

GEORGE CHADWICK

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George Whitefield Chadwick was an American composer. Along with Horatio Parker, Amy Beach, Arthur Foote, and Edward MacDowell, he was a representative composer of the New England School of American composers of the late 19th century. He was proud of his New England roots which he traced back to about 1630.

Chadwick's works are influenced by the Realist movement.. Many consider his music to portray a distinctively American style. His works included several operas, three symphonies, five string quartets, tone poems, incidental music, songs and choral anthems.

Born in a rural part of Lowell, Massachusetts, on 13 November 1854, Chadwick received some early musical training from organ lessons given by his older brother, Fitz Henry. He developed an independent, self-reliant character early in his life. Dropping out of high school in 1871, Chadwick assisted briefly in his father's insurance business. The experience enabled him to travel to Boston and to other cities, where he attended concerts and cultural events. He heard the premiere of Paine's Symphony no 1 which inspired him. Apparently, his father was somewhat puritanical and George felt he had to rebel.



Chadwick entered New England Conservatory (NEC) as a "special student" in 1872, where he could study with the faculty without satisfying the rigorous entrance or degree requirements. However, he approached his studies more seriously and took advantage of what NEC offered. Chadwick studied organ with George E. Whiting (1840–1923), piano with Carlyle Petersilea (1844–1903), and theory with Stephen A. Emery (1841–1891), each of whom was well respected in the Boston music scene. In America. He also pursued studies with Eugene Thayer.

In 1876, Chadwick accepted a position on the faculty at Olivet College and was a valued instructor as well as administrator. While at Olivet, Chadwick founded the Music Teachers National Association. The first evidence of his interest in composing appeared during this time, from a performance of his Canon in E flat dated 6 November 1876.

Realising that his musical career in the USA would be limited without further studies in Europe, Chadwick headed to Germany in 1877 like many other composers of his generation. He studied in Leipzig at the Royal Conservatory of Music under Carl Reinecke (1824–1910) and Salomon Jadassohn (1830–1902).

Chadwick's most significant compositions as a student there include two string quartets (no. 1 1877-8, no. 2 premiered 1879) and the concert overture Rip Van Winkle. These works helped confirm his position as a promising young American composer among his German contemporaries, from whom he received favourable critiques.

After his two-year stay in Leipzig, Chadwick travelled around Europe with a group of artists who called themselves the "Duvneck Boys". They were led by the young and charismatic Frank Duvneck, who was well known for his portrait works in the style of Velázquez. The group was based in Munich, then in Paris. Chadwick also stayed in France with the group, where he was taken with the French lifestyle and influenced by the emerging Impressionist movement.

Chadwick resumed his compositional studies with Josef Rheinberger (1839–1901) at the Hochschule für Musik in Munich. Rheinberger was known as a skilled musical craftsman who incorporated polyphony with creativity and clarity. Thus Chadwick benefited from Rheinberger's extensive knowledge of the classics, both instrumental and choral.

Chadwick returned to Boston in March 1880 establishing a career in the USA. He opened a teaching studio and secured two performances of Rip Van Winkle. Chadwick also completed his First Symphony, which although not really inspired was a significant early contribution by an American composer. In addition to his compositional activities, Chadwick was also both a performing organist and avid conductor. He served as the Music Director of the Springfield Festival from 1890 to 1899, and of the Worcester Music Festival from 1899 to 1901.

The Symphony no 2 in B flat Op 21 was commenced as a whole in 1886 and took about three years to complete although the scherzo had appeared in 1884 and was performed with some success. The first movement is called Introduction and Allegro beginning with an unaccompanied horn theme that serves as a motto theme. The allegro is in sonata form and is said to echo classical and romantic symphonies also in B flat such as Schubert's Fifth and Schumann's First. The music is like quicksilver never heavy and with some good orchestration. But, if there is a fault, it is too sweet and lacks drama. The scherzo follows and is probably the best movement with hints of Irishness and Mendelssohnian felicity. The slow movement may owe something to Tchaikovsky with brass fanfares and a protestant-style chorale reminiscent of Chadwick's background.. The finale recalls previous material with Schumann's Spring Symphony in mind.

The Symphonic Sketches were written over a period of time Jubilee and Noel appeared in 1895, Vagrom Ballad the following year and Hobgoblin in 1904. It is a symphony in all but name and unlike the symphony the work is dramatic and maintains attention. It may be his best orchestral work. Jubilee is fast, loud and exciting with a contrasting section. A habanera rhythm appears and as Horatio Parker said the work is very American. Noel gives us a picture of the manger which reminded the composer of his dear wife and second son, Noel. the music is tender and becomes passionate. Hobgoblin is a Halloween piece with some gorgeous colours in the orchestra A Vagrom ballad pictures a tramp from Vaudeville days. There is a solo for bass clarinet, a parody of a solo in Meyerbeer's Les Huguenots. Parker called it 'fooling around' music

In 1897, Chadwick was appointed Director of New England Conservatory. Known in the Boston arts circle as talented, personable, and energetic, he was crucial in transforming NEC into a respectable school of music. Chadwick implemented features that resembled those of the German conservatories of his experience. He established a variety of performing ensembles, and students were required to take more music theory and history classes. He also invited members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra as private teachers for the students, along with being an inspiring teacher himself. His students described him as "demanding, though fair-minded and witty". Among his pupils were Horatio Parker, William Grant Still, Arthur Whiting, Wallace Goodrich, Frederick S. Converse and Henry Hadley.

He had some influence in the establishment of Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia music fraternity, which was established at the conservatory in the fall of 1898, primarily through the recommendation of the name "Sinfonia" after a student organization to which he belonged in Leipzig. He was named an honorary member of the Alpha Chapter at the conservatory, and was later named a national honorary member of the Fraternity in 1909.

Chadwick composed in almost every genre, including opera, chamber music, choral works, and songs, though he had a particular affinity for orchestral music. His music can be categorized into four style periods: The Formative Period, 1879–1894; The Americanism/Modernism Period, 1895–1909; The Dramatic Period, 1910–1918; and The Reflective Years, 1919-1931.

The formative period (1879–1894)

During the time of the formative period Chadwick utilized his training as a student in Leipzig, favouring sonata form, diatonic harmony, and regular phrasing and rhythms. The Symphony No. 1 in C major, Symphony No. 2 in B-flat major, and Symphony no 3 in F followed the four-movement outline, modelled after composers like Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Brahms, and Dvořák. Nonetheless, the Second and Third Symphonies exhibit original aspects such as pentatonic scales, along with the Scots-Irish folk style in the Second Symphony.

His important early overtures are Rip Van Winkle, Melpomene, and Thalia. Set around Washington Irving's tale of the same name, Rip Van Winkle was his first orchestral work that established his claim to fame in Europe and America. Melpomene is a rich and lush work reminiscent of Wagner, and the comedy overture Thalia is imitative of Mendelssohn's light and lively style. A choral/orchestral piece, The Lily Nymph, presents a mixture of techniques borrowed from Mendelssohn and Impressionism.

Among his chamber works, the First String Quartet and Second String Quartet demonstrate a solid knowledge of developmental procedures as well as inventiveness, while the Third String Quartet (1882?-1886) displays more mastery in instrumentation. The Quintet for Piano and Strings is a lyrical work that shows a melodic gift despite some awkward moments.

Chadwick's first work for the theatre was *The Peer and the Pauper*, an imitation of Gilbert and Sullivan operas which were then popular in the USA. His "burlesque opera" *Tabasco* was an outlet for his own wry wit, featuring a humorous plot, comically named characters, and popular-style music. It opened in New York in 1894 and toured the United States for a year. The Grove Encyclopedia says it offered:

"...a veritable anthology of popular styles, including a 'Plantation Ballad', a Spanish 'Bolero', an Irish 'Ditty' and a French 'Rigaudon', most of them designed as set pieces to show off the talents of the first performers. But Chadwick also composed complex musical numbers that advance the plot and demonstrate his command of the extended finale as employed by Sullivan..."

In the Americanism/Modernism period (1895–1909) Chadwick asserted his own musical style more than previously, as in the concert overture *Adonais*. It includes multiple sections, muted strings, and harps to generate an ethereal quality, unconventional rhythms, and occasional chromaticism. The critic William Foster Apthorp stated, "It is the most modern in spirit of anything I know from his pen... He has outgrown the classic idea... The very character of the thematic material in *Adonais* is modern, in sharp contrast to the classic reserve shown in the *Melpomene* overture; the expression is more outspoken, more purely emotional and dramatic."

Chadwick further delved into the symphonic genre with his *Symphonic Sketches*, *Sinfonietta*, and *Suite Symphonique*. All have the conventional four-movement pattern, but he created a gossamer atmosphere with humorous themes, programmaticism, modality (pentatonic melodies), and Impressionism. The orchestration contains unexpected elements such as bass clarinet cadenzas, saxophone solos, extended brass solos, and large percussion batteries.

His Fourth String Quartet, composed around the same time as Antonín Dvořák's String Quartet in F (Op. 96, "American"), displays a more American folk style than his Fifth String Quartet, with catchy tunes and pentatonic third-movement fiddle melodies.

Chadwick composed more stage works, notably *Judith*, based on the tale from the *Aprocrypha*. The piece is melodic and exotic, much like Camille Saint-Saëns's *Samson et Delilah*.

In his *Ecce jam noctis* for chorus and orchestra composed for Yale University's 1897 commencement ceremony, Chadwick weaved in rhythmic twists like triple-meter strings against the static and homophonical chorus. *Lochinvar* is another distinctive choral piece with a Celtic flavourer, featuring a baritone voice with a violin solo just before the "Introduction of Strathspey" section.

During the Dramatic period (1910-1918), Chadwick shifted from overtures and symphonies to a more dramatic and programmatic style. At this point, he was more interested in musical effects than in form and construction.

His two representative works are the tone poems *Aphrodite* and *Tam O'Shanter*, both for large orchestra. The compositions are both highly episodic, programmatic and well-orchestrated. *Aphrodite* evokes a majestic image of the sea, and *Tam O'Shanter* (based on the tale by Robert Burns) is a work of musical story-telling of similar caliber as some of Richard Strauss's pieces, such as the latter's *Don Quixote*.

Chadwick's most important stage work from this period is *The Padrone*, based on the realistic plight of Italian immigrants in the North End of Boston. It has a distinctive verismo style (realistic action integrated with a lyrical score). Although Chadwick considered this to be one of his finer works, it was not performed until 1995, when it was premiered by the Waterbury Symphony at the Thomaston Opera House.

He wrote a number of patriotic songs during World War I, including *These to the Front*, *The Fighting Men*, and perhaps his best known, *Land of Our Hearts*, first performed in the Norfolk Festival in June 1918, featuring a fluid syllabic setting of a poem by John Hall Ingram. But access to recordings of his music are very rare and so this essay is inadequate.

The reflective years (1919–1931) shows Chadwick as a highly regarded elder musician who was no longer writing as the energetically creative artist. The Anniversary Overture to celebrate his 25th anniversary as the director of New England Conservatory was considered "scholarly" but warm and congenial. His output significantly declined during these years, and he was more of a musical administrator and socialite among the elite Bostonians. He remained well respected until his death in 1931, after which his works became more obscure but nonetheless he is considered to have made important contributions to the American music repertoire. Some of his orchestration is first class and his many songs are admired by the few that know them.

He died on 4 April 1931.

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