



Dudley Buck (American Composers)

N. Lee Orr

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Dudley Buck (1839-1909) was a composer, conductor, and music teacher who helped establish the organ in American musical life. N. Lee Orr's introduction to Buck's life and career details his stint as teacher to Charles Ives, organ recital tours around the Midwest, and work composing music for church organs. His *Grand Sonata in E Flat* became a great hit wherever he played it, and his *Variations and Fugue on the "Star-Spangled Banner"* remains a standard in organ repertoire. Intended for practical use, his music was challenging, sometimes full of romantic flourishes, counterpoint, and part singing, but still accessible to amateur musicians and choirs.

During the 1870s Buck composed extensively for choir, orchestra, and organ, while also helping organize and conduct the first Central Park Garden Concerts. His reputation was such that he was asked to collaborate with the poet Sidney Lanier to commemorate the nation's centennial, and his *Forty-Sixth Psalm* was the first American composition performed by Boston's Handel and Haydn Society. Placing Buck's life and career within the Victorian mindset that sought to draw citizens into higher circles of art and beauty, Orr stresses how Buck's music touched players and listeners of all classes.

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