Late Piano Works

Far Awa', Op. 43, no. 4 (1936)

The Lotos Isles, Op. 76, no. 2 (c.1930)

The Water-Sprites, Op. 90, no. 2 "Caprice" (c.1921)

A September Forest (1930)

by

Amy Beach

Coedited by Dr. Kirsten Johnson & Chris A. Trotman
Engraved by Chris A. Trotman
Women's Philharmonic Advocacy – www.wophil.org
www.amybeach.org

Late Piano Works

(*Far Awa', The Lotos Isles, The Water-Sprites "Caprice" & A September Forest*)

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with the cooperation of the MacDowell Colony.

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Amy Beach: Late Piano Works

Preface

This album contains four pieces, yet unpublished, composed in Amy Beach's later years.

Far Awa' (1936)[1] is a piano transcription of the fourth of her *Five Burns Songs*, op. 43; Beach also wrote an organ version later that same day.[2] The text, about a woman longing for her sailor lover, is from Robert Burns' poem, "Talk of Him That's Far Awa' (1788). The song melody is first presented in the middle voice, requiring a delicate balance between the bass line and the right-hand chords on the offbeat. The last stanza is particularly evocative:

> "Gentle night, do thou befriend me,
> Downy sleep, the curtain draw;
> Spirits kind, again attend me,
> Talk of him that's far awa!"

The dynamics and phrasing in this edition are from the song setting as Beach's manuscript is sparse with little performance detail. There is much opportunity for the pianist to color and voice chords, bring out countermelodies and inner lines. At the end, the longer top notes, as in measure 45 onwards, should sing out, allowing the sound to continue over the sequential descending patterns.

The text of Beach's song, ***The Lotus Isles***, Op. 76, No. 2 (1914) is from Alfred Tennyson's poem, "The Lotus-Eaters." Beach's eponymous piano piece[3] was written around 1930 but is only loosely based on her earlier work with the melody hidden in the passagework. Rather than the 4/4 meter of the song, Beach uses 3/4 and adds an introduction and a coda. The original song's accompaniment patterns are now developed melodically, requiring a close, legato finger technic to achieve the *dolce murmurando* marked. Beach indicates use of the sostenuto pedal at the start, allowing the low A to undergird the harmonies above. The pedal marks throughout are Beach's own, as are the dynamics and phrase markings. The performer may wish to experiment with using the sostenuto pedal in other places, for example on the Ab in measure 21, the Db – Ab in third beat of measure 62, and the Db on the third beat of measure 66. Or, depending on the piano and acoustic, half-pedalling might be preferred in various phrases, for example in measures 37-40.

Caprice is Beach's own piano transcription[4] of the second piece of her trio for flute, cello and

piano, *The Water-Sprites, Op. 90* (1921). Only two measures longer, this piano version effectively combines the instrumental parts, placing the pizzicato cello line in the left-hand while the 16th notes in the right combine the running-water passages of the flute and piano. *Caprice* is written without musical markings: dynamics, articulations and tempi are informed by the trio score, with editorial license. All fingerings are editorial suggestions.

Composed in 1930 during a stay at the MacDowell Colony in New Hampshire, ***A September Forest*** beautifully depicts a tranquil woodland setting. The serenity and inner peace Beach must have felt at her retreat is revealed in the hymn-like melody which comes halfway through the piece. Beach used A September Forest as the basis for Christ in the Universe, op. 132, a vocal work with orchestra. Her piano manuscript is detailed, including dynamics, pedaling and articulation marks. Exquisite shifts of color are captured throughout, with long holds of the damper pedal. In some acoustics, the pianist might wish to half-pedal or more frequently pedal, but this is a matter of personal taste. We have left the pedal markings as Beach indicated, except for adding sostenuto pedal markings in measures 84-88 to allow for the bass line to be sustained under the full chords above.

Dr. Kirsten Johnson
Oxford, United Kingdom
May 3, 2024

[1] Beach wrote at the top of the manuscript: "Studio MacD.C., about 9 am, September 17/36" and at the end, "Finished 10:45 am." Amy Beach, *Far awa'* (piano manuscript) in Amy Beach Papers, UNH archive, Box 4, Folder 12.

[2] Amy Beach, *Far awa'* (organ manuscript) in Amy Beach Papers, Box 5, Folder 1; original manuscript dated "afternoon of Sept. 17/36"; a diary note says this was revised in 1937 (Block, *Passionate Victorian*, 377 n.15).

[3] Amy Beach, *The Lotus Isles* (manuscript), in Amy Beach Papers, UNH archive, Box 5, Folder 26.

[4] This piano transcription is found in manuscript in theAmy Beach Papers, UNH archive, Box 5, Folder 35.

Far Awa'

Op. 43, no. 4

Studio MacDowell Colony
Sept. 17, 1936, 10:45 a.m.

Amy Marcy Beach
Coedited by Kirsten Johnson (fingering)
& Chris A. Trotman (engraver)

* Dotted brackets indicate places where those with smaller hands may wish to take the notes with R.H.

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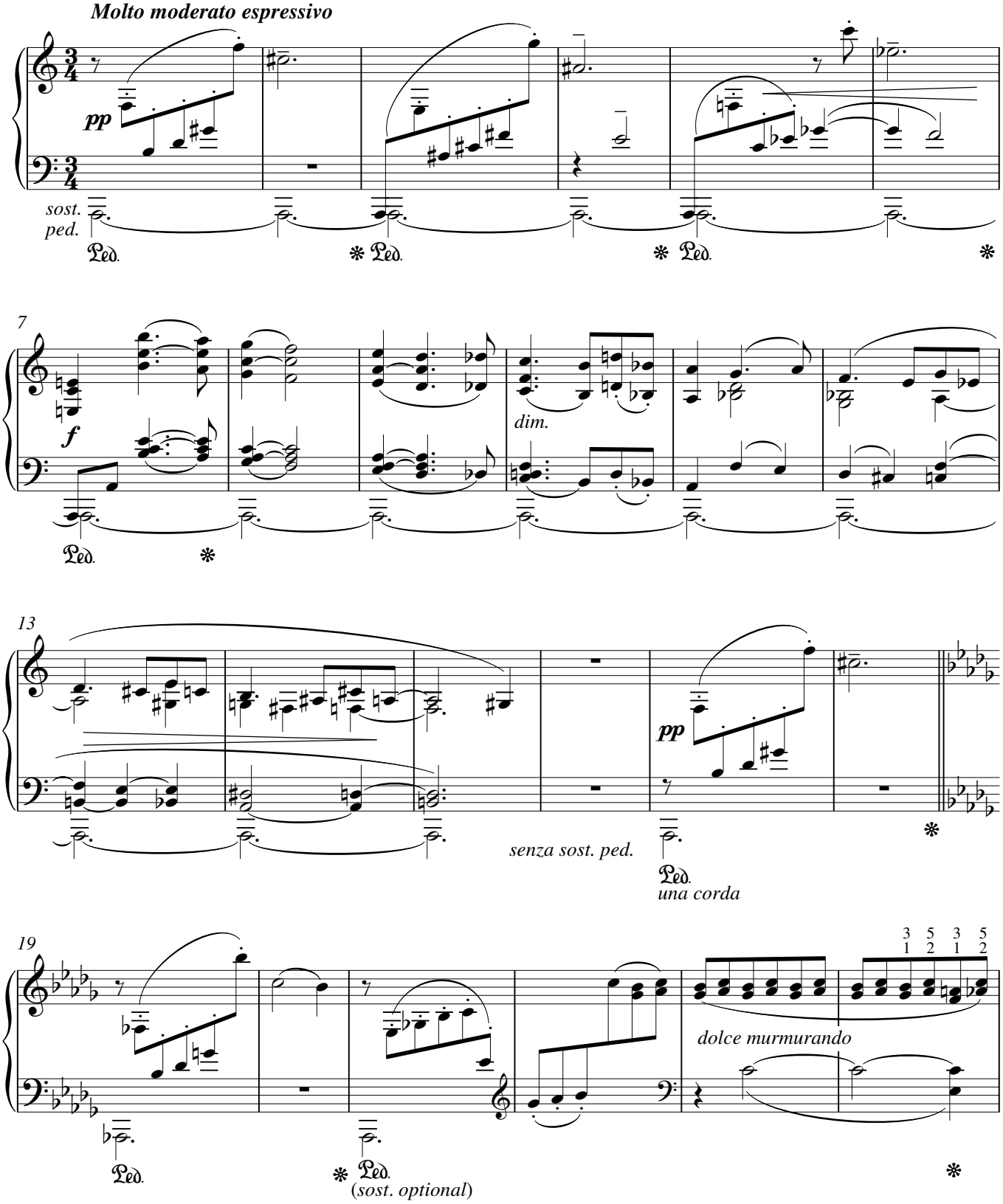
The Lotos Isles

Op. 76, no. 2

Amy Marcy Beach
Coedited by Kirsten Johnson (fingering)
& Chris A. Trotman (engraver)



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Caprice

Op. 90, no. 2, From "The Water-Sprites"

Amy Marcy Beach
Coedited by Kirsten Johnson (fingering)
& Chris A. Trotman (engraver)

*Tied in Trio version

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A September Forest

(*1930*)

Amy Marcy Beach
Coedited by Kirsten Johnson (fingering)
& Chris A. Trotman (engraver)

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