

The Cambridge Companion to Amy Beach

Amy Beach was a pathbreaking composer and pianist who transcended the restrictions of nineteenth-century Boston to become America's most famous turn-of-the-century female composer and, later in her career, a prominent performing artist and promoter of music education. *The Cambridge Companion to Amy Beach* makes her life and music accessible to a new generation of listeners. It outlines her remarkable talent as a child prodigy, her marriage to a prominent physician twice her age, and her subsequent international acclaim as a composer and piano virtuoso. Analytical chapters examine the range of her musical output, from popular songs and piano pieces to chamber and symphonic works of great complexity. As well as introducing Beach's compelling music to those not yet familiar with her work, it provides new resources for scholars and students with in-depth information drawn from recently uncovered archival sources.

E. DOUGLAS BOMBERGER teaches musicology and piano at Elizabethtown College. He has published six books and numerous articles on music in the United States, and he served as subject editor for nineteenth-century music for the *Grove Dictionary of American Music* (2013).

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Edited by

E. DOUGLAS BOMBERGER

Elizabethtown College



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KIRSTEN JOHNSON has recorded the complete piano works of Amy Beach in a four-CD set, including many world premieres and unpublished works available only in manuscript. Her championing of American piano music also includes two discs of Florence Price’s piano pieces (Guild, 2022); and the complete works of Arthur Foote (Delos), James Hewitt (Centaur), and Benjamin Carr (Centaur). Dr. Johnson earned her Doctor of Musical Arts from the University of Missouri–Kansas City under a Kemper Doctoral Fellowship. Her doctoral research became the basis of her first CD: *Këngë: Albanian Piano Music*. Dr. Johnson later researched Dmitri Kabalevsky’s music, making the first recording of Dmitri Kabalevsky’s *Three Preludes for Piano*, op. 1, which she discovered in a Paris library and then edited for publication. For more information on Dr. Johnson’s music and recordings, please visit www.kirstenjohnsonpiano.com.

KATHERINE KELTON has enjoyed an eclectic singing career that has included solo recital and oratorio work, in addition to extensive professional choral singing. Her CD, *Amy Beach: Songs* (Naxos, 2004), has introduced Beach's songs to a worldwide audience and contributed to their regaining their rightful place within the body of art song literature. Formerly Associate Professor of Music at Butler and Pittsburg State Universities, she received DMA and MM degrees in Applied Voice from the University of Texas at Austin. She has been active in the National Association of Teachers of Singing on the national level and has been a contributor to *American Music*, *American Music Teacher*, and *Classical Singer Magazine*, among other publications. In addition to her advocacy for Amy Beach's songs, Kelton's work focuses on phonetics and vocal composition.

MATTHEW PHELPS is Minister of Music at West End United Methodist Church in Nashville, Founder and Artistic Director of Vocal Arts Nashville, the Artistic Director of Collegium Cincinnati, and a faculty member at Lipscomb University. He has performed as a pianist, organist, and conductor throughout the nation. Dr. Phelps has presented and performed at conferences of the American Choral Directors Association, the Hymn Society, the American Guild of Organists, and the National Pastoral Musicians. His critical edition of Amy Beach's *Grand Mass in E-Flat Major* is published by A-R Editions.

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Women's History and Culture in the United States (Library of Congress, 2002).

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Acknowledgments

Editing the *Cambridge Companion to Amy Beach* has been a joy and a privilege because of the dedication of the contributors. Each of them approached the task with enthusiasm for the subject and flexibility when challenges arose. They each brought unique perspectives and disciplinary orientations to their assigned topics, resulting in essays that are uniquely suited to the varied aspects of Beach's long and fruitful career. I am also grateful to Kate Brett and her colleagues at Cambridge University Press for supporting this project and seeing it to completion in a professional manner.

All of us who value the music of Amy Beach are indebted to the research pioneers who make our work possible. Adrienne Fried Block's numerous writings, especially her award-winning biography, *Amy Beach, Passionate Victorian* (1998), established the scholarly foundation on which this study rests. Barbara White and William Ross of the University of New Hampshire's Milne Special Collections Library created a peerless collection of archival source materials for us to consult. The list of new recordings of Beach's music grows each year, owing in equal part to dedicated performers and receptive record companies.

I am grateful to Elizabethtown College for several sources of funding. A faculty grant supported research visits to New Hampshire in 2021 and 2022 as well as numerous day trips to the Library of Congress. The college's Summer Creative Arts and Research Program (SCARP) was crucial in completing the manuscript preparation in summer 2022. Amaris Wolfe, the SCARP recipient, was very helpful in a variety of tasks from database searching to proofreading. She demonstrated a special skill in preparing musical examples. My colleagues and students in the music department have afforded many opportunities to present my findings in seminars as well as to perform Beach's works in campus concerts.

This book was written under the shadow of the coronavirus pandemic, and the research has made us grateful for the printed music and secondary literature available online or through interlibrary loan but also acutely aware that many important documents relating to Beach and her music are available only as archival sources. We are deeply indebted to Robin

Rausch, Paul Sommerfeld, and their colleagues at the Library of Congress Music Division, along with Bill Ross at the Milne Special Collections Library at the University of New Hampshire, for fielding questions during the shutdown and for allowing us to visit their research collections as early as possible in the summer of 2021. We must also acknowledge that without the heroic work of health care workers in our communities and research scientists at pharmaceutical companies, we would not have been able to enjoy this window of availability.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge that the reason for my ongoing interest in and advocacy for Amy Beach has always been her compelling music. I thank Marmaduke Miles, whose recital of Beach's solo piano works in the University of North Carolina's Hill Hall ignited a flame that has burned ever since. I am grateful to my piano teachers, including Marvin Blickenstaff and Bradford Gowen, who coached me on Beach works that were previously unfamiliar to them but related to the Romantic piano literature they knew. I appreciate the willingness of my piano students, particularly Anthony Beer and Sarah Palatnik, to immerse themselves in Beach's works and perform them publicly. I am grateful to David Sariti and Emily Derstine, who helped me internalize the Violin Sonata through their performances with me. Most importantly, I cannot express enough gratitude to my wife, soprano Teresa Bomberger, whose countless performances of Beach's solo songs have given me insights into the beauties of this music that are only matched by her insightful critiques of my attempts to express those beauties in writing.

Chronology

September 5, 1867	Amy Marcy Cheney is born in Henniker, New Hampshire, to Clara Imogene (Marcy) Cheney and Charles Abbott Cheney.	
1871	Clara Cheney allows her child to sit at the piano for the first time. Amy Cheney is able to pick out tunes and harmonize them from memory. Starting at age six, mother and daughter hold lessons in their home three times a week.	“Mamma’s Waltz”
1876	Amy Cheney begins piano study with Ernst Perabo. Mentors recommend that Amy be sent to Europe, but her mother declines.	“Air and Variations” (1877) “Minuetto” (1877) “Romanza” (1877) “Petite Waltz” (1878)

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|------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1881 | Cheney begins to study harmony with Junius Welch Hill at Wellesley College. She takes lessons for only one year. | |
| 1882 | Cheney ends her study with Perabo and begins study with Carl Baermann, a pupil of Liszt. Amy also begins to educate herself on counterpoint and orchestration by examining works of prominent composers such as J. S. Bach. | |
| October 24, 1883 | Amy Cheney gives her official debut, performing in Alfred P. Peck's Anniversary Concert in Boston. | |
| January 9, 1884 | Cheney's first public recital is given at Chickering Hall in Boston. | "A Rainy Day" (1884) |
| February 1885 | Cheney's composition, "With Violets," is published by the Arthur P. Schmidt Company. | "With Violets," op. 1, no. 1 (1885) |
| March 28, 1885 | Amy Cheney performs Chopin's Concerto in F minor, op. 21, in her debut with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. | |

December 2, 1885	At age 18, Amy Marcy Cheney is married to Henry Harris Aubrey Beach, a prominent Boston physician. In accordance with Henry's wishes, Amy limits her public piano performances and turns to composing under her married name, Mrs. H. H. A. Beach. The couple reside at 28 Commonwealth Avenue in Boston.	<i>Valse Caprice</i> , op. 4 (1889) Grand Mass in E-flat major, op. 5 (1890) "Empress of the Night," op. 2 (1891)
February 7, 1892	The Handel and Haydn Society of Boston performs Beach's first major work, the Grand Mass in E-flat major, op. 5.	<i>Festival Jubilate</i> , op. 17 (1891) <i>Sketches</i> , op. 15 (1892)
May 1– October 30, 1893	Several of Beach's works are performed at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago.	"Ecstasy," op. 19, no. 2 (1893) <i>Romance</i> , op. 23 (1893)
November 21, 1894	Beach begins composing the first movement of her "Gaelic" Symphony, basing many of the work's themes on Gaelic folk tunes.	<i>Ballade</i> , op. 6 (1894) <i>Bal Masqué</i> , op. 22 (1894)

- | | | |
|-------------------|---|--|
| October 31, 1896 | The Boston Symphony Orchestra performs Beach's "Gaelic" Symphony, op. 32, under Emil Paur's baton. This work is met with outstanding success. | "Gaelic" Symphony, op. 32 (1896)
<i>Three Shakespeare Songs</i> , op. 37 (1897) |
| April 7, 1900 | Amy Beach premieres her Piano Concerto in C-sharp minor, op. 45, with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. | Sonata in A minor for Piano and Violin, op. 34 (1899)
<i>Three Browning Songs</i> , op. 44 (1900) |
| February 8, 1905 | Amy Beach premieres her <i>Variations on Balkan Themes</i> , op. 60, a large-scale work for solo piano. | <i>Variations on Balkan Themes</i> , op. 60 (1904)
<i>The Sea-Fairies</i> , op. 59 (1904)
Service in A, op. 63 (1906) |
| June 28, 1910 | Henry Harris Aubrey Beach dies of infection following a fall. | <i>Four Eskimo Pieces</i> , op. 64 (1907)
<i>The Chambered Nautilus</i> , op. 66 (1907)
Quintet for Piano and Strings, op. 67 (1907) |
| February 18, 1911 | Amy Beach's mother dies. | |
| September 5, 1911 | Newly widowed, Amy Beach sets sail for her European tour, where she promotes her own music outside the United States for the first time. | |

1911–1914	Amy Beach's compositions are met with popularity in Germany, especially her larger works.	
September 18, 1914	Shortly after the outbreak of World War I, Amy Beach arrives in New York after her three-year tour.	
February 1915	Amy Beach begins renting an apartment in New York City, leaving her residence at 28 Commonwealth Avenue behind.	
1915–1916	Beach continues to travel and perform throughout the United States, mainly California.	<i>Panama Hymn</i> , op. 74 (1915)
February 1918	Amy Beach relocates to Hillsborough, New Hampshire, along with her aunt and cousin.	
Summer 1921	Beach begins her visits to the MacDowell Colony in Peterborough, New Hampshire. She would stay at the Colony periodically over the next twenty years. Beach divides her time between the Colony, her New York apartment, and her two homes.	<i>Hermit Thrush Pieces</i> , op. 92 (1921) <i>From Grandmother's Garden</i> , op. 97 (1922)

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| 1925 | The Society of American Women Composers is founded. Beach serves the organization as president until 1928 and honorary president until 1932. | |
| June 18, 1928 | Amy Beach receives an honorary master's degree from the University of New Hampshire. The university president later expresses regret that the university did not award her an honorary doctorate instead. | <i>The Canticle of the Sun</i> , op. 123 (1928)
<i>Christ in the Universe</i> , op. 132 (1931) |
| June 18, 1932 | Beach completes her one-act opera, <i>Cabildo</i> , op. 149. | <i>Cabildo</i> , op. 149 (1932) |
| April 23, 1934 | Beach is summoned to the White House by Eleanor Roosevelt to accompany soprano Ruth Shaffner. | |
| April 17, 1936 | Beach is invited to perform at the White House again with Shaffner. | |
| March 19, 1940 | Amy Beach's last performance takes place in Brooklyn with violinist Carl Tollefsen and cellist Willem Durieux. Shortly after, doctors forbid her to play piano due to deteriorating health. | Trio, op. 150 (1939) |

November 27–28,
1942

A festival is held in honor of Beach's 75th birthday at the Phillips Gallery in Washington, DC. Bashka Paeff's plaster bust of Beach is displayed, and several concerts entirely comprised of Beach's compositions are performed.

December 27,
1944

Amy Marcy Cheney Beach passes away of heart disease in her New York apartment, attended by Ruth Shaffner.

Pax nobiscum (1944)