



Emotion and Drama in *Lament for the Stolen* (1938)

DAN WESSLER

The desire of the girl for womanhood, the instinctive loyalty of mothers; the grief of women in war time; their joy at the safe return of the soldiers—these are motives which command the respect of everyone; and yet composers have passed them by in silence and have chosen instead trivial texts about angels, fairies, the bevy of young girls, or the most sentimental aspect of the Madonna and the Child. Composers ... “wrote down” to women, and frequently ignored possibilities for the women’s chorus in its legitimate field.

—Sophie Drinker, quoted in *New York Herald Tribune*¹

In 1930, wealthy Philadelphia socialite Sophie Drinker joined a small women’s chorus called the Montgomery Singers and immediately asserted control, moving rehearsals to her house and developing strict dual criteria for choosing repertoire. First, it must have been written for women’s chorus (not originally for SATB or men’s chorus and alternately arranged for women) and second, it must express what she considered to be genuinely feminine sentiment.² As she witnessed the complex web of burdens, emotions, and responsibilities put upon women during the Great Depression, she inevitably felt the need to give it musical voice. Then, in 1932, a tragic event occurred that would dominate the consciousness—and news cycle—of the nation for over four years and add further anxiety to the already-burdened experience of American women: the infant son of world-famous military officer and aviator Charles Lindbergh and wife, Anne, was kidnapped for ransom and eventually found murdered.

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Six years later, on back-to-back concerts on the evenings of December 30 and 31, 1938, the Philadelphia Orchestra premiered *Lament for the Stolen*, a thirty-minute, single-movement work for women's chorus and symphony orchestra, with music by Harl McDonald and poetry by Katherine Garrison Chapin, commissioned by Sophie Drinker.³ Here was a musical work written for a chorus of women, with original poetry reflecting the anxieties, fears, burdens, and hopes of women and mothers in America at a time when those feelings were at a boiling point. The work was performed again shortly after, on May 15, 1940, by the Brico Junior Symphony Orchestra at White Plains High School in New York.⁴ No evidence of any other performance exists.

Composed during the Great Depression and as a reaction to the tragic kidnapping of infant Charles Lindbergh Jr., *Lament for the Stolen* reveals historical contexts from a significant era. Further, the events and struggles in America during the 1930s may not be as far removed from contemporary events and struggles as we think; perhaps it is an appropriate time to re-evaluate this all-but-forgotten choral masterwork. This article will explore the conception of *Lament*, detail the reception of the work at its premiere, provide a musical analysis of the work, and discuss its practical considerations and relevance in twenty-first-century America.

Conception and Premiere of *Lament*

Sophie Drinker is considered one of the founders of gender studies and feminism in the field of musicology. When she joined and took charge of the Montgomery Singers in 1930, Drinker discovered that most music for treble voices was written for children or boys, and music that was written for women was often in poor textual and musical quality.⁵ This discovery, combined with a 1931 hysterectomy that supposedly ignited her interest in gender issues,⁶ further encouraged her to study the history of women's involvement in music for two decades and to eventually publish her findings in a 1948 book, *Music and Women*.

Due to Drinker's lack of formal studies or academic status, her text was not highly recognized at the time of its publishing.⁷ However, it has influenced feminist

musicology in the decades that have followed, expressing some philosophies that were ahead of their time. In *Music and Women*, for example, Drinker argues that gender roles are a social construct, noting that men and women will "behave according to the expectations their societies have for them,"⁸ writing this at a time when people still thought largely in terms of "naturally" gendered behavior and capabilities.⁹ As such, in the early 1930s, Sophie Drinker's passionate attempt to find quality repertoire for women's chorus that expressed a true women's voice was at its height.

When infant Charles Lindbergh Jr. was kidnapped in 1932 and eventually found murdered, the resulting series of events inevitably became a national news phenomenon. The suffocating media presence in Charles and Anne's lives drove the couple to exile from the United States in 1935, not returning until 1939. The catastrophic event, and the effect that it had on the anxieties of women and mothers throughout America, would serve as the point of inspiration for Drinker's commission of *Lament for the Stolen*. For the creative forces behind the work, she found two local talents: poet Katherine Garrison Chapin and composer Harl McDonald.

Katherine Garrison Chapin

Born in Waterford, Connecticut, in 1890, Chapin spent her entire life on the East Coast. She married Philadelphia lawyer Francis Biddle in 1918,¹⁰ who would go on to hold several important positions under the presidential administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt, most notably that of U. S. Attorney General in 1941 and as a judge during the famous Nuremberg trials.¹¹ As such, much of Katherine and Francis's married life took place residentially between their Philadelphia home and Washington, D.C., and they were in close contact with the elite in the field of politics and the arts.¹²

Alberta Turner notes that Chapin's poetry often shows "dignified concern for [the world's] defects and possibilities."¹³ This quality is present in the themes of her most well-known works, catapulted to fame by their musical settings by composer William Grant Still. Chapin wrote the original poetry for two of Still's choral/orchestral works: *And They Lynched Him on a Tree*

(1940) and *Plain-Chant for America* (1941).¹⁴ Written by Chapin in back-to-back years, neither text was intended as pure poetry; both were written with the explicit intent of musical setting (as was *Lament for the Stolen*). Furthermore, both poems explore issues of social unrest in America (the former addressing the practice of lynching, and the latter addressing the likes of xenophobia and race riots). Regarding *Lament*, in the task of constructing a poem inspired in part by child kidnapping and murder, Chapin certainly channeled some of her own grief: the younger of her two sons, Garrison, passed away at the age of seven.¹⁵

Harl McDonald

Harl McDonald was born on a small ranch near Boulder, Colorado,¹⁶ grew up in Southern California,¹⁷ and made a career for himself in Philadelphia. In 1927 he was appointed head of the University of Pennsylvania's music department and took on directorship of a number of local choirs, including the historic Mendelssohn Club.¹⁸ McDonald also aligned himself with the Philadelphia Orchestra, becoming the organization's manager in 1939 and fostering strong partnerships with its conductors, Eugene Ormandy and Leopold Stokowski.¹⁹

Barbara Renton notes that McDonald's music often follows a written program, noting that he wrote music that had an "immediate emotional appeal, eschewing what he called 'sterile, intellectual forms and idioms.'" Ronald Eyer wrote that McDonald believed music to be "essentially an emotional language" and that it "should not be written objectively, but 'from the inside out.'"²¹ Indeed, emotional expression is an important element in McDonald's compositions and was crucial in his approach to *Lament for the Stolen*.

Premiere

The story of the commission, construction, and public promotion of *Lament for the Stolen* is fascinating and complex, featuring multiple artistic and philosophical disagreements, arguments, and eventual compromises between McDonald, Chapin, and Drinker. That story, however, transcends the scope of this article.²² *Lament for the Stolen* premiered as planned, on back-to-back nights December 30 and 31, by the Philadelphia

Orchestra, under the baton of Eugene Ormandy. The chorus consisted of three choirs: the University of Pennsylvania Women's Chorus, the Mendelssohn Club Women's Chorus, and the College of Chesnut Hill Women's Chorus.²³ McDonald was present (having served as chorusmaster), Chapin attended the second night (having fallen ill the first night), and Drinker sang in the choir.²⁴

Both performances were successful, and Chapin received many congratulatory letters afterward. She, McDonald, and a number of her colleagues petitioned Ormandy to include the work in a planned series of New York concerts with the Philadelphia Orchestra.²⁵ Ormandy, however, turned Chapin down, referencing the fact that his repertoire for the coming New York concerts was already planned, also noting that including *Lament* in his Philadelphia season itself involved a lot of logistical shuffling.²⁶ Plans for a New York premiere never proceeded any further.

Following the premiere, critics and individuals praised Chapin's poetry, but the response to McDonald's music was mixed. One admirer called the music "stunning," claiming to be "struck by the horror of the musical sound,"²⁷ and another noted the music to be so "sweet" that she "could not keep the tears back."²⁸ Certainly this music was infused with emotion and drama, the likes of which seemed to be too much for its detractors, who criticized the "neoprimitive chorus" and "agitated orchestra,"²⁹ citing the chorus's "screches" and "primitive wails"³⁰ as overly dramatic. Harlem Renaissance philosopher Alain Locke attended the premiere, writing afterward:

In places it is beautifully developed...[but] the music missed the quiet tragedy in important places and the elemental quality so necessary for a proper translation of the emotion into music...too much of [McDonald's] *Lament* was voiced in shrill almost hysterical [representation] of actual grief instead of in the lone self-contained agony of pity and compassion.³¹

As noted, *Lament for the Stolen* was performed only once more shortly after the premiere, on May 15, 1940, by the Brico Junior Symphony Orchestra at White Plains

High School in New York.³² The lack of a subsequent New York performance following the premiere and the mediocre reception of the premiere jointly buried the piece in the annals of history, especially as the nation moved swiftly into World War II.

Musical Analysis³³

McDonald's harmonic language in *Lament* is largely tertian but without strict adherence to any given tonality. He begins the work without a key signature and features extensive chromaticism as the music develops and shifts between key centers. As the composer emphasizes certain key centers, he applies key signatures to aid in readability, but the work does not seem to be in any one set tonality. The composer characterized the musical structure of *Lament for the Stolen* as "a fantasia in five episodes to be played without pause."³⁴ Table 1 on the next page outlines McDonald's delineation of the text between the five episodes.

In his program notes for the premiere, McDonald refers to two primary musical motives introduced in Episode 1, which are developed throughout the work and represent contrasting ideas of looming danger vs. naïve peace: one symbolizing "the long, cold winds of the terrible spring" and one symbolizing "the harmless, innocent circle of light."³⁵ Nowhere does McDonald actually identify the themes, but the opening of the work clearly features a sense of alternation between two musical ideas—one deep and sinister, one melodic and lilting.

The opening measures feature the motive of an oscillating half-step, a long note that builds to an accented half-step ascent (or descent) that immediately returns to the original note, best exemplified in the cello/bass of mm. 5-8 (Figure 1 on page 28). This motive's featured appearance throughout the work, and especially throughout Episode 1, suggests it to be McDonald's "long, cold winds of the terrible spring" motive ("winds" motive).

At m. 23, McDonald brings to the forefront the "harmless, innocent circle of light" motive (the "circle" motive): a short stepwise passage that moves up two steps and descends back down to its starting point, on a rhythm of one quarter note followed by four eighths

notes, best exemplified in its first appearance in violin I at m. 24 (Figure 2 on page 28). As McDonald proceeds to develop this musical gesture, the nature of half and whole steps is never consistent, but the melodic contour set to that particular rhythm remains indicative of the motive.

After McDonald alternates between the sinister "winds" motive and the serene "circle" motive for some time, the women's chorus enters. This entrance (labeled "solo chorus") begins in B major, harmonically shifts through half-step motion in a single voice at a time, and lifts into a bright-but-distant C-sharp-major chord on the word "light" (Figure 3 on page 28). Identification of McDonald's "circle" motive is confirmed by its use on the word "circle" in this phrase (actually written in contrary motion between two parts as a voice exchange), and while the "winds" motive is not featured, the overt use of half-step motion is reminiscent of that established motive.

McDonald begins Episode 2 with a sudden fully diminished D chord that halts the forward motion, and the women's chorus enters on the first of McDonald's "neo-primitive wails," sustained "ah" vowels on snapping, dotted rhythms and oscillating melodic figures that mix simple and compound meter (Figure 4 on page 29). The drama heightens and leads to a "shriek" at m. 157 (Figure 5 page 29). Detractors of the premiere performance referred to this "shriek" as a moment lacking taste; if Margaretta Wright (a friend of Chapin and a member of the *Lament* chorus) is to be believed in her correspondence with Chapin, McDonald encouraged the women in rehearsal to "scream as hard as possible" at that moment, as if at a "football game."³⁶ If the chorus executed the moment as such at the premiere, one can surely believe it to have been unexpected and potentially off-putting.

McDonald continues to innovate in Episode 2, featuring *sprechstimme* in the chorus. The sopranos chant repeated iterations of "this is a terrible thing to be done in our time" above wailing altos (Figure 6 on page 29). The rhythmic motive in the sopranos' statements of "terrible" is one McDonald utilizes throughout the work (the "terrible" motive). Episode 3 initiates new textures, as the chorus quasi-chants the text in octaves above a pulsating orchestral foundation. The music

Table 1

Episode 1

Into the sheltered circle,
Into the harmless, innocent circle of light,
As the long cold winds of the terrible spring blow on,

Hope in the heart, abating,
But grief and horror time cannot mend,
Wait, at the vigil's end,
The vigil's end.

Episode 2

This is a terrible thing to be done in our time.
This is a terrible thing!
Woman to woman, shoulder to shoulder,
The wide world over,
Stand and look at this thing.
Evil, out of the night betraying,
Evil, the hand that stole, the slaying
Hand reaching out of the night,
Into the sheltered circle of light,
Into the harmless, innocent circle of light,
This is a terrible thing!

Episode 4

Now it is ended,
So frail to suffer death,
The innocent, light laughter
Is stilled.
Quick, gentle heart broken
Tender words unspoken,
Tender hopes unfulfilled,
Let the earth cover
In silence deep
The wounds and the wounded
In a long sleep
Let the earth cover . . . in a long sleep
But woman to woman the watch shall keep!

Episode 3

Ah, the heart stands still for the empty room,
There is fear in the open window, fear unspoken, unsaid,
Ah, the cold fear unspoken, the fear unsaid,
Ah pity, oh anguish, oh pain, ah, despair,
The search goes out over the waves of the air,
As the long, cold winds of the terrible spring blow on!
Woman to woman, the wide world over, our hands reach
out to her side,
Dumb with compassion, dumb with pity, strong only in
pride,
Pride for the silent courage, the tears unwept,
And the long endless vigilance kept,
The vigilance kept.
Ah, the breathless suspense, the torment, the waiting,

Episode 5

Woman to woman, through love with pity,
Will cry these wrongs to an answering height.
From hillside to farm, from village to city
Break the heart in anger, shatter the night!
Reach for the evil with merciless hand,
Wipe the long blood stains from the trampled land!
Not vengeance, but justice!
Not destruction, but peace,
Wipe the long blood stains
That childhood shall sleep, shall sleep in peace.

Violoncello

Contrabass

5

sfz

sfz

sfz

sfz

Figure 1. Harl MacDonald, *Lament for the Stolen*, mm. 5–8.
“Winds” motive

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Violin 1

24

Figure 2. Harl MacDonald, *Lament for the Stolen*, m. 24.
“Circle” motive

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S

A

71

Bmaj Bmin Daug Dmaj A7 C#maj

3 3 3 3

In-to the shel-tered cir-cle In-to the harm - less, in - no-cent cir - cle of light

In-to the shel-tered cir-cle In-to the harm - less, in - no-cent cir - cle of light

Figure 3. Harl MacDonald, *Lament for the Stolen*, mm. 71–76.

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140 *ff*
S Ah, Ah, Ah
ff
A Ah, Ah, Ah

Figure 4. Harl MacDonald, *Lament for the Stolen*, mm. 140–143.
“Wail” motive

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155 *ff* (shriek)
S ah, ah, ah, ah
ff (shriek)
A ah, ah, ah, ah

Figure 5. Harl MacDonald, *Lament for the Stolen*, mm. 155–157.

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172
S This is a ter - ri-ble thing to be done in our time. This is a ter - ri-ble thing. A ter - ri-ble thing.
A ah, ah,

Figure 6. Harl MacDonald, *Lament for the Stolen*, mm. 172–176.
“Terrible” motive

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builds, transitioning into a fugue on the text “Woman to woman, the wide world over, our hands reach out to her side” (Figure 7).

The rhythmic nature of the fugue subject is borne out of the wails from earlier in the work, as the text setting—in particular each iteration of the word “woman”—features the snapping rhythmic motion of the “wailing” from m. 140. In addition, the musical setting of the words “over, our hands” can be interpreted as an inversion of the “circle” motive, and all throughout the fugue, the bass instruments iterate variations on the half-step “winds” motive.

Following the fugue, a climactic moment featuring a high B^b in the first soprano leads to a decrescendo and sudden thinning of texture to chorus and strings. McDonald then features some more quasi-chant over pulsating orchestra, and he brings Episode 3 to a close with the text “wait at the vigil’s end.”

After a short Episode 4, featuring solo chorus and some of the most intimate, reflective text thus far, the final climactic episode begins with a return to *sprech-stimme*, as sopranos speak the first lines of the episode over wailing in the altos. The “terrible” motive returns

in the orchestra, punctuating with the rhythmic figure as the full chorus wails, building to a sudden, *forte* unaccompanied statement by the chorus on the text “not vengeance, but Justice!” that morphs from B^b minor to B^b major (Figure 8). The orchestra further iterates the “terrible” motive, while the chorus continues to refute it, with statements of “not vengeance” on duplet eighth notes in 6/8 time alternating with the orchestra’s “terrible” motives (Figure 9 on the next page). McDonald identifies this moment as the primary climax of the work.

To close, McDonald reprises music from the beginning—this time, however, choosing not to emphasize the sinister “winds” motive, but featuring more of the “circle” motive. The musical material originally sung on the text “Into the harmless, innocent circle of light” is now sung on the text “Wipe the long bloodstains that childhood shall sleep in peace” by the solo chorus, brightened by its transposition up one whole step from the beginning. The “circle” motive remains present, in its original state in first soprano and inverted in second alto (Figure 10 on the next page). However, in the final measures of the work, McDonald brings in the full



Figure 7. Harl MacDonald, *Lament for the Stolen*, mm. 264-270.

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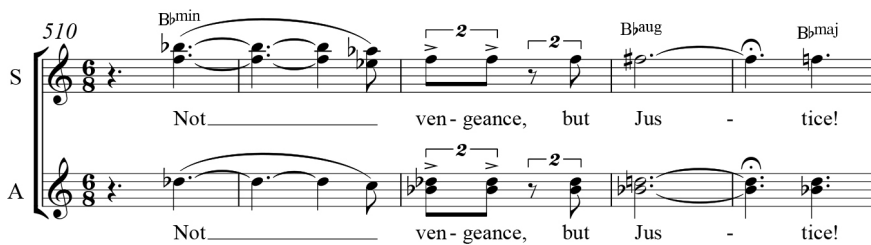


Figure 8. Harl MacDonald, *Lament for the Stolen*, mm. 510-514.

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519

S
ven - geance! ven - geance! ven - geance!

A
ven - geance! ven - geance! ven - geance!

Vln. 1
ff

Vln. 2
ff

Vla.
ff

Vlc.
ff

Cb.
ff

Figure 9. Harl MacDonald, *Lament for the Stolen*, mm. 519–521.

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557

S
Wipe the long blood - stains, that child - hood shall

A
Wipe the long blood - stains, that child - hood shall

560

S
sleep, that child - hood shall sleep in peace, that

A
sleep, that child - hood shall sleep in peace, that

“Circle”

“Circle” inverted

Figure 10. Harl MacDonald, *Lament for the Stolen*, mm. 557–563.

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chorus on a neutral syllable, featuring harmonic progressions that suggest the ever-present nature of threat, as the half-step motion of the “winds” motive remains within the fabric of the harmony in first soprano (Figure 11).

Performance Considerations

No recordings of the premiere of *Lament* have yet to be discovered; however, materials for performance are available for rental from Carl Fischer Publishing. Full score, instrumental parts, and piano/vocal score can all be obtained there (in manuscript form). In addition, the work will enter the public domain within a decade, allowing for easier access. On the title page of his full-score manuscript, Harl McDonald notes that *Lament for the Stolen* is scored for “Chorus of women’s voices SSAA with a solo choir (optional off-stage) SSAA.”³⁷ The note implies some flexibility regarding these solo choir moments. An off-stage chorus may necessitate more than a true solo choir of four individual voices to be heard, but an on-stage solo choir may function more practically with such forces, since the orchestral texture is thin at these spots. The intention at these moments is to express intimacy, and a conductor would do well to determine the nature of the solo chorus with regard to practicality in the performance space and performing forces.

Further choices regarding vocal forces are present in the moments of *sprechstimme*. It is unclear whether some of the moments of *sprechstimme* were intended for solo voices or for the section in unison: mm. 171-182 and mm. 480-483 have the spoken lines marked as “solo voice” in McDonald’s full score (the latter section accompanied by “half-chorus” wailing in the alto section), but his program notes indicate the former section to be a unified chant in the soprano section. Again, as may have been the case with the premiere, a contemporary conductor may choose to experiment in rehearsal in order to determine what choice in these cases serves the aesthetic of the music in the best way.

While the work is scored for SSAA divisi, McDonald often indulges in three-part writing within the choir. In addition, at these three-part moments, he is not consistent with regard to his method of division; at times he divides sopranos but leaves altos in unison, and at times divides the altos and leaves sopranos in unison, possibly implying intention on his part in terms of which vocal parts should be stronger. Regardless, a director might choose to re-voice the chorus into an equal split of three parts for these moments; the short, three-part fugue in particular may call for equal voicing.

McDonald’s writing for the chorus is also frequently challenging. Although Sophie Drinker was a champion for amateur music making, her commission, *Lament for the Stolen*, is not suitable for an average amateur wom-

The image shows a musical score for Soprano (S) and Alto (A) parts, measures 572-578. The score is in 3/4 time and features dynamic markings of piano (p) and sforzando (sfz). The lyrics are: "Ah, hm - ah - mm, Ah, hm - ah - mm, hm." The Soprano part has a melodic line with a half-step motion, and the Alto part has a similar line. The score ends with a double bar line.

Figure 11. Harl MacDonal, *Lament for the Stolen*, mm. 572–578 (end).

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en's chorus. The voice-leading itself is not difficult; however, the non-traditional harmonic shifts in some of the writing necessitate a skilled musical ear, regardless of the stepwise nature of the vocal lines. Rhythmic precision is important, particularly in the first wailing section; unifying a chorus of voices on such a rhythmic line poses a challenge.

The vocal ranges introduce challenges as well. The alto line sits in a suitable range, except for its entrance at the fugue, which begins on an E5. However, the alto statement of the subject is the very beginning of the fugue, necessitating a strong entrance, while other parts are *tacit*; a conductor may choose to supplement the alto part here with some soprano voices as the sopranos wait for their own entrance. Indeed, written in pencil in McDonald's full score at the alto entrance are the words "tutti except first sop." The first soprano line often reaches as high as A5 and B^b5; however, the composer does sopranos the courtesy of primarily setting their high notes on a wailing "ah" syllable or a similar vowel sound.

The score calls for extensive instrumentation—essentially a full romantic orchestra. As such, a proper performance of *Lament for the Stolen* is not one for the chamber music hall or for a choral concert with a few hired instrumentalists. A full symphony orchestra is required, at least until a scholar creates an edition for smaller forces (which may be difficult, considering the dramatic nature of the writing). In addition, a performance with solely piano accompaniment is not yet possible either. The vocal score of *Lament* does include a piano reduction, but only for moments that accompany the voices; orchestral interludes are represented as long periods of rest.³⁸ Presently, anyone wishing to stage a performance of *Lament for the Stolen* will need considerable resources: a full symphony orchestra and a skilled four-part treble chorus.

Contemporary Relevance of *Lament for the Stolen*

Lament for the Stolen is an interesting historical artifact and makes for absorbing study. However, outside of its historical relevance, one must ask, what value does the work have today? Is a performance of *Lament for the Sto-*

len practical or relevant in the twenty-first century?

Initial Reception and a Place in the Canon

Consider first the lackluster reception of the music upon its premiere. The primary criticism following the premiere was offense at its overtly dramatic moments. However, Alain Locke, in addition to his negative comments, also admitted that the music "in places [is] beautifully developed."³⁹ Another detractor wrote that "one should hear [the work] several times before judging it."⁴⁰ Someone else defended the piece, noting that "a lighter touch or an oblique attack would have been mannered and silly...unworthy of the theme."⁴¹

As such, the critical response to *Lament for the Stolen* paints the portrait of a work of art with true redeeming value but containing some dramatic elements that may have been too eccentric, too overt, too unconventional for patrons of the era used to hearing a certain type of music from their cherished Philadelphia Orchestra. Lacking a recording of the premiere, we cannot truly pass judgment on the premiere performance—and that performance is what determined the staying power of the work. Regarding the "shriek": if the chorus truly executed this moment at the premiere in the way Margaretta Wright claims McDonald wanted, is it possible that even a contemporary audience in the twenty-first century may be turned off to the work overall by such a shocking, overtly dramatic choice?

And consider the year of its premiere, 1938: atonal and serial music were in full swing, but classical music had yet to reach the vocal eccentricities the likes of György Ligeti's *Le Grand Macabre*. One can assume that, for attendees at the premiere performances of *Lament for the Stolen*, the unconventionally dramatic nature of some of the music cast a shadow over the quality of the work as a whole.

Even considering the lackluster response to the premiere, one speculates how history may have changed for *Lament for the Stolen* had there been a high-profile follow-up performance. The work was of high enough quality that many individuals joined Chapin in pushing for a New York performance, which did not materialize primarily because of logistical issues and programming schedules. But the opportunity to present the work to a new audience, possibly one more prepared for the

dramatic elements of the music due to its reputation from the premiere, may have resulted in more favorable response. Edward Elgar's oratorio *The Dream of Gerontius* had a famously terrible premiere performance in 1900, but due to a successful second showing in Düsseldorf in 1901 gained momentum toward an eventual reputation of one of the greatest English oratorios ever written.⁴² *Lament for the Stolen* may not have ever had a chance of being named one of the greatest choral works of all time, but a second performance may have helped it find a place in the canon.

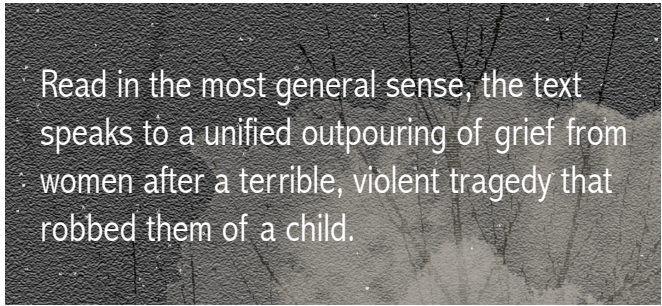
Social Issues and Gender Implications

Lastly, what relevance does *Lament for the Stolen* have in today's world? For any number of reasons, child kidnapping for ransom is not a social issue in the way it was during the 1930s and 1940s. However, Chapin's poem lacks any overt specificity to a particular event or physical act. Read in the most general sense, the text speaks to a unified outpouring of grief from women after a terrible, violent tragedy that robbed them of a child (reference to loss of a child is itself ambiguous, but mention of "the empty room" and its context tends to specify the tragedy in that direction). Even in its time, one could interpret *Lament for the Stolen* as an expression not of child kidnapping specifically, but of a son drafted into the military and killed in action. And now, in the twenty-first century, one needs only to look at the news cycle on a weekly basis to understand how a mother's tragic loss of a child due to an avoidable, violent tragedy that draws heavy media coverage is still relevant today.

Lament for the Stolen is a surviving relic of Sophie Drinker's dream of a repertoire for women's chorus that expresses feelings true and specific to women. To a certain extent, modern gender philosophies have undercut the concept of the women's chorus overall. Ensembles previously labeled "women's choruses" have been reimagined as treble choruses, in an effort toward inclusivity of male-identifying treble singers and of non-binary individuals.

While Drinker's gender-based musicological studies were certainly ahead of their time in one sense, they are a relic of a past in their assumption of gender as binary. As the choral discipline has seen a growth in

works written specifically for soprano/alto chorus since the 1950s—a trend Drinker would appreciate—her desire for a movement of women's chorus music that expresses women-specific themes has not come to much fruition, possibly because of the evolving nature of gender philosophy. New developments in choral music may be avoiding gender-specific themes in favor of universality and inclusion. Certainly, scholars are uncovering and composing more choral music that features an empowering women's voice. But in the twenty-first century, to follow Drinker's desire that these works be written for a chorus exclusively comprising women is to cater to a shrinking population.



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Conclusion: Universal Themes

One might assume that a work written in 1938 around specific social and gender issues of that time could not fit into the social atmosphere of the twenty-first century. The universal themes of *Lament*, however, are such that any choral singer or attentive listener may connect with them, as they may with any musical work, painting, film, or book that expresses deep emotion through a creative, artistic lens. As Katherine Garrison Chapin put it succinctly in a talk to the Philadelphia Cosmopolitan Club shortly before the premiere of *Lament*:

What woman, with a child, doesn't wonder, as she puts it to bed, or leaves it to play, whether she will find it safe when she returns. That lurking fear is there. As one woman wrote to me, "I hope your poignant words and the music may help to bring about a safer world for all little children."⁴³ ◻

NOTES

- ¹ Lawrence Gilman, "A Lament for the Stolen," *New York Herald Tribune* (1926-1962), New York, N.Y., December 18, 1938: E6.
- ² Ruth Solie, "Afterword" in *Music & Women: The Story of Women in their Relation to Music*, by Sophie Drinker, 325-368, 2nd Ed. (New York: The Feminist Press at The City University of New York, 1995), 334.
- ³ Concert Program. The Philadelphia Orchestra. Eugene Ormandy. Philadelphia: Academy of Music, December 30-31, 1939. Katherine Biddle Papers, GTM-GAMMS250, Box 44. Georgetown University Manuscripts, Booth Family Center for Special Collections, Washington, D.C.
- ⁴ Concert Program. The Brico Junior Symphony Orchestra. Antonia Brico. New York: White Plains High School, May 15, 1940. Katherine Biddle Papers.
- ⁵ Ruth Solie, "Afterword," in *Music & Women*.
- ⁶ Ruth Solie, "Women's History and Music History: The Feminist Historiography of Sophie Drinker," *Journal of Women's History*, 5/2 (1993): 8-31, accessed 30 November 2022.
- ⁷ Elizabeth Wood, "Preface," in *Music & Women: The Story of Women in their Relation to Music*, by Sophie Drinker, vii-ix.
- ⁸ Solie, "Afterword," 334.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, 335.
- ¹⁰ Maxine Block, "Chapin, Katherine Garrison," Ed. Anna Rothe, *Current Biography* (New York: H.W. Wilson Company, 1944): 121.
- ¹¹ Laurie Dennett, *An American Princess: The Remarkable Life of Marguerite Chapin Caetani* (Chicago: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2016), 262.
- ¹² Katherine Biddle Papers, GTM-GAMMS250, Box 44. Georgetown University Manuscripts, Booth Family Center for Special Collections, Washington, D.C. Chapin's correspondence reveals close connections with the likes of Alain Locke (writer, philosopher, and "Dean" of the Harlem Renaissance), Charlotte Osgood Mason (philanthropist), Max Eastman (writer), Rachel Crothers (playwright and theater director), Maxwell Struthers Burt (poet), Edmund Wilson (writer and literary critic), Eleanor Roosevelt (first lady), and Henry Bainbridge McCarter (modernist illustrator and painter).
- ¹³ Alberta Turner, "Katherine Garrison Chapin," in *American Women Writers: a Critical Reference Guide from Colonial Times to the Present*, ed. Lina Mainiero, 335, (New York: Ungar, 1979), accessed 11 November 2022 at <https://archive.org/details/americanwomenwri01main/page/334/mode/2up>.
- ¹⁴ An interesting historical note regarding *And They Lynched Him on a Tree*: In correspondence from July/August 1938, as McDonald and Chapin were discussing finishing touches for *Lament*, they were simultaneously making plans for their next project and make repeated reference to a "lynching poem." As if continual mention of a "lynching poem" were not enough, the fact that both of them quote the first line of what modern choral musicians know as the beginning of William Grant Still's *And They Lynched Him on a Tree* reveals that, indeed, Harl McDonald was Chapin's originally intended composer to set her poem to music, and sketches may possibly exist for McDonald's vision.
- ¹⁵ Laurie Dennett, *An American Princess: The Remarkable Life of Marguerite Chapin Caetani* (Chicago: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2016), 193.
- ¹⁶ Ronald F. Eyer, "Meet the Composer: Harl McDonald," *Musical America*, 64/4 (March 1944): 7 and 25. Accessed 11 November 2022 at https://archive.org/details/sim_musical-america_1944-03-10_64_4/page/6/mode/2up. See also "Harl McDonald" (Obituary). *The Cincinnati Enquirer*. March 31, 1955, 8.
- ¹⁷ Madeline Gross, *Modern Music-Makers: Contemporary American Composers* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, Inc., 1952), 303-304. Both of Harl's parents were accomplished musicians: his father played piano and horn, while his mother was a singer Lied and music theorist. His mother also taught him lessons in piano and basic music theory. Harl proceeded to gain proficiency on a variety of instruments, including piano, organ, violin, cello, clarinet, and horn.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 305.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 311.
- ²⁰ Barbara A. Renton, "McDonald, Harl," *Grove Music Online*, accessed December 4, 2022, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.
- ²¹ Ronald F. Eyer, "Meet the Composer: Harl McDonald."
- ²² Correspondence in the Katherine Biddle Papers (Georgetown University) and the Katherine Garrison Chapin Papers (Library of Congress) reveal the full story, which is synthesized in my full dissertation on this subject.

- ²³ Concert Program. The Philadelphia Orchestra. December 30-31, 1939. Katherine Biddle Papers, GTM-GAMMS250, Box 44.
- ²⁴ Chapin to McDonald, date unknown, Katherine Biddle Papers, GTM-GAMMS250, Box 44.
- ²⁵ Chapin to Eugene Ormandy, January 19, 1939, Katherine Garrison Chapin Papers, MMC-3429, Box 4, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Washington, D.C.
- ²⁶ Ormandy to Chapin, January 23, 1939, Katherine Garrison Chapin Papers, MMC-3429, Box 4.
- ²⁷ Amber Cheston to Chapin, date unknown, Katherine Biddle Papers, GTM-GAMMS250, Box 44.
- ²⁸ Mrs. Edward Becker to Chapin, January 2, 1939, Katherine Biddle Papers.
- ²⁹ Unknown, "Music: Terrible Thing," *Time*, January 9, 1939, Accessed 20 December 2021 at <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,771316,00.html>.
- ³⁰ Phoebe (last name unintelligible) to Chapin, January 7, 1939, Katherine Biddle Papers.
- ³¹ Locke to Mason, January 1, 1939, Katherine Biddle Papers. Knowing that Chapin and McDonald were working on a "Lynching Poem" project as early as summer of 1938, and knowing that Alain Locke and fellow New England philanthropist Charlotte Mason were driving forces behind the commission of "And They Lynched Him On A Tree," we can presume that Locke and Mason approached her to propose a commission, Chapin mentioned this "lynching" project in the works with McDonald, and Locke/Mason suggested they go forward with that idea, but involve an African American composer rather than McDonald for such a racially charged project. McDonald's surrendering of the project is possibly alluded to in a letter from Chapin to McDonald written at an unknown time after the premiere of *Lament*, in which she writes, "I really feel as if something had died—having you give up my other poem!" Thus, thanks to Alain Locke's attendance at the premiere of *Lament for the Stolen*, a work originally intended to be the second McDonald/Chapin collaboration became a William Grant Still choral ballad, an important staple in the repertoire of twentieth-century choral music.
- ³² Concert Program. The Brico Junior Symphony Orchestra. Antonia Brico. New York: White Plains High School, May 15, 1940. Katherine Biddle Papers, GTM-GAMMS250, Box 44.
- ³³ Harl McDonald, *Lament for the Stolen* (manuscript), Pennsylvania: Theodore Presser, 1938. See also: McDonald, Harl. *Lament for the Stolen* (scratch score). Free Library of Philadelphia, Fleisher Collection, U-5853.
- ³⁴ Lawrence Gilman, "Lament for the Stolen: for Chorus of Women's Voices and Orchestra: Poem by Katherine Garrison Chapin; Music by Harl McDonald," program notes for Philadelphia Orchestra, *Twelfth Pair*, Eugene Ormandy, conductor, Friday, December 30 and Saturday, December 31, 1938, Academy of Music, Philadelphia, PA.
- ³⁵ Lawrence Gilman, "Lament for the Stolen: for Chorus of Women's Voices and Orchestra: Poem by Katherine Garrison Chapin; Music by Harl McDonald," program notes for Philadelphia Orchestra, *Twelfth Pair*, Eugene Ormandy, conductor, Friday, December 30 and Saturday, December 31, 1938, Academy of Music, Philadelphia, PA.
- ³⁶ Wright to Chapin, unknown date, Katherine Garrison Chapin Papers, MMC-3429, Box 4, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Washington, D.C.
- ³⁷ Harl McDonald, *Lament for the Stolen* (manuscript), Pennsylvania: Carl Fischer Publishing, 1938.
- ³⁸ Harl McDonald, *Lament for the Stolen* (vocal score), Free Library of Philadelphia, Fleisher Collection, U-5853.
- ³⁹ Locke to Mason, January 1, 1939, Katherine Biddle Papers, GTM-GAMMS250, Box 44.
- ⁴⁰ Phoebe (last name unintelligible) to Chapin, January 7, 1939, Katherine Biddle Papers.
- ⁴¹ Genevieve Taggard, "News Notes," *Poetry*, 53/5 (1939): 285-287. Accessed 20 December 2021.
- ⁴² Dennis Shrock, *Choral Repertoire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 541.
- ⁴³ Chapin's notes, December 20, 1938, Katherine Biddle Papers, GTM-GAMMS250, Box 44. Further, the "woman who wrote to" Chapin referenced in this quote is Elizabeth Morrow, Chapin's friend and mother of Anne Lindburgh.