. It is very well written for the voices, is singable, not excessively difficult, very effective in performance, and of a definitely American character.

With kindest regards,

Yours cordially,

Howard Hanson
The lengthiest response came from Normand Lockwood, teacher of composition and theory, Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio. Lockwood is himself a composer of modern choral compositions, and his works assuredly are gaining momentum rapidly in constant appearances on choral concerts by leading choirs of this country. In a separate letter, Normand Lockwood says, "I am sorry to say that I have never conducted a chorus in my life." His long, interesting letter of February 8, 1942, follows:

Dear Miss Crawford:

A few words in behalf of your thesis! I believe that Mr. Harris's writing for chorus has not only given a number of valid works to our literature but that they are of such an indigenous style as to be sure to influence the writing of other composers who are contemporary with, and who will follow, Mr. Harris. You may notice that, since his writing A Song for Occupations, he has simplified his technique and style to a noticeable degree. One of the most beautiful settings of its particular style and grade of difficulty (and it is not very difficult) is his Year That Trembled (also Whitman), which is published by Mills Music, Inc. A Song for Occupations is the first choral work with which he made a success, and this success was a radically different kind of success than he achieved with, say, his more recent Folk Song Symphony. Both are what one can call "American," though the former is American in a more subjective sense, the latter deliberately relying upon the American tunes, which it employs, for its character. As Mr. Harris is a friend of mine, I can speak quite frankly of my reactions. The Song for Occupations (which I heard twice, not including a rehearsal eight or nine years ago when I watched the score with Mr. Harris) impresses me principally as an experiment, and I feel that, in the direction in which it leans, it went much too far to the side of contrapuntal mechanism ever to live as a work that will be sung and re-sung. Of course, I may be wrong! I'm not
predicting: I'm merely stating my own reaction. The Folk Songs Symphony, on the other hand, which is, by nature, and rightly so, a much longer work, leans very, very far indeed to the side of what seems to me at times an oversimplification of the choral texture. Obviously, the composer did this to make it available for use with a large chorus and not to necessitate a great deal of rehearsing. This aim is perfectly justified, in fact, admirable; but I believe the work is too long to be made really interesting, and to be, as one might say, really sustained in interest, because of this very thin kind of development and choral texture. Incidentally, the movement without chorus calling for, as I recall, only strings and tympani, is remarkably fine. It seems to me one of the finest creations of real American "impressionism": it strikes me as an "impression" of a country fiddler rather than simply an obvious transcription of the character for the larger body of orchestral strings. In other words, this movement conveys the spirit of the country fiddler in addition to simply laying bare his characteristics. But be sure to see Mr. Harris' little *Year That Trembled*, which I like very much.

What do you think of the paraphrase on Old Black Joe (G. Schirmer)? For me, it gets too far away from the spirit of the setting; but I am still thinking about it, and looking at it from time to time, in the effort to change my mind. I have found so often that I have come to regard many works of music in the brightest light only after "changing my mind" about them; and sometimes this process has taken me longer than I might have wished!

Might I ask you a question? If you find out, in your replies, whether any chorus has ever performed *A Song for Occupations* besides the Westminster Choir, would you trouble to let me know? I know that the work elicited a great deal of interest and comment at the time of the Westminster Choir's repeated performances of it, and I know that, up to several years ago, it had sold some thousand copies (which is rather remarkable for a work which is obviously too difficult for the great majority of A Cappella choruses), but I do not know if anyone has ever conducted it besides Dr. Williamson with his own choir.

Perhaps I have written enough!

I will send you two sacred works of mine for your possible interest. 

Sincerely yours,

Normand Lockwood
An opinion of no small import concerning Harris' choral works was obtained through personal interview from Peter W. Dykema, Professor Emeritus of Music Education, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York. His remarks are quoted as follows:

Roy Harris is one of the most promising of American composers. He is constantly growing and is extremely open-minded regarding the place of music in our country. I feel confident that as he gets to know more intimately the needs of students in our schools, he will increasingly write music adapted to them that will stir them greatly.4

The foregoing statements voice the opinions of eight of Harris' contemporaries whose comments must be acknowledged as not only representative, but authoritative. For obvious reasons, the opinions of these persons bear far more weight on the subject at hand than the opinions of ordinary laymen. They are qualified to judge the scope of work similar to their own, and their keenness of insight is founded on sound musicianship augmented by many years of experience.

4Peter W. Dykema, personal interview with the writer, June, 1942.
CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

It is impossible to state positively at the present time what position Harris will hold among composers when musical activities of American creativeness today have become history. Such would be true of any contemporary artist. Among the tests to which present-day works are submitted, time is the most demanding. It could not be declared with assurance that Harris' contributions to music literature will be perpetuated through the annals of time; neither could it be asserted with any more certainty that his works will definitely take the part suggested by the old adage, "Here today; gone tomorrow." It is known, however, that theoretically Harris is attempting to do in music what has already been done in poetry; namely, to free music from restrictions corresponding to rhyme, meter, and conventional form. Music needs to be logical and cogent, but its form should be determined by content. The analysis of his choral compositions has proved that this composer clings to the preceding ideals.

Harris' steady flow of works is being constantly placed before the people through such media as the country's best
symphony orchestras and choral units, the National Broad-
casting Company and the Columbia Broadcasting System, and
by both Victor and Columbia victrola recordings. Such
reputable organizations would never bother with insignifi-
cant material, and their presentation of his music proves
that Harris is a musician of no ordinary merit. While it
seems probable that Harris' choral works are destined to wait
for posterity before they receive final approval and ac-
ceptance by the general public, all present evidence points
toward their ultimate acceptance.

It is not true that all evaluations of Harris' choral
compositions are a hundred per cent favorable, but the en-
thusiastic endorsements of his works so completely out-
weigh the adverse criticisms of them that a future place
for them in the musical world seems assured. This fact points
to the recognition of the genuineness of Harris' artistry.

Harris expressed a thought several years ago that un-
doubtedly influenced his accomplishments. He said:

The artist should have a shrewd common sense of ma-
terials and forms coupled with a delicate recep-
tivity to those faint, mystical, spiritual, psy-
chic promptings deep within us without which the
brain is only an index of everything that has been
conceived by others.\(^1\)

In keeping with this thought he has written steadily, not
at the dictates of existing modes, but in a manner entirely
Harris'. His sense of patriotic feeling as present in the

\(^1\) Roy Harris, "Perspective at Forty," Magazine of Art,
XXXII (November, 1939), 638.
choral scores emerges from a nucleus which has developed into an American voice, expressing an unconscious Americanism.

The following words of Arthur Farwell concerning Harris provide a suitable close for this study:

It may be that he will prove to be the protagonist of the time-spirit, by which I do not mean that passing phase which worships the machine, or machine-made sport, but the new time-spirit which seeks the truer human values beneath the surface of the present phenomena, and which must presently posit the deeper aspirations of the twentieth century.²

²Farwell, op. cit., p. 18.
## WORKS OF ROY HARRIS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composition</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Symphonic Poem for Chorus and Trio&quot;</td>
<td>Manuscript</td>
<td>1925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitman Suite (woman's chorus and two pianos)</td>
<td>Manuscript</td>
<td>1927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suite (women's chorus, two pianos)</td>
<td>Manuscript</td>
<td>1928</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The Story of Norah,&quot; by Niles (arranged by Harris)</td>
<td>G. Schirmer</td>
<td>1934</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Song for Occupations</td>
<td>G. Schirmer</td>
<td>1935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Johnny Comes Marching Home&quot;</td>
<td>G. Schirmer</td>
<td>1935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Old Black Joe,&quot; by Foster (arranged by Harris)</td>
<td>G. Schirmer</td>
<td>1938</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;He's Gone Away&quot;</td>
<td>G. Schirmer</td>
<td>1939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sanctus</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symphony for Voices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separate choruses:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Song for All Seas, All Ships&quot;</td>
<td>G. Schirmer</td>
<td>1939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Tears&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Inscription&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folk-Song Symphony</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separate choruses:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Welcome Party&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Western Cowboy&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Mountaineer Love Song&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Negro Fantasy&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Final&quot;</td>
<td>G. Schirmer</td>
<td>1940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composer</td>
<td>Publisher</td>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitman Triptych</td>
<td>G. Schirmer</td>
<td>1940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separate choruses:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I Hear America Singing&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;An Evening Lull&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;America&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christus Factus Est (Pitoni)</td>
<td>G. Schirmer</td>
<td>1940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge: 1940</td>
<td>Manuscript</td>
<td>1940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Red Bird in a Green Tree&quot;</td>
<td>Mills Music, Inc.</td>
<td>1940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year That Trembled</td>
<td>Mills Music, Inc.</td>
<td>1941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Freedom, Toleration&quot;</td>
<td>Mills Music, Inc.</td>
<td>1941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;To Thee O Cause&quot;</td>
<td>Mills Music, Inc.</td>
<td>1941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Freedom's Land&quot;</td>
<td>Mills Music, Inc.</td>
<td>1941</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

Bauer, Marion, Twentieth Century Music, New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1933.

Bauer, Marion, Music through the Ages, New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1932.


Reis, Claire, Composers in America, New York, Macmillan Company, 1938.


Articles


Bauer, Marion, "Have We an American Music?" Musical America, February 10, 1940, pp. 22, 271-272.

Burke, Kenneth, "Most Useful Composition," Nation, CXXXIX (December 19, 1934), 719-720.

"Composers Get a Chance to Exhibit in One-Man Shows," Newsweek, VI (November 2, 1935), 40-41.


Elwell, Herbert, "Harris' Folksong Symphony," Modern Music, XVIII (January, 1941).


"Folk Song Symphony," Literary Digest, XXXVII (January 6, 1941), 34.


Harris, Roy, "Perspective at Forty," Magazine of Art, XXXII (November, 1939), 638-639.


"Home-Grown Composer," Time, XXXV (April 8, 1940), 45.


Rosenfeld, Paul, "Tragic and American," New Republic, LXXXI (November 21, 1934), 47.


