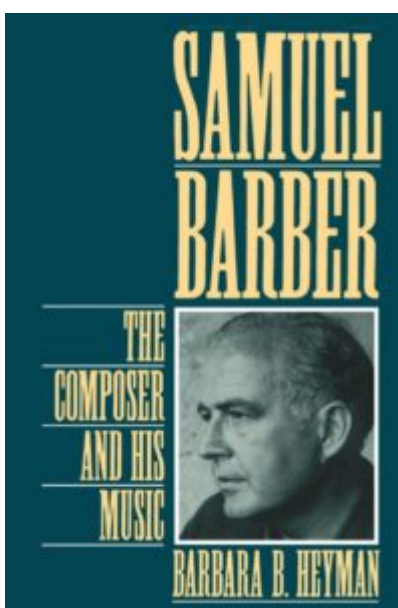


# Samuel Barber – Agnus Dei – Adagio for Strings Op. 11 (organ or piano solo arr. with sheet music)

Table of Contents

Samuel Barber – [Agnus Dei](#) – Adagio  
for Strings Op. 11 (arranged for  
organ or piano solo arr. [with sheet  
music](#))



# Samuel Barber

Samuel Barber (West Chester, 1910 – New York, 1981) American composer. At eleven years old, he showed his precocious musical talent by writing the operetta *The Rose Tree*.

His uncles, the singer Louise Homer and the composer Sidney Homer, encouraged him to pursue music in depth. Between 1924 and 1932 he studied at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia with Isabelle Vengerova (piano), Emilio de Gogorza (singing), and Rosario Scalerò (composition). In this same center he was professor of orchestration between 1938 and 1942. In 1928, he befriended Gian Carlo Menotti, who would later influence his compositional career.

He spent a few years in Europe, and it was in the old continent where he came into contact with the music of the post-romantics. He furthered his singing and conducting studies in Vienna with John Braun and, starting in the 1930s, he began to sing as a professional baritone. During his short singing career he recorded his own *Dover Beach* series of songs, based on texts by Matthew Arnold, for which he received warm praise.

In 1928, he was awarded his first award as a composer: the Bear Award for his *Violin Sonata*. Three years later, Samuel Barber won the award again with his overture *The School for Scandal*. In 1934 he was awarded the Rome Prize, which enabled him to spend two years in the Italian capital. There he wrote his *Symphony in One Movement*, premiered at the Salzburg Festival in 1937.

In 1938, Arturo Toscanini conducted in New York his first *Essay for orchestra* (1937) and his *Adagio for strings* (excerpt from *String Quartet op.11*, 1936), performed by the NBC Symphony Orchestra. In the midst of the world war, together with Menotti, he acquired the 'Capricorn' country house, which would soon become a meeting place for intellectuals and

artists. In that period he composed his Second Symphony – a commission from the US Air Force – as well as his Cello Concerto and the orchestral song Knoxville: Summer of 1915.

In 1946, just after World War II ended, Samuel Barber wrote the ballet Medea on behalf of the dancer and choreographer Martha Graham. He also received a commission to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the American League of Composers which resulted in his Piano Sonata (1949), premiered by Vladimir Horowitz. He entered the field of opera with Vanessa, premiered in 1958 at the Metropolitan Opera in New York and winner of a Pulitzer Prize.

Four years later, his Piano Concerto won him his second Pulitzer. In 1966, he was commissioned Anthony and Cleopatra, an opera about the stormy idyll between Marco Antonio and Queen Cleopatra that faithfully followed the text of Shakespeare's homonymous tragedy; It was premiered during the opening of the new Metropolitan Opera at Lincoln Center.

From that moment on, Barber suffered from depressive crises that diminished his creativity and led him to concentrate on small-format vocal music, although during this period he managed to write the cantata entitled The Lovers and part of a concerto for oboe before he died. in 1981. In 1976, he had been awarded the gold medal for music at the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, in recognition of his fruitful career.

Samuel Barber was a composer interested in bringing classical music closer to broader sections of the population. Unlike his contemporaries, he was not overly concerned with avant-garde musical techniques.

His language is expressive and lyrical and is based on the tonal system of the late nineteenth century, although he incorporated some elements such as chromaticism and tonal ambiguity from the 1940s. Nor did he pay special attention to

elements of North American musical culture, such as folk or jazz, so used by other American composers of the stature of Aaron Copland or Marc Blitzstein. Only in some of his works, such as *Excursions* or *Knoxville: Summer of 1915*, do we find popular American rhythms such as blues.

Barber's production covers practically all genres, although his great interest in the human voice led him to write numerous vocal works based on texts by writers such as Joyce, James Stephens, Emily Dickinson or Rilke. His song cycle *Despite and Still* op. 41 is dedicated to the soprano Leontyne Price and is characterized by its frequent allusions to loneliness and nostalgia for lost love through harmonies rich in chromatism and dissonance.

One of the main characteristics of Barber's music is his use of long melodic lines, which can be seen perfectly in his famous *Adagio for strings*, a page composed in 1936. In his orchestral works, he usually gives the solo parts to the instruments woodwind, as well as often using a highly fluent contrapuntal language and colorful orchestration.

His famous *Adagio for strings* was premiered by the NBC orchestra conducted by Arturo Toscanini in 1938 as well as *Essay for Orchestra No. 1* of the same year. He also composed chamber, piano and choral works.

He won the Pulitzer Prize for his first opera, *Vanessa* (1958), composed of a libretto by his friend the composer Gian-Carlo Menotti. The second Pulitzer (1963), he got it for the piano concerto. His second opera, *Antony and Cleopatra* (1966), was chosen to open the new Metropolitan Opera House in New York.

## **List of compositions of Samuel Barber.**

### **Stage Works**

- *Medea (Serpent Heart)*, ballet, Op. 23 (1946)

- Rev. as *The Cave of the Heart*, 1947
- arr. as orchestral *Suite*, 1947
- Medea's Meditation and Dance of Vengeance*, Op. 23a, 1953
- *A Hand of Bridge*, opera in 1 act, 1953
- *Souvenirs*, ballet, 1955
- *Vanessa*, opera in 4 acts, 1956-7
- *Antony and Cleopatra*, opera in 3 acts after Shakespeare, 1966

## Orchestral

- *The School for Scandal*, Op. 5, 1931-3
- *Music for a Scene from Shelly*, Op. 7, 1933
- *Symphony [No. 1] in One Movement*, Op. 9, 1936
- *Adagio for Strings*, [arr. of 2nd movement of String Quartet], Op. 11, 1938
- [First] *Essay for Orchestra*, Op. 12, 1937
- *Violin Concerto*, Op. 14, 1939
- *Second Essay*, Op. 17, 1942
- *Symphony No. 2*, Op. 19, 1944
- 2nd movement revised as *Night Flight*, Op. 19a, 1964
- *Capricorn Concerto*, Op. 21, 1944
- *Cello Concerto*, Op. 22, 1945
- *Toccata festiva*, Op. 36, 1960
- *Die Natali*, chorale preludes for Christmas, Op. 37, 1960
- *Piano Concerto*, Op. 38, 1962
- *Fadograph of a Yestern Scene* (after Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*), Op. 44, 1971
- *Canzonetta*, Op. 48 [posth.], 1981

## Choral

- *The Virgin Martyrs*, Op. 8/1-2, 1936
- *A Stopwatch and an Ordnance Map*, Op. 15, 1940
- *Reincarnations*, Op. 16, 1937-40
- *Prayers of Kirkegaard*, Op. 30, 1954
- *Agnus Dei*, Op. 11, 1967

- *Twelfth Night*, Op. 42, 1968
- *The Lovers*, Op. 43, 1971

## Chamber

- *Serenade*, string quartet/string orchestra, Op. 1, 1930
- *Violin Sonata*, Op. 4, 1928
- *Cello Sonata*, Op. 6, 1932
- *String Quartet*, Op. 11, 1936
- *Summer Music*, wind quintet, Op. 31, 1956
- *Canzone (elegy)*, flute and piano, Op. 38a, 1961

## Solo Instrumental

- *Excursions*, Op. 20, 1942-4
- *Sonata*, piano, Op. 26, 1949
- *Nocturne (Homage to John Field)*, piano, Op. 33, 1959
- *Stille Nacht* [arrangement of *Silent Night* from *Die natali*], Op. 37, 1960
- *Ballade*, piano, Op. 46, 1977

## Songs

- *Dover Beach*, Op. 3, 1933
- *Three Songs (Joyce)*, Op. 10, 1935
- *Four Songs*, Op. 13, 1941
- *Two Songs*, Op. 18, 1942
- *Knoxville: Summer of 1915*, Op. 24, 1947
- *Nuvoletta*, Op. 25, 1947
- *Melodies passagères*, Op. 27, 1950-51
- *Hermit Songs*, Op. 29, 1952-3
- *Andromache's Farewell*, Op. 39, 1963
- *Despite and Still: A Last Song*, Op. 41, 1968-9
- *Three Songs*, Op. 45, 1972

Many unpublished or withdrawn works, including numerous songs.