

*Tito's Say:*

A Cantata by James DeMars with Texts by Alberto Rios

by

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## ABSTRACT

Composer James DeMars has found a unique voice in the poetry of Alberto "Tito" Rios. The imagery combines memories and experiences of life on the Mexican/American border with scenes of love at various stages of life. The purpose of this study is to examine the structure, artistry and contemporary significance of *Tito's Say*, a cantata for soprano and baritone soloists, chorus, and orchestra by James DeMars with text by Alberto Rios, and to gain understanding of its inception, creation, composition, and subsequent performances.

Description will be given in detail to increase familiarity with the work among choral musicians. Within this document, the reader will learn from personal interviews about James DeMars and Alberto Rios, focusing on their influences and experiences, including the circumstances leading up to the creation of *Tito's Say*. Furthermore, the reader will discover why the work was composed and how the collaboration came to be, details about its premiere, subsequent performances, and varying versions of this composition. A descriptive exploration and analysis of the text, its musical treatment, as well as an analysis of each of the five movements of the work are included herein, focusing on harmony, form, and style. Last, the author seeks to address stylistic and formal traits that unify the work, and performance considerations and challenges for the choir and for the orchestra. Appendices include available reviews, more extended biographies of both the composer and the poet compiled from interviews, and a works list of DeMars's compositions.

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## INTRODUCTION

On October 8, 2010, a concert, *Un Saludo Musical a Mexico!*, was presented at Arizona State University in celebration of Mexico's Bicentennial and the one hundredth anniversary of the Mexican Revolution. The concert featured the ASU Orchestra and Symphonic Chorale with guests Mariachi Champana Nevin. The program consisted of *Sinfonia India* by Carlos Chavez, *El Salon Mexico* by Aaron Copland, *Pasion Mexicana* by Jeffrey Nevin (played by the Mariachi group and orchestra), and *Tito's Say*, a cantata by American composer James DeMars with text by renowned and beloved poet Alberto Rios. This celebration of Mexican culture was a unique opportunity to combine performing ensembles that do not traditionally collaborate, such as Mariachi and orchestra. The performance of *Tito's Say* proved unique to the program in that it celebrates Mexican culture while expressing a universal message of love, written and sung in English.

*Tito's Say* is a cantata that makes an important contribution to the modern world of choral music, reflecting on subjects of life and love through James DeMars's music and Alberto Rios's poetry. Historically, cantatas were multi-movement works with a single subject (most often with sacred texts) that involved a combination of choruses, recitatives and arias, frequently ending in a chorale. *Tito's Say*, a twentieth-century cantata calling for chorus, baritone and soprano soloists, with orchestral accompaniment, is further evolution of a time-honored form. Other examples of twentieth-century cantatas include Bartok's *Cantata Profana*, Pinkham's *Christmas Cantata*, and Barber's *The Lovers*. Cantatas of the

twentieth century often vary in performing forces and the number and types of movements, with one remaining constant, that of its unified subject.

*Tito's Say* is a five-movement work made cohesive by the subject of love, more specifically, the inquietude of love. The text is entirely secular, written by the celebrated Hispanic-American poet, Alberto Rios, and is part of three different books of poetry: *Five Indiscretions* (1985), *The Lime Orchard Woman* (1988), and *The Theater of Night* (2005). The poems were chosen by DeMars individually and subsequently compiled into this cantata, creating a libretto that spans Rios's work over some twenty years.

This work possesses a strong Hispanic presence by way of text as well as thematic musical material. Alberto Rios's poetry encapsulates his experience growing up on the Mexican/American border in the Arizona town of Nogales. In this five-movement cantata, *Tito's Say*, Rios's poetry paints five different pictures of love from within the palette of Latin American flavors and colors, particularly in the final movement, "Ventura and Clemente," the imagined love story of his own great-grandparents.

The text for *Tito's Say* is modern, fresh, and expressive, with strong elements of sensuality not commonly found in the traditionally conservative world of choral music. This work and others like it deserve to be pivotal to the genre of choral music, a composition that emphasizes the depth of human expression through multiculturalism and the use of modern language. Perhaps because of choral music's deep roots and long history in the church, the genre has fallen behind relative to movements within the digital and participatory culture,

such as theatre or visual arts, where graphic language, nudity, and shocking subjects have been regularly addressed for centuries.

DeMars's composition elevates Rios's poems in a manner that brings new color and texture to the words, often inserting musical idioms that sound distinctly Latino, be they rhythmic or melodic. The combination of the expressive text with intense, sensual, rhythmically driven music makes for a well-composed cantata, unique in its combination of traditional classical sounds with the ethnic sounds of the border and the driving rhythms of various dances like the tango. DeMars's composition is representative of his penchant for combining the sounds of various cultures and folk idioms together within traditional forms. His *Two World Concerto*, *Native Drumming*, and *Guadalupe* were written for Native American instruments combined with traditional orchestra, and *Sabar*, written for Senegalese drum ensemble with orchestra, among others, are examples of his distinct style. The multicultural facet evident in his writing continues with *Tito's Say*.

## CHAPTER 1

### JAMES DEMARS AND ALBERTO RIOS

James DeMars was involved in making music from a very young age, composing and improvising music with his friends in rural Minnesota as early as the sixth grade. When he attended Macalester College in St. Paul, he first majored in psychology and mathematics, but continued his piano studies, even though his father did not approve. After experiencing the tragic loss of a loved one, he found his only solace was in the practice room and he became a music major. He went to the University of Southern California, Los Angeles, to study conducting for his Master's degree. The highly competitive atmosphere among the conductors soured him to the craft, and he instead focused on composition, under the encouragement of the young Morten Lauridsen.<sup>1</sup> But Los Angeles proved to be a somewhat difficult place to live, so he moved back to Minnesota to study with Dominick Argento at the University of Minnesota.<sup>2</sup>

During his tenure at Minnesota, DeMars participated in choirs under the baton of Dale Warland,<sup>3</sup> and was also in the company of some notable classmates, composers Libby Larsen,<sup>4</sup> Stephen Paulus,<sup>5</sup> and Michael Schelle.<sup>6</sup> While Libby

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<sup>1</sup> Morten Lauridsen is one of the most prominent living composers of

<sup>2</sup> James DeMars, interview by author, Tempe, AZ, February 3, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Dale Warland was the founder and musical director of the Dale Warland Singers, and a distinguished composer and conductor. For more information, see [www.dalewarland.com](http://www.dalewarland.com).

<sup>4</sup> Libby Larsen is one of the most performed composers in America. For more information, see [www.libbylarsen.com](http://www.libbylarsen.com).

Larsen and Stephen Paulus were forming the Minnesota Composer's Forum, DeMars was involved as a pianist with an avante-garde ensemble called *Zeitgeist*. Through networking and connections, his involvement with this group steered him to his current faculty position at Arizona State University, where he has worked for more than thirty years.<sup>7</sup>

When DeMars arrived in Phoenix, he assumed he would only stay for a short while, but once he saw how much both the city and the university were growing, he decided to settle permanently. After realizing some difficulty finding performing ensembles for his compositions at the university, DeMars decided to create his own performing ensemble called *Tos*. He gained some notoriety performing with this ensemble in the Phoenix area, and as a result he was contacted by Richard Romero, who later initiated the commission that led to the creation of the cantata *Tito's Say*.<sup>8</sup>

DeMars has written a variety of compositions for many different combinations of instruments and voices. Some of his better known works are *An American Requiem* (1994), for chorus, soloists, and orchestra; *Guadalupe* (an

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<sup>5</sup> Stephen Paulus is one of the most prolific composers of the latter half of the twentieth century. For more information, see [www.stephenpaulus.com](http://www.stephenpaulus.com).

<sup>6</sup> Michael Shelly is the composer in residence at Butler School of Music in Indianapolis, and has seen commissions and/or performances of his works in over 250 orchestras. For more information, see [www.schellemusic.com](http://www.schellemusic.com).

<sup>7</sup> James DeMars, interview by author, Tempe, AZ, February 3, 2012.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

opera in two acts), *Sabar*, a concerto for African Drums and Orchestra; and *Two World Concerto*, for Native American flute and orchestra.<sup>9</sup>

DeMars admits he may have gone in two different stylistic directions, although he continuously tries to pull his writing toward the center. In the first direction, he often incorporates music of various ethnicities, or folk music, with classical idioms. Even though this may seem like a prominent style trait, he maintains that his music is about pleasure.<sup>10</sup> Melodies that are mostly modal in nature feel good to him and take him back to the joy of singing that he experienced in his childhood.<sup>11</sup> The second compositional direction is that of a more traditional, standard repertoire, including his *Violin Concerto* and his *Piano Concerto*.<sup>12</sup>

DeMars combines many different compositional techniques in his writing. Along with modal melodies, he prefers to write with some or all of the following: rapidly modulating harmonies, polytonalities, Impressionistic chord structures, and simple harmonies that help to emphasize the mood or message of the piece. He does not have a penchant for using upper tertian harmonies, however, because he thinks they sound “a little too jazzy or slick.”<sup>13</sup> His overall ideal for composing

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<sup>9</sup> James DeMars, interview by author, Tempe, AZ, February 3, 2012.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

is that the music should bring pleasure to the performers as well as the listeners, by helping them find the innate joy in music that makes a person finish a performance and then immediately want to repeat the experience.<sup>14</sup>

Alberto Rios, the poet whose work DeMars selected for *Tito's Say*, was born in the border town of Nogales, AZ in 1952. "The border"<sup>15</sup> for him had become, as he realized in retrospect, a metaphor that later helped him become the writer he was going to be,<sup>16</sup> in that there was never just one way to say something. Because of the varied backgrounds of his Mexican father and English mother, he lived in a "house full of languages,"<sup>17</sup> where there were always multiple ways to say something, to eat something, to think something, or do anything. He believes that his upbringing has provided him with one of the greatest gifts a poet can receive. Speaking different languages, obeying different laws depending literally upon where a person stands, all of this helps to understand that creativity is the order of the day, not order.<sup>18</sup>

Rios finished high school in Nogales in 1970, and immediately after graduation, attended the University of Arizona in Tucson. Admitting that he really had no idea how to be a college student, Rios chose to attend the University of

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<sup>14</sup> James DeMars, interview by author, Tempe, AZ, February 3, 2012.

<sup>15</sup> Rios uses the Border as a symbol representing the combination of American, English, and Mexican cultures as he experienced it.

<sup>16</sup> Alberto Rios, interview by author, Tempe, AZ, February 7, 2012.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

Arizona because of its convenient nearby location to his home; he arrived not knowing what major to choose.<sup>19</sup> Through what seemed like an act of fate, the words ‘no final’ on a course description led him to what would become his life’s work, poetry and fiction writing. After completing his Bachelor’s degree in poetry and fiction, he earned another degree in psychology, spent a year in law school, then made his way back to writing. He earned his Master’s of Fine Arts in 1979 from the University of Arizona.

Rios’s career as a writer abounds with awards and publications. Shortly after graduating with his MFA, Rios won several major awards, one of them the Walt Whitman Award for writing. In the years 1979 to 1982, he traveled around Arizona as part of the ‘Poets in Our Schools’ (PITS) program. In 1982, Arizona State University contacted him about the possibility of becoming a faculty member. He accepted and has been working there for thirty years, having been appointed a Regents Professor in 1994 (one of the youngest ever to do so). During his career he has garnered significant acclaim as a poet and public speaker, and has published ten books and chapbooks of poetry, most recently *The Dangerous Shirt* (2009); *The Theater of Night* (2006), winner of the 2007 PEN/Beyond Margins Award; and *The Smallest Muscle in the Human Body* (2002), which was a finalist for the National Book Award.<sup>20</sup>

Rios’s writing style is often termed “Magical Realism,” a primarily Latin-American literary phenomenon in which fantastic or mythical elements are

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<sup>19</sup> Alberto Rios, interview by author, Tempe, AZ, February 7, 2012.

<sup>20</sup> Alberto Rios, interview by author, Tempe, AZ, February 7, 2012.



incorporated into otherwise realistic fiction.<sup>21</sup> When asked about his own writing style, he would classify it somewhat differently, calling it “Cultural Realism,”<sup>22</sup> instead describing it as objects having a life of their own. In English, a person might say something like ‘I dropped the book,’ but in a romance language, the same idea might be phrased as ‘the book has fallen from me.’ The romance language gives the book some responsibility, while the English language is subservient to the ‘Great I.’<sup>23</sup> Rios believes that in this sense, the English language is impoverished. Romance languages also genderize objects (*el* and *la*), which opens up the possibility that all objects have life. Rios exploits the innate potential of objects to do something beyond what they are expected to do. His belief that the world is alive with itself<sup>24</sup> is evident in his texts, such as in the final movement of *Tito’s Say*, “Ventura had hair of the jungle, long, long, like words of the monkeys and parrots, long, long! Like vines and the roots without end!”<sup>25</sup> This line gives life to Ventura’s hair, creating action, sound, length, and color, even alluding to the long history of her ancestry (“roots without end”).

Although these poems were written without the expressed intent of becoming a libretto for *Tito’s Say*, when James DeMars discovered them he was

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<sup>21</sup> The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, “Magical Realism,” Columbia University Press, [www.cc.columbia.edu/cu/cup/](http://www.cc.columbia.edu/cu/cup/) (accessed February 24, 2012).

<sup>22</sup> Cultural Realism is a term Rios uses to describe his own work.

<sup>23</sup> Alberto Rios, interview by author, Tempe, AZ, February 7, 2012.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> James DeMars, *Tito’s Say*, text by Alberto Rios (Tempe, AZ: Proulx Publishing, 2010.)

able to breathe new life into the poetry that had once lived only on the page. The following chapter will explore the journey of the work from its inception to its performances.

## CHAPTER 2

### FROM INCEPTION TO PERFORMANCE

James DeMars received his first commission from the Arizona Choral Arts Society in 1986 for his work *The Prophet*, while performing with his ensemble “Tos” in Phoenix, AZ.<sup>26</sup> This commission was followed shortly by another in 1987, generated by Richard Romero, founder of the Arizona Choral Arts Society,<sup>27</sup> which led to the creation of what eventually became *Tito’s Say*, a cantata in five movements and the subject of this paper.

DeMars was charged with the task of finding a libretto for his new composition. He considered the possibility of using some of the work of another ASU faculty member named Rita Dove, who had won the Pulitzer Prize at about this time. Dove had sent DeMars some of her texts, but they did not correspond to what DeMars had in mind for the work, and he decided to pursue other authors. At a local bookstore called Changing Hands, he discovered a poetry collection by Alberto Rios. The very first poem he read was “The Bath” (to become the second movement of the cantata), and he recalls feeling his face flush upon reading it. He had been looking for texts and images that excited him, and in Rios’s work he found what he wanted, thus spawning the creation of *Tito’s Say*.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> James DeMars, interview by author, Tempe, AZ, February 3, 2012.

<sup>27</sup> James DeMars, “Curriculum Vitae,” Arizona State University. <https://webapp4.asu.edu/myprofile/cv.do?eid=29322> (accessed February 12, 2012).

<sup>28</sup> James DeMars, interview by author, Tempe, AZ, February 3, 2012.

The title, *Tito's Say*, was conceived by DeMars, after having compiled a selection of poems by Rios. The name Tito was Alberto's nickname, a family name first shortened to Albertito (his father was also Alberto), and then to simply, Tito. The texts represent different aspects of love from varying points of view, and were each individually selected by DeMars. These poems were not originally part of a set, but rather a spanning of Rios' work over twenty years.<sup>29</sup> The original work consisted of four movements: "The Industry of Hard Kissing," "The Bath," "Listening Into Night," and "Ventura and Clemente," each one representing a different aspect of love. By the 2010 performance, the work had grown to five movements. The soprano solo ("Her Secret Love, Whispered Late in Her Years"), placed before the final movement, was added for the Arizona State University performance given in October of 2010.

The Arizona Choral Arts Society performed the premiere of *Tito's Say* in May of 1990, at St. Mary's Basilica in Phoenix under the baton of John Daly Goodwin.<sup>30</sup> On the day of the premiere, as programs were being printed which included full transcripts of the texts, the producer, Richard Romero realized he was facing a problem. Church officials were not happy with the suggestive language used in the work, and were determined to cancel the performance. Romero, knowing that the performance might be stopped, delayed the church official who had been trying to speak to him in the hours before the performance,

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<sup>29</sup> Alberto Rios, interview by author, Tempe, AZ, February 7, 2012.

<sup>30</sup> Goodwin was the conductor of the New York Choral Society at the time.

successfully avoiding the confrontation. DeMars relayed a comical view of Romero making his way around the church, with the church official just a few steps behind him the entire time, as if in an endless chase scene. They never did discuss the issue, and the performance went on as planned.<sup>31</sup>

The instrumentation of *Tito's Say* has gone through at least three metamorphoses, due largely to logistical or financial factors. Before its first performance, DeMars received phone calls from Romero saying there was not enough money for three woodwinds and wondering if he could get by with two. Similar calls continued until the orchestra was reduced to a chamber version for the first performance. DeMars recalls using a saxophone quartet because he could have them double for the reeds and the brass alike. Initially, the work included flute, clarinet, and bass clarinet, but these instruments were eliminated from subsequent performances. The score most often used now was not the score used for the first performance. In the performance at St. Mary's Basilica in 1990, the instrumentation was intended for flute, oboe, clarinet, bass clarinet, bassoon, 2 altos saxophones, 1 tenor saxophone, and 1 baritone saxophone, 3 trumpets, various percussion, synthesizer, strings, choir, and baritone and soprano solos. DeMars had to make additional concessions with instrumentation because when it was scheduled to be performed at Carnegie Hall in April of 1992, it appeared on the program with Haydn's *Missa in Augustinis* (also known as the *Lord Nelson Mass*) which, in its original scoring, has no woodwinds. The conductor (again, John Daly Goodwin) asked DeMars if he could make *Tito's Say* work with similar

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<sup>31</sup> James DeMars, interview by author, Tempe, AZ, February 3, 2012.

instrumentation. Motivated by the trip to New York and the Carnegie Hall performance, DeMars agreed and removed the wind parts and re-worked the score. It is in this version that the piece has enjoyed its three subsequent performances, with instrumentation for three trumpets, two trombones, one bass trombone, harp, piano, strings, timpani, soprano and baritone soloists and SATB chorus along with a wide variety of percussion (Bass Drum, Tom-toms, Bongos, Conga, Mark Tree, Cabasa, Suspended Cymbals, Wood Blocks, Claves, Triangle, Sand Blocks, Maracas, Tam-tam, Chinese Cymbal, Wind Gong, Marimba, Temple Blocks, Guiro, and Crotales). Regarding the new instrumentation, DeMars says that he misses the flutes the most, especially since there are moments where the brilliance from the flutes would be more suitable than that of the strings. He also states that the cello line in the beginning of the Tango (“Listening Into Night”) was originally written for bass clarinet.<sup>32</sup>

The Carnegie Hall performance of April 24, 1992, received a mixed review in *Classical Music in Review* suggesting DeMars style “negotiates a path between Broadway ensemble singing and the chanting repetitions of Philip Glass.”<sup>33</sup> The review also mentioned that the singers seemed much better prepared for the performance than the orchestra did, saying they (the orchestra) sounded

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<sup>32</sup> Additional orchestral and wind ensemble versions of “Ventura and Clemente” are also available. “Listening Into Night” is available as a duet, and as a tenor solo with piano accompaniment.

<sup>33</sup> Bernard Holland, New York Choral Society at Carnegie Hall, *Classical Music in Review*, <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/04/28/arts/classical-music-in-review-731492.html?scp=1&sq=new%20york%20choral%20society%20at%20carnegie%20hall%20tito's%20say&st=cse> (accessed February 21, 2012).

“barely rehearsed at all.” Regarding the music, the review was a bit more positive, saying the piece was set to “pleasant and chatty music.”<sup>34</sup>

*Tito’s Say* was revived on May 1, 2010 at Carnegie Hall, again with Goodwin conducting. In an interview about the concert, he says:

I fell in love with this work the first time I saw Jim’s score in 1989 and my enthusiasm for it has continued to grow over the years... The poems provide four aspects of love and life; from the gritty twist of a cheating spouse to the poignant reflections of old age, the sensual flirtations of tango and finally the imagined childhood love of his grandparents Ventura and Clemente. Jim DeMars’ music is spectacular, sexy and a lot of fun. The singers in the NYCS are loving the piece and we can’t wait to share it with our audience!<sup>35</sup>

*Tito’s Say* has been performed a total of four times, including the Arizona premiere and twice in New York at Carnegie Hall. The most recent major performance of the work was on October 8, 2010 at Arizona State University, conducted by Dr. Gregory Gentry, with the ASU Symphonic Chorale, ASU Symphony Orchestra, Andrew Briggs, baritone, and Allison Stanford, soprano. Gentry initiated the performance and prepared the choir.<sup>36</sup> The performance was part of a special concert called *Un Saludo Musical a Mexico!*, celebrating Mexico’s bicentennial as well as the 100th anniversary of the Mexican

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<sup>34</sup> Bernard Holland, “Classical Music in Review”, The New York Times, <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/04/28/arts/classical-music-in-review-731492.html> (accessed February 19, 2012).

<sup>35</sup> Playbill Arts Staff, “Meet John Daly Goodwin,” Playbill Arts, <http://www.playbillarts.com/features/article/8375.html> (accessed February 18, 2012).

<sup>36</sup> James DeMars, interview by author, Tempe, AZ, February 3, 2012.

Revolution.<sup>37</sup> The Mexico Consul General Lic. Victor Manuel Trevino Escudero was in attendance.<sup>38</sup>

Portions of the cantata have been rearranged for a variety of other performance mediums. DeMars adapted “Listening Into Night” from the original choral/orchestral version and reduced it to what came mainly from the soprano line of melody, accompanied by piano. Portions of the tune offer a choice between two notes, as the tessitura reaches a bit high at times. The piano accompaniment here was based on the piano reduction from the choral score, but included more color and style, appropriate for a vocal/piano duet. The melody and rhythmic patterns remain quite recognizable, however.

The final movement, “Ventura and Clemente,” was also arranged for orchestra (without chorus or soloists) as well as for wind ensemble. The orchestral version has not yet been performed. DeMars’s setting of the work for winds received honors in the Barlow Competition of 1998, and employs an extensive instrumentation: piccolos, flutes, clarinets, bass clarinet, saxophones, trumpets, French horns, trombones, baritone, tuba, double bass, timpani, various extensive percussion, and piano.

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<sup>37</sup> Also on the program for this concert were the Mariachi group, Mariachi Champana Nevin, performing Nevin’s concerto *Pasion Mexicana* with the ASU Orchestra. The Orchestra also performed *Sinfonia India* by Carlos Chavez, and *El Salon Mexico* by Aaron Copland.

<sup>38</sup> Neysa Grzywa, “ASU School of Music Presents *A Musical Salute to Mexico!*,” Arizona State University, [http://music.asu.edu/news/press\\_release.php?id=826](http://music.asu.edu/news/press_release.php?id=826) (accessed February 12).



Over a span of twenty years, James DeMars has created a work that has gone through a variety of changes before reaching its current state. The poetry of Alberto Rios was used to create a cantata with a unifying theme of love. The original four movements emphasized the use of the chorus with solo writing for the soprano and baritone as part of those movements. The movement that was eventually added was a soprano solo, adding contrast and interest to the work as a whole. Various versions of the work certainly exist, but if it were to be performed today, the version the composer prefers would be the one most recently performed at Arizona State University. The instrumentation in this version is the same as that of the first Carnegie Hall performance, with the added soprano solo before the final movement. Many performing possibilities exist related to this work as well, including vocal solos accompanied by piano, and wind and orchestral versions of the final movement.

## CHAPTER 3

### *TITO'S SAY*, TEXT AND MUSICAL TREATMENT

As previously stated, five different aspects of love are represented in *Tito's Say*. The poetry, having been adapted from selections taken from Alberto Rios's various poems, employs a technique called "prosimeter," or freely written poetry without regular meter or rhyme. Rios said that DeMars chose poems that individually told a complete story, and "lived or died on their own."<sup>39</sup> The choices not only surprised but also excited Rios because he felt the lines had great musicality in the first place, and he realized that he and DeMars shared a common opinion about the types of lines that lend themselves well to music.<sup>40</sup> This type of rhythmic language can be difficult to set to regular musical rhythms, as is seen in the treatment of *Tito's Say*. Meter changes are common, and unusual meters, such as 10/8 (divided 3+3+2+2) are used to accommodate the flow of the text (see figure 3.1).

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<sup>39</sup> Alberto Rios, interview by author, Tempe, AZ, February 7, 2012.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

Figure 3.1: Movement 5, “Ventura and Clemente,” m.13

*J*  
Ven - tu - ra had hair of the jun - gle,  
*f*  
Ven - tu - ra had hair of the jun - gle,  
*f*  
Ven - tu - ra had hair of the jun - gle,  
*f*  
Ven - tu - ra had hair of the jun - gle,

Because of the poet’s Mexican American background and the vivid visualization of that culture in the text, DeMars opted for sounds that the listener would equate to Latin or Hispanic music, such as his Mariachi-style use of the trumpets, as well as using a tango theme for the entire third movement.<sup>41</sup> Extensive use of brass instrumentation and choice of percussion instruments like maracas and crotales also lend to this effect.

In the discussion ahead, the full libretto of each movement will be presented, followed by a detailed textual analysis based on interviews with Alberto Rios. The musical treatment of each poem will follow, highlighting musical traits, themes, and motives within the context of the libretto. In addition, a brief structural analysis will follow, allowing the reader to gain familiarity with the work.

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<sup>41</sup> James DeMars, interview by author, Tempe, AZ, February 3, 2012.

## **Movement 1**

### **The Industry of Hard Kissing**

CHORUS:

The Inquietude of this matter of love!

BASS SOLO:

Knocking cows over when they sleep,  
they get mad.

SOPRANO SOLO:

Oh.

CHORUS:

Ordinary life falls the quickest,  
is easy to make breathe hard.

BASS SOLO:

The quiet of a sad desire  
for someone you cannot have again,  
this small cancer of the happy soul!

CHORUS:

You cannot have again, again, again.  
Ordinary life falls the quickest,  
is easy to make breathe hard.

BASS SOLO:

So we kiss! Kiss harder or not at all;  
Something saved for the other,  
For the whistles and the cheeses of another life, another mouth,

SOPRANO SOLO:

Another woman!

BASS SOLO:

and a thousand new words are what you must say now,

SOPRANO SOLO:

So suddenly

BASS SOLO:

Instead of the other woman,

CHORUS:  
You cannot have again

BASS SOLO:  
there is no other woman,

CHORUS:  
Yes, there is!

SOPRANO SOLO:  
No, no, no...

BASS SOLO:  
there is no other woman, and there is.

SOPRANO SOLO:  
Ah!

CHORUS:  
Ordinary life falls the quickest,  
is easy to make breathe hard.

“The Industry of Hard Kissing” is taken from Rios’s collection of poems, *The Lime Orchard Woman*, published in 1988. Rios, using his own great-grandparents as the source material for this story, presents this first aspect of love as that of passionate love, longing, and the taboo of an affair. Rios mentioned that his parents’ love story was beautiful as well, but at the time he wrote these poems he felt too close to them to write about it. He did, however, feel comfortable writing about his great-grandparents, emphasizing that these words are his perceptual imagining of what their love story entailed. While it has some elements of truth, ultimately it is Rios’s creation. He explained it as such:

I would say it is my imagined version, but given the family stories I heard growing up, how I remembered and misremembered them, who could imagine it better than me? I can lie, and I’m not going to lie the same way

you're going to lie about this--so there's something there in the kernel of that. It's not accurate, but *I* think they're true.<sup>42</sup>

Various dramatic issues lent themselves to the creation of this text. Rios's great-grandfather fought in the Mexican Revolution, and was often away on campaigns for two or three years at a time, during which he acquired a whole other family (the "casa chica" or "small house"), a phenomenon Rios says was fairly common in Latin America at that time. Years later, Rios's family was visited by a member of this "other" family, leading to their discovery of the affair. In Rios's poem, the "other woman" represents not only the singular woman, but also the global "other woman," the idea that human beings remember and long for someone else, struggling with the difficulty of committing to only one person. The "sad desire for someone you cannot have again" represents the sadness over the loss of something that may have once been yours, and is still yours in memory, but is no longer truly yours. There exists an element of sadness for the loss of the "other."<sup>43</sup>

Rios chose the word "industry," deliberately to represent a time in history and a symbolic image. The Industrial Revolution took place in the late Nineteenth century, and Rios's view was that people believed machinery could potentially solve all of the world's problems. The "industry" of hard kissing relates to kissing the current lover so hard that there is no room for anything else, eliminating room

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<sup>42</sup> Alberto Rios, interview by author, Tempe, AZ, February 7, 2012.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

in one's mind for pining over what was lost. It also relates to the "hard work" of forgetting someone.<sup>44</sup>

In this movement, the bass and soprano are the main characters, the lovers, and the chorus plays a commentary role similar to that of the ancient Greek choruses. In the original poem (also titled "The Industry of Hard Kissing"), the lines are not divided among characters, but are portrayed as a single voice. The opening line of the original poem is "knocking cows over when they sleep." The first line the choir sings to open the cantata is "The Inquietude of this matter of love," which actually came from a different poem, the final one, "The Inquietude of a Particular Matter," which provided the text for the final movement, "Ventura and Clemente." DeMars chose to open the cantata with this line, ("the inquietude of this matter of love"), which appears again in the final movement, to symbolize the overarching idea of the entire cantata, and unify the work as a whole. Rios chose the word "inquietude" because of its multiple meanings: not only "not to stay quiet," but also "to be upset or unsettled."<sup>45</sup> Each of the movements is related to inquietude in some way.

The text of the original poem of the first movement remains mostly intact in DeMars's setting, excluding the first and last lines. However, the poem ended with "there is no other woman, and there is," and DeMars added a line here from an earlier stanza to finish out the movement, "ordinary life falls the quickest, is easy to make breathe hard." The composer chose to add this line to punctuate

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<sup>44</sup> Alberto Rios, interview by author, Tempe, AZ, February 7, 2012.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

what became three separate sections of music, therefore it is heard three times in the movement, creating a three-part structure.

The first movement opens with the trumpets and trombones introducing a musical idea that becomes a unifying thread throughout the work: a motive, reminiscent of Mariachi music, with two eighth note pick-ups followed by a turning triplet, and returning back to the original pitch of the two eighth notes, harmonized in fourths (see figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2: Movement 1, “The Industry of Hard Kissing,” m. 1

With hard passion ♩ = 112  
(3+3+2+2)

Trumpets in C 1,2  
*f*

Trumpet in C 3  
*solo*  
*f*

Trombones 1,2  
*solo*  
*f*

This melodic motive played by the brass, though brief, creates a backdrop for the scene, transporting the listener directly to the border of Mexico. The orchestral introduction before the chorus enters is only one measure in length, and the chorus sings the first line of text, “the inquietude of this matter of love,” accompanied by strings, harp, piano, and various percussion, creating a six



measure introduction to the movement in mostly 10/8 meter, another unifying trait that ties the beginning of the cantata to the end.<sup>46</sup>

After a change to common time, the main body of movement one begins. The tonality is centered around F, primarily in Dorian mode with changing chords in root position to enhance sudden shifts of tonality (see figure 3.3).<sup>47</sup>

Figure 3.3: mm. 7-9.

The image shows a musical score for measures 7-9. It includes staves for Piano (Pno.), Women's voices (Wom.), Men's voices (Men.), Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Contrabass (Cb.). The piano part features a complex rhythmic pattern with dynamic markings of *ff*, *mf*, and *con ped. ad lib.*. The vocal parts have lyrics "love," and dynamic markings of *p*. The orchestral parts include dynamic markings of *p*, *mf*, and *ff*. A rehearsal mark [8] is present, indicating the start of a section with the tempo marking "Con moto ben marcato" and a tempo of 112.

<sup>46</sup> In both the orchestral score and piano reduction, the first measure of pickup is counted as a full measure, therefore the numbering of measures of the first section in the score goes up to 7, even though there are only 6 full measures. For ease of analysis, the printed measure numbers will be used.

<sup>47</sup> James DeMars, interview by author, Tempe, AZ, February 3, 2012.

Four measures establish the F minor tonality, and then the bass and soprano solos enter on neutral syllables, ascending, for eight measures. The text begins with the bass singing “knocking cows over when they sleep,” in m. 21. The harmonic rhythm of the orchestra is slow moving here, but the literal rhythm is a brisk ostinato, employing tremolo in the strings. The melodies of the soloists consist of long, legato lines floating above and adding contrast to the fast supporting motion of the instruments. Other than occasional commentary by the harp or violin, the voices are also the only instruments adding dissonance to the steady harmony provided below (see figure 3.4).

Figure 3.4: mm. 14-17.

The musical score for measures 14-17 consists of six staves. The top two staves are for vocal solos: S. Solo (Soprano) and B. Solo (Bass). The S. Solo part begins with a *mf* dynamic and features a long, legato line with the syllables "Ah," "oo," and "ee." The B. Solo part begins with a long, legato line on the syllable "oo." The orchestral accompaniment includes Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., Vc., and Cb. The Vln. I part begins with a *soli* marking and a *mf* dynamic. The Vln. II, Vla., and Vc. parts feature a brisk ostinato with tremolo. The Cb. part features a "scratch tone - over bridge" effect. The score is in F minor and 4/4 time.

At m. 40, the chorus enters in a homophonic texture on an F minor chord with the words, “ordinary life falls the quickest.” The piano, cello, and double bass create

a two-measure motive in the bass, another familiar melodic theme that DeMars reintroduces later in the work. The rhythm in 4/4 meter is a dotted quarter note, followed by two quarter notes, then an eighth note, with pitches in stepwise ascending motion, followed by a measure repeating the same pitches in quarter notes. The combination of this bass line with the chorus provide a theme that is reiterated three times in this movement alone, and is revisited in later movements as well (see figure 3.5).

Figure 3.5: “The Industry of Hard Kissing,” mm. 67-70, bass line.

The image shows a musical score for measures 67-70. The top two staves are for the vocalists: Women (Wom.) and Men. Both parts have the lyrics: "Or-di-na-ry life falls the quick-est is ea-sy to make breathe. hard." The vocal parts are marked with *mf* and feature glissando markings (*gliss.*) at the end of the phrases. Below the vocal parts, the instrumental ensemble includes Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Contrabass (Cb.). The instrumental parts are marked with *sfz* (sforzando) and *mp* (mezzo-piano) dynamics. A box labeled "67" is placed above the first measure of the instrumental parts. The bass line (Cb.) is specifically highlighted in the original image, showing a rhythmic pattern of a dotted quarter note, two quarter notes, and an eighth note, with a stepwise ascending pitch.

The soloists continue declaiming their texts, now with the chorus adding commentary, and sometimes repeating lines from the solo for emphasis. After the bass sings “the sadness of a quiet desire for someone you cannot have again,” the chorus repeats “ordinary life falls the quickest” in m. 67, with the same music, an appropriate reminder of change as a constant. The drama continues with the bass

claiming, “there is no other woman,” but the women of the choir are the ones who tell the truth, “oh, yes there is,” as the soprano sings, “no, no, no!” (see figure 3.6).

Figure 3.6: mm. 99-103.

The musical score for measures 99-103 consists of the following parts:

- Piano (Pno.):** Features a complex, rhythmic accompaniment with a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a more active bass line in the left hand. Dynamics include *p* and *mf*.
- Soprano Solo (S. Solo):** Enters in measure 100 with the lyrics "No, no, no," in measure 103.
- Bass Solo (B. Solo):** Enters in measure 99 with the lyrics "there is no o-ther wo-man," in measure 100.
- Women (Wom.):** Enters in measure 101 with the lyrics "oh, yes there is!" in measure 102.
- Men (Men):** Enters in measure 102 with the lyrics "are what you must say now," in measure 103.
- Orchestra:** Includes Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Contrabass (Cb.). The strings provide harmonic support with various textures, including a prominent bass line in the cello and double bass.

The bass tries one more time to convince the soprano, “there is no other woman,” but relinquishes, and follows shortly after with “and there is.” The soprano replies with “ha! ah,” at the same time the choir finishes the movement with “ordinary life falls the quickest, is easy to make breathe hard,” this time in C Dorian, acting as the dominant leading back to F. The familiar bass theme is shared among all

the lower strings in the last three measures, ascending an octave by step from F to F (see figure 3.7).

Figure 3.7: mm. 107-113.

The musical score for measures 107-113 includes the following parts:

- Wom. (Soprano):** Rests in measures 107 and 108. Enters in measure 109 with a forte (*f*) accompaniment of chords. Lyrics: "Or-di-na-ry life falls the quick-est is".
- Men (Bass):** Rests in measures 107 and 108. Enters in measure 109 with a forte (*f*) accompaniment of chords. Lyrics: "Or-di-na-ry life falls the quick-est is".
- Vln. I & II:** Play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with a melodic line. Measure 108 is marked with a box containing the number 108.
- Vla. (Viola):** Play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. Measure 109 includes a *div.* (divisi) marking.
- Vc. (Violoncello):** Play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. Measure 109 includes a *div.* (divisi) marking.
- Cb. (Double Bass):** Play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. Measure 109 includes a *div.* (divisi) marking.

The score is written in a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a common time signature (C). The vocal parts are in treble and bass clefs, while the string parts are in their respective clefs. The dynamic marking *f* (forte) is present throughout the passage.



The final sonority is an open fifth built on F and C shared by the strings and the choir, with an additional solitary G in the soprano solo, perhaps symbolically alone, outside the chord.

Structurally, the movement can be divided into three sections, each one punctuated by the choral commentary, “ordinary life falls the quickest, is easy to make breathe hard,” and preceded by the introduction, “the inquietude of this matter of love.” The following table (Table 1) illustrates the formal structure of the work, with key, length, rhythm, melody, meter, tempo, and text for each section.

	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>
<b>Key/ tonality</b>	D Dorian	F dorian	C dorian (sudden shift at m. 46)	Shifting between C dorian and F dorian
<b>measures (length)</b>	1-7 (6+pick up)	8-45 (38)	46-72 (27)	73-114 (42)
<b>rhythm</b>	16th notes in strings, 8ths and 16ths in other parts, harp very complex (8:6)	steady, mostly 16ths	steady, mostly 16ths	steady, mostly 16ths
<b>melody</b>	somewhat static, stepwise motion, harmonized in fourths	solos - small steps and large leaps; choir - stepwise chordal	solos - small steps and large leaps; choir - stepwise chordal	solos - stepwise motion, few leaps; choir - stepwise chordal
<b>meter</b>	10/8 (3+3+2+2)	4/4	4/4	4/4
<b>tempo</b>	with hard passion (112)	con moto ben marcato (112)	con moto ben marcato	con moto ben marcato
<b>text</b>	The inquietude of this matter of love	knocking cows over..ordinary life falls the quickest, is easy to make breathe hard	the quiet of a sad desire; ... ordinary life falls the quickest, is easy to make breathe hard	so we kiss; ordinary life falls the quickest, is easy to make breathe hard

Table 1 - “The Industry of Hard Kissing”

The music mirrors the free-style prosody of Rios's original text by having three sections, similar but not repeated, unified by thematic material added by the composer. The short Mariachi style trumpet theme appears only during the introductory portion of movement one, in measures 2, 4, 5, and 6, but will be heard again in later movements. In addition, the melodic material for "the inquietude of this matter of love," will also appear again in the final movement.

## **Movement 2**

### **The Bath**

The woman undressed  
and put her nipples on  
for decoration,  
so as to bathe lavishly.  
She kept them in the water  
next to her bed  
where her teeth had been  
years ago.  
She floated in the water  
watching her skin fold  
again and again.  
These were her treasures,  
her only heirlooms left  
and she guarded them  
now, like diamond earrings.  
She thought as she looked  
that she would like very much  
to be buried with them on.  
Slowly they float from her body  
as boats on the water.

After the passionate, raw, and intense first movement, the second movement takes on a quiet, serene, and private view of love. "The Bath," from Rios's *Five Indiscretions* (1985), provides the libretto and is accompanied only by



strings, commencing with only treble voices, changing the entire aural experience for the listener. In a subdued voice, the aspects of love represented here are self-love, the memory of love, and facing the loss of one's sexuality with age.<sup>48</sup>

Of the entire work, there is one word in this movement that has caused more issue than any other word in the entire collection, and that is the word "nipples." This word, not commonly seen in choral scores, has caused some difficulty related to the performance of the work. DeMars preferred to substitute the word "lashes" in place of "nipples." He placed it in the score in the soprano 2, alto 1, and alto 2 lines, but left "nipples" in the soprano 1 line, with a note that read "for rehearsal use lashes." DeMars admits that he would like to use the word "lashes" permanently, because he feels it is more elegant.<sup>49</sup> An argument that may never be resolved, Rios holds to his opinion that the original word is the only appropriate word that captures his intended meaning. When Rios wrote the poem, he certainly meant for the word to have some sexual charge, and he meant for it to be an actual part of the body that represents sexuality, not something a woman can put on and then remove like make-up or lashes.<sup>50</sup> "The Bath" addresses the gradual loss of the woman's sexuality, and the immense sadness that comes along with that. Although the previous movement also addressed loss - the loss of another - this movement poignantly addresses the saddest loss of all, the loss of one's self. As the woman is lying in the bath, she symbolically sees her body

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<sup>48</sup> Alberto Rios, interview by author, Tempe, AZ, February 7, 2012.

<sup>49</sup> James DeMars, interview by author, Tempe, AZ, February 3, 2012.

<sup>50</sup> Alberto Rios, interview by author, Tempe, AZ, February 7, 2012.

slowly floating away from her, there is nothing she can do to get it back, and now they (the nipples) have suddenly become only decorative. They have become not something she has, but something she adds, because she still likes having them close to her. Rios says it is a representation of great change in the human experience, and views it as “curiously celebratory,” because he believes she is saying “I still want to be a part of this world.” Rios said about the line, “she thought as she looked that she would like very much to be buried with them on,”

That’s a dark observation. She’s saying ‘I want to imagine myself whole’ and vibrant, even when I die, I want to be strong in this process, I want to be who I’ve been. I want to be thought of that way, but even so, they keep floating away.<sup>51</sup>

With a marked tempo of “♩=44 Surreal serenity,” the mood takes a sudden turn from the hard, driving passion of the first movement to serene, pensive reflection. The low strings are called upon to play unison low C’s, then each of the other string sections are added in ascending order, measure by measure, with flourishes of septuplets spanning only an eighth-note’s length. By measure 5, the violin solo enters with a sustained high G, approached from an octave below. By measure 8, the double bass has slowly ascended a fifth up to G, and maintains that pedal point until measure 13, while the violas and cellos slowly plod forth on quarter-note rhythms. The upper strings continue the flourishes, sometimes in groupings of six, sometimes seven, still an eighth-note’s length in total, and set in very unpredictable locations in the measure. This juxtaposition of slow and

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<sup>51</sup> Alberto Rios, interview by author, Tempe, AZ, February 7, 2012.

sudden sounds creates the experience of the bath: the warm, calm water, interrupted by occasional splashing (see figure 3.8).

Figure 3.8: Measures 7-12, The Bath.

The image shows a musical score for measures 7-12 of 'The Bath'. The score is written for five instruments: Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Contrabasso (Cb.). The music is in 3/4 time and features a variety of textures and dynamics. Measures 7-9 show a delicate opening with a *p* dynamic. Measures 10-12 feature a more active texture with *mf* dynamics and complex rhythmic patterns, including sixteenth-note runs and triplets. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

As previously noted, the delicate opening text is presented by only the women of the chorus. The sopranos and altos enter at m. 14 with the “the woman undressed,” harmonized primarily in thirds. The melody also seems to move mainly in thirds, and the meter is almost entirely 3/4, with only one measure of 2/4 (measure 6) (see figure 4.9). There is some very subtle counterpoint in this movement, often creating an echo-like effect at different pitch levels, but always returning to a homophonic texture. Harmonically, DeMars engages rapid modulations in this movement, not allowing a reprise in any single key, with chord changes occurring at least once per measure, usually in stepwise relationships.

Figure 3.9: “The Bath” - Choral entrance at measure 14.

The musical score for "The Bath" shows the choral entrance at measure 14. The tempo is marked "un poco più mosso" with a metronome marking of 52. The score includes vocal parts (Soprano 1, Soprano 2, Alto 1, Alto 2) and instrumental parts (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Cello, and Contrabass). The lyrics are: "The wo-man un-dressed and put her nip-ples on for de-co-ra-tion".

Even in this context, DeMars subtly harkens back to the trumpet theme introduced in the first movement, using only its latter half, the last three notes: a descending whole step followed by a descending half step, the second of which is emphasized by the downbeat. In movement two, this motive appears multiple times in the voices (figures 3.11-12) as well as in the violins (figure 3.10).

Figure 3.10: mm. 7-10, descending theme.

Violins:

Musical score for Violins I and II, measures 7-10. The score is in 3/4 time and features a descending theme. Violin I starts with a box around the number 7, followed by a slur over measures 7 and 8, a triplet in measure 9, and a trill in measure 10. Dynamics range from *p* to *mf*. Violin II has a triplet in measure 10. The key signature has one flat.

Figure 3.11: mm. 54-57, descending theme.

Sopranos:

Musical score for Sopranos, measures 54-57. The score is in 3/4 time and features a descending theme. The lyrics are: "They float from her bo - dy as boats on the". The dynamics range from *mp* to *mf*. The key signature has one flat.

Figure 3.12: mm. 59-62, descending theme.

Altos:

Musical score for Altos, measures 59-62. The score is in 3/4 time and features a descending theme. The lyrics are: "They float from her bo - dy as boats on the wa - ter,". The dynamics range from *mp* to *mf*. The key signature has one flat.

The male voices enter for the first time at measure 36, with “she floated in the water watching her skin fold again and again, and again.” The emphasis on

harmonic as well as melodic thirds continues here. The women then join the men for the remainder of the movement, beginning with the text, “these were her treasures, her only heirlooms left.”

At m. 52, the final portion of the movement begins with the basses singing “so slowly, slowly...” Harp and subtle percussion are also added at this point. The basses of the chorus and the double basses of the orchestra provide a long pedal point on A  $\flat$  for the remainder of the movement. In contrast, the sopranos sing a slow descending line, “they float from her body as boats on the water,” followed by altos, followed by tenors, each in their own descending line, as the basses continue. When each voice finishes the line, they then join the basses in singing “slowly,” on the note A  $\flat$  in their own octaves, creating a slow, fading, floating away affect, at which point the strings (violins and violas) and harp are passing around flourishes similar to the ones at the beginning of the movement, but now they are occupying almost every beat (see figure 3.13).

Figure 3.13: mm. 64-66.

The musical score for measures 64-66 includes the following parts:

- Hp. (Harp):** Features a complex, arpeggiated texture in the right hand, with a measure rest in the left hand.
- Vocal Parts (Sop., Alto, Ten., Bass):** All parts sing the lyrics "slow - ly, slow - - - ly, slow - - - ly, wa - ter, so slow - - - ly, slow - - - ly, bo - dy, so slow - - - ly, slow - - - ly." The vocal lines are marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic.
- Orchestra:** Includes First and Second Violins (Vn. I, Vn. II), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Contrabass (Cb.). The strings play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, with dynamic markings of *f* and *p*. The Cb. part has a *p* marking at the end of the section.

The movement comes to a close with an unusual choice of sounds: most of the instruments are playing some type of  $A \flat$  but added to it are  $D$ ,  $C$ , and  $A \sharp$ , creating a four-note whole tone cluster ( $A \flat$ ,  $B \flat$ ,  $C$ ,  $D$ ), perhaps to erase any sense of tonality at this point and accentuate the “floating” concept, similar to a compositional technique Debussy might have used (see figure 3.14).

Figure 3.14: mm. 67-69.

The musical score for measures 67-69 is presented in a standard orchestral layout. The top system includes the Harp (Hp.) and four vocal parts: Soprano (Sop.), Alto (Alto), Tenor (Ten.), and Bass. The harp part features a complex arpeggiated texture in the right hand and a more rhythmic accompaniment in the left hand. The vocal parts are marked with a piano (*pp*) dynamic and a *rall.* (rallentando) tempo marking. The lyrics "slow - - ly, ah." are written below the vocal staves. The bottom system includes the string ensemble: Violin I (vln. I), Violin II (vln. II), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Contrabass (Cb.). The string parts are marked with dynamics ranging from *f* (forte) to *ppp* (pianissimo) and include various articulations and phrasing marks.

Structurally, this movement can be divided into three large sections. The opening section includes the treble chorus and the preparation for the bath, the second section is marked by the entrance of the men, singing about the woman in the bath and her feelings about aging and loss, and the third section is marked by the constant pedal point provided by the basses and concludes the movement with a feeling of floating away on the water (see Table 2).



Section	Tonality	measures (length)	text
A	Ambiguous	1-35 (35)	The woman undressed and put her...
B	Ambiguous	36-51 (16)	She floated in the water watching her skin fold...
C	A-flat pedal	52-69 (18)	So slowly, they float from her body as boats on the water

Table 2: “The Bath” formal chart.

The text throughout the entire poem centers around the subject, “nipples,” which is one reason that changing the word to “lashes” would mean a major shift in the original intention of the text. It is not just a passing word, but a symbol representing the cherished memories of the vibrant life of the woman in the bath.

Were this movement to be extracted from the cantata, it would not seem to have many of the Latin nor Hispanic musical traits that appear in other movements. “The Bath” is a poignant view of aging that is complete in its message, and can be extracted from the work as its own unique composition. A contrast to the first and third movements of the cantata, it acts as a thoughtful and meditative segue to the sensual tango of the third movement.

### **Movement 3**

#### **Listening Into Night**

Music drifts in from the street,  
until it is the fourth wall of the room.  
So thin, maybe Brazilian, at first,  
a samba on the sand beneath the light.  
The quiet evening sun  
settling all at once into shadow,

into the tight tango strains of a nervous night,  
suddenly gathered at the neck  
a flute, a clarinet, a girl who will cry,  
a thousand moons a single sky.

I am sitting on a couch and dreaming of the outside,  
ten things, ten songs, ten parts of a long, long woman,  
and the woman always walks tight, complex,  
ten parts of a leg, the back of a head,  
the hair that she holds in her hand,  
dreaming of the outside.

Dreaming of the music in the house,  
white curtains and the light,  
an open window, no morning here,  
only late afternoons and that which follows,  
always sand, and always clean and white and moveable,  
as if that part of an eye that is central and dark,  
that is for seeing into darkness is ignored,  
suddenly swallows up itself,  
and the world it sways,  
it moves as if again,  
it is young and wants to be.

This poem incites a variety of images of sun, warmth, sand, and late afternoons, but focuses also on a character who is inside the house, “dreaming of the outside, dreaming of the music.” Rios explains, this poem is a complete contrast to “The Bath,” referring to it as “hot night.”<sup>52</sup> This character is young, with a whole world of potential and the excitement that entails, feeling everything that the woman in the bath was missing or wanted to feel.<sup>53</sup> DeMars describes his perception of the text as sexy and exotic, traveling to exotic places, sleeping on

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<sup>52</sup> Alberto Rios, interview by author, Tempe, AZ, February 7, 2012.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

boat decks and waking up to a new island the next morning, or stumbling upon a secluded bistro in an alley in Brazil where music was playing.<sup>54</sup>

By marking “tempo di tango” at the opening of this movement, DeMars suggests a strong dance influence. Arguably, the tango is one of the most intimate and sexually charged dances in the history of dance, emphasizing the strong and active male role with a passive female role.<sup>55</sup> It appropriately suits the character and mood of the text and music. Originally intended for bass clarinet, the bass line given to the cello at the opening is reminiscent of the habanera bass line of Bizet’s “L’Amour est un Oiseau Rebelle,” from *Carmen*, an example of long gliding motion interrupted by sudden stops, characteristic of the tango. Although a wide variety of possible tango rhythms exist from the last century, a basic Argentinian tango is a dotted quarter note followed by an eighth note, then two more quarter notes (♩. ♪ ♩ ♩).<sup>56</sup> Here, this theme is two measures in length, and becomes an integral part of the motivic structure of the entire movement (see figure 3.15).

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<sup>54</sup> James DeMars, interview by author, Tempe, AZ, February 3, 2012.

<sup>55</sup> Tango is defined as a dance in duple time, characterized by long gliding steps and sudden pauses; from American Spanish, probably of Niger-Congo origin.

<sup>56</sup> Gerard Behague. “Tango,” Grove Music Online. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/27473?q=tango&search=quick&pos=1&start=1#firsthit>; accessed March 22, 2012.

Figure 3.15: “Listening Into Night,” Cello line, measures 1-3



Another example of tango rhythm used in this movement occurs at what would be considered the refrain or chorus, “I am sitting on a couch dreaming of the outside.” The rhythm here is very straightforward, an example of tango rhythm from the early twentieth century,<sup>57</sup> in which the quarter note is the beat of emphasis. In this example, the orchestra plays the following rhythm: ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩, which in tango would be danced as slow-slow-slow-quick-quick, with repetition.

Rios’s original poem, “Piece for Flute and Clarinet,” was borrowed from his book, *The Lime Orchard Woman* (1988). DeMars adapted the text somewhat, creating phrases that would lend themselves to musical structure. For example, the final two lines of the original first stanza were, “A thousand moons a single sky; a flute, a clarinet, a girl who will cry.” DeMars reversed the two lines to end on “a single sky.” He also takes the line, “It is young and wants to be,” and places it at the very end of the poem, which originally ended with, “And the hair that she holds with her hand.” By reorganizing some of the text, DeMars was able to take this poem, which is freely composed, and create structure needed for the music. He sets these repeating phrases to repeated musical themes, as he does in all of the

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<sup>57</sup> Gerard Behague. “Tango,” Grove Music Online. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/27473?q=tango&search=quick&pos=1&start=1#firsthit>; accessed March 23, 2012.

movements of *Tito's Say*, creating a familiarity for the listener that helps to establish some semblance of form.

After a four-measure introduction, the chorus passes the text from voice to voice, as though they are having a conversation. The sopranos sing, “music,” followed by the tenors on “somewhere,” then the text becomes shared among all parts. Chromaticism permeates this movement.

Figure 3.16: mm. 5-9.

The musical score for measures 5-9 of *Tito's Say* is presented in a four-part setting. The Soprano part begins with a *mf* dynamic and the lyrics "Mu-sic" in measure 5, followed by "drifts in from the street" in measure 6 and "un-til it is the fourth wall" in measure 7. The Alto part enters in measure 6 with the lyrics "drifts in from the street oo," in measure 7 and "oo, un-til it is the fourth wall" in measure 8. The Tenor part enters in measure 5 with the lyrics "Some-where" in measure 6 and "drifts in from the street oo," in measure 7, followed by "oo, un-til it is the" in measure 8. The Bass part enters in measure 7 with the lyrics "drifts in from the street" in measure 8 and "it is the fourth wall," in measure 9. The score is written in a chromatic setting with rapid harmonic changes, and the lyrics are declaimed quickly and syllabically. A box containing the number 5 is located above the Soprano staff in measure 5.

The declamation of text happens quickly and syllabically, and the harmonies, like the text, are very tight (i.e., closely voiced), with rapid harmonic changes in a highly chromatic setting. The choir continues for the first section of the movement in this conversational style of text declamation, relaxed in tempo, telling the story, and creating the mood of anticipation. In measure 27, a sparse open-fifth accompaniment supports the sopranos and altos on an extremely disjunct and unpredictable melodic line, “a flute, a clarinet, a girl who will cry.”

Oddly, the current instrumentation used does not include flutes or clarinets at all.<sup>58</sup> The section ends with, “a thousand moons, a single sky,” at which point the familiar bass line introduced in movement one (“The Industry of Hard Kissing”) is heard once again.

Figure 3.17 - “Listening Into Night” - Viola, Cello, Bass - measures 28-31

The image shows a musical score for three instruments: Viola (Vla.), Cello (Vc.), and Bass (Cb.). The score is in 3/4 time and features a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The first two measures (28-29) show the Viola playing a melodic line with a fermata over the second measure, while the Cello and Bass play a steady bass line. The third measure (30) begins a new section with dynamic markings: *p* for Viola, *p* for Cello, and *p* for Bass. The fourth measure (31) continues this section with dynamic markings: *mp* for Viola, *f* for Cello, and *f* for Bass. The Viola part has a crescendo hairpin leading to the *f* dynamic in measure 31. The Cello and Bass parts also have a crescendo hairpin leading to the *f* dynamic in measure 31.

DeMars marks “aggressive” for this portion of music. It is rhythmically charged, and again has a forward driving feel, with a strong rhythmic pick-up to beat one, a trait he feels emphasizes the tango. In the chorus, the altos and basses sing in unison and lead the melody, “I am sitting on a couch.” The tenor follows in imitation two beats later and a fifth higher, while the sopranos add a decorative “lu” to the theme, directing all voices to join together in homophony on measure 38, “ten parts of a long, long woman” (see figure 3.18).

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<sup>58</sup> The reason for the lack of flutes and clarinets was explained earlier in chapter 3. DeMars matched the instrumentation for the Haydn Mass with which it shared the program at Carnegie Hall in 1992.

Figure 3.18: mm. 38-40.

The musical score for measures 38-40 consists of the following parts:

- Vocal Parts:** Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. All four voices sing the same lyrics: "things, ten songs, ten parts of a long, long wo-man." The vocal lines are harmonized with ascending chromatic chord clusters.
- Violin I (Vln. I):** Features a melodic line with a dynamic marking of *mf*.
- Violin II (Vln. II):** Features a melodic line.
- Viola (Vla.):** Features a melodic line.
- Violoncello (Vc.):** Features a melodic line with dynamic markings of *fp* and *div.*.
- Contrabass (Cb.):** Features a melodic line with dynamic markings of *fp*.

“And the woman always walks, tight, complex, tight, tight,” is shared by all voices, harmonized with ascending chromatic chord clusters, building intensity to “ten parts in a leg, the back of a head, the hair that she holds in her hand.” This portion is set with various triads ascending chromatically in root position (D major, E $\flat$  major, E major, F major, etc.), followed by oscillating seventh chords

(F# half-diminished 7, F minor 7). The phrase ends in a whole tone cluster on the word, “hand,” in a climactic crescendo and *rallentando*, after whose release is followed by a gentle repeat of the statement, “that she holds in her hand,” then leading back to the tango feel as in the beginning, “dreaming of the outside, dreaming of the music.” In a portion similar to the opening, the choir continues in its conversational style, building up again to “it is young and wants to be,” set to the same tune as, “a thousand moons a single sky.” This once again leads into the “I am sitting on a couch” portion of the movement, text DeMars has chosen to repeat, although it is not repeated in the original poem. The music here is the same as that in mm. 34-40, but is then followed by material from mm. 23-30, with new text.

Figure 3.19: mm. 23-30.

The musical score consists of four staves, each with a vocal line and lyrics. The lyrics are: "in-to the tight tan-go strains of a". The music is in 7/8 time and features a crescendo leading to a fortissimo (f) dynamic. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The score shows the vocal lines for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass.



ner - - vous night, sud-den-ly ga-thered at the neck

ner - - vous night, sud-den-ly ga-thered at the neck

ner - - vous night, sud-den-ly ga-thered at the neck

ner - - vous night, sud-den-ly ga-thered at the neck

a flute, a clar-i-net, a

a flute, a clar-i-net, a

girl who will cry,- a thou-sand moons, a sin-gle sky

girl who will cry,- a thou-sand moons, a sin-gle sky

lu

a thou-sand moons, a sin-gle sky



line of text, “it is young and wants to be,” serves as a suitable segue to the fourth movement in which an elderly woman reflects on her youth.

#### **Movement 4**

##### **Her Secret Love, Whispered Late in her Years**

Gravity wants me.  
Gravity can't get enough of me.

Every time I try to leave,  
it finds a way to bring me back.

It shows up wherever I go.  
It's always been this way.

Sometimes catching me by surprise at the ankle,  
trying to wrestle me to the ground.

It makes me laugh and I give in.  
This thing that wants me,

this amorous creature,  
this magnet to my body - it is a beast.

But I would miss it if it weren't there.

When I was young, headstrong and full of stars,  
not ready for any embrace,

more than the necklace those stars made for me.  
But gravity, not the stars, caught my tears.

Each time I was with child, it whispered my name in the night.  
As I grew heavier through the years it only asked for me all the more.

It brought my hair down  
and made my summer dresses fall from me.

In every step I have taken, long companion unswerving,  
never leaving my side it has turned me.

Gravity wants me.  
Gravity can't get enough of me.

But now I am the one who's drawn to its arms,  
and I am the one who opened the door.

Now I am the one, I am the suitor.  
I say very nice things.

I'm desperate these days,  
I'm desperate and ready  
to lie down with it.

This movement, a soprano solo, was not a part of the original composition, but was added for the 2010 performance by the Arizona State University Symphonic Chorale and Orchestra. DeMars contacted Rios and informed him that he would like to add another movement, with another one of his texts. Rios suggested "Her Secret Love, Whispered Late in her Years,"<sup>59</sup> which comes from his collection *The Theater of Night*, published in 2005. Rios says about this poem:

"It's about love, it's about passion, but it's at a remove, about change again. This revisits what the bath was talking about, in that, 'I still feel like I have desire, I want to be desired, but everybody who is in my story is gone. And who is left to me? My old friend, gravity.' It's embodied, looking for what's left, and finding an answer."<sup>60</sup>

The woman in this poem is an elderly woman, and she is not sad. Although the text may be perceived as conveying sadness, Rios says it is actually a positive

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<sup>59</sup> Alberto Rios, interview by author, Tempe, AZ, February 7, 2012.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

message about still feeling something. In the style of magic realism, gravity becomes the woman’s companion when everyone else has gone.<sup>61</sup>

This movement is through-composed, unified by significant emphasis on the melodic third, large leaps, and fast chromatic flourishes. The dramatic declamation of the text occurs fairly rapidly, with “ah’s” added in for effect, such as following “gravity can’t get enough of me,” and as laughter following, “it makes me laugh” (see figures 3.21-22).

Figure 3.21: mm. 7-8

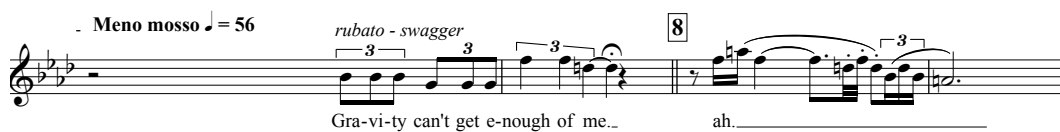


Figure 3.22: m. 28



Strings, harp, and marimba make up the bulk of the instrumentation in this movement. The harp and marimba have a strong presence and act as a trio with the soprano voice, while the strings play a more accompanimental role. At measure 44, for the first time in the movement, the strings begin a regular pattern of quarter notes, preceding the text “when I was young, headstrong, and full of stars,” symbolizing the persistence of youth. This pattern accelerates to eighth

<sup>61</sup> Alberto Rios, interview by author, Tempe, AZ, February 7, 2012.

notes, but does not remain steady for very long and is interrupted by musical commentary between the phrases of the soprano. At measure 65, a regular pattern of eighth notes begins and continues until measure 73, increasing the intensity to the climax of the movement, which occurs at measure 74, with the text, “but now I am the one.” The rhythmic durations for the strings broaden to quarter notes while the harp and marimba add color with glissandos, tremolos, and flourishes. As the *denouement* begins, the harp ceases, the marimba gradually slows to nothing at m. 84, and the soprano is left with only the strings in a static chordal accompaniment as she sings, “I’m desperate these days, desperate and ready to lie down with it.” She follows with two short “ah’s” ascending then descending on a minor third between e and g, and the final chord is an e minor seventh.

Although the key signature for this movement is four flats, multiple accidentals occur in nearly every measure, with the melody “gravitating” toward G. Using G as the tonic for this movement with four flats, the tonality would seem to be leaning toward Locrian mode, although it is difficult for the listener to detect by ear alone. The only portion of the movement that momentarily resides in the actual key with few accidentals is the climax, measures 74-84 (see figure 3.23)

Figure 3.23: mm. 77-78.

The musical score for measures 77-78 is presented in a multi-staff format. The top staff is for Percussion 2 (Perc. 2), showing a single note in measure 78 with a dynamic marking of *mf*. The Harp (Hp.) part features a complex texture with multiple sixteenth-note runs, some marked with a '12' and a slur, and a dynamic marking of *mp*. The Soprano Solo (S. Solo) part contains the vocal line with lyrics: "I am the one who o - pened the door. Now". The vocal line includes a triplet of eighth notes in measure 78. The string section consists of Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Contrabass (Cb.), all playing sustained notes with a dynamic marking of *mf*.

The insertion of the new fourth movement creates a balance between the third and fifth movements, adding contrast in style, color, and key. The third movement, with its atmosphere of Brazilian sounds, tango, and samba, would have been followed directly by the rousing final movement “Ventura and Clemente.” The soprano solo in between these two movements creates the needed variety and interest for the listener.

## **Movement 5**

### **Ventura and Clemente**

CHORUS:

Ventura Had hair of the jungle, long, long  
like words of the monkeys and parrots, long, long  
like vines and the roots without end;  
all pulled back, knotted and tight  
with the help, the insistence of her mother;

Her mother who had cheeks like persimmons,  
her face always tasting the peel,  
using the energy of their taste to pull  
so the face of Ventura's young girl-head  
was skull white bone and big clack teeth like the cartoon,  
unconnected.

CHORUS WOMEN:

Almost sounding like fat ducks

CHORUS MEN:

that every day she fed

CHORUS WOMEN:

clack, clack, clack-clacking do

CHORUS MEN:

after she stopped her work in the peeling secretariat  
of a third but ambitious supervisor of federal railroads

CHORUS:

every day she fed them popcorn ("palomitas")  
and one day she could not because of snow!  
Snow for the first time she could remember this early, so far to the south,  
they opened their mouths and ate the snow  
the white bits ("palomitas") they thought had come from her.  
Ventura, Ventura, Ventura's young girl-head,  
She laughed and laughed  
and opened her mouth without making a sound in the late afternoon  
so screeched in one freedom, the crickets stopped to listen, listen, listen,  
but no less than he...

Clemente, from behind the bouganvillas  
had smoked his colored cigarette,



watching her this moment and then letting her go,  
simply letting her go,  
like smoke to its most secret place,  
to the place smoke always goes.  
This Ventura, leaving a memory,  
This Ventura, sweet like the cane in his eyes  
so that the rest of his body caught fire with jealousy.

CHORUS MEN:  
The world had always erupted through him

CHORUS WOMEN:  
and always bad!

CHORUS MEN:  
Breaking through to the side of what might be,

CHORUS:  
wishing, wishing, wishing  
to whisper the Spanish love songs,  
breaking through to the side of what might be,

CHORUS WOMEN:  
He dared not

CHORUS MEN:  
nothing could be

CHORUS WOMEN:  
He dared not

CHORUS MEN:  
Nothing could be

CHORUS:  
Nothing could be so, so simple!  
How he wanted her,  
he could not endure  
the inquietude of this matter of love!  
Ventura had hair of the jungle, long, long

like words of the monkeys and parrots,  
long, long, long, long, ah.

BASS SOLO:  
How she laughed out her true self

SOPRANO SOLO:  
Ah!

CHORUS ET AL:  
Ventura! Clemente! Ventura!

Ventura and Clemente are Alberto Rios's great-grandparents by name.

The characterization “does not go to the left or to the right of them,” Rios says, “it is them,”<sup>62</sup> although the details of the story itself are imagined. Much of the imagery in this poem comes from a conglomeration of memories of Rios's childhood, parents, and grandparents, as well as his great-grandparents. The opening text that refers to the jungle, monkeys, and parrots, comes from a familiar story his grandmother told him. During the birth of Rios's father, a volcano was erupting near where they lived. The house was in the tropics, and the windows were made only of netting. The birds were so frightened of the volcano that they tore through the netting and came inside the house. They were in the rafters screeching during the birth. His grandmother says she could not hear her own screams, but rather she felt as though the sounds of the birds were coming from her. This loud, screeching and squawking language of the birds and monkeys represents the language of life, the *el* and the *la* mentioned earlier. This represents the “magic realism” often referred to in Rios's writing, the possibility of magical interaction between all things animate and inanimate.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Alberto Rios, interview by author, Tempe, AZ, February 7, 2012.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

Rios's poem creates in the mind of the reader a scene with a bright and noisy jungle as the backdrop, and within, telling a love story of two young teenagers, Ventura and Clemente.<sup>64</sup> Ventura is the primary character and she is experiencing change, growing from a child into a woman, "all pulled back, knotted and tight with the help, the insistence of her mother," referring to the long hair that she has. It is not her own, but the same hair her mother and grandmother also had. This is an image of the mother trying to control the daughter while she is experiencing this change, trying to keep her daughter young.<sup>65</sup> "Her face always tasting the peel" refers literally to what happens to the body and face when tasting persimmons. It is so sour that it makes the mouth pucker instantly. This was the face of the mother, but also of Ventura, whose hair was being pulled back so tightly. "Peel" also has multiple meanings, the first referring to the sour flesh of the persimmons, the second referring to the changes Ventura faced.<sup>66</sup> Her young childhood features are peeling away, revealing her womanhood. "Young girl-head, was skull white bone and big clack teeth," describes the awkward changing stage of adolescence.<sup>67</sup> Ventura fed the ducks after she stopped her work in the "peeling secretariat of a third but ambitious supervisor of federal railroads" (from libretto). Rios's great-grandmother actually had a job like this. In the poem, she is

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<sup>64</sup> Poem "The Inquietude of a Particular Matter," from *Five Indiscretions*, 1985

<sup>65</sup> Alberto Rios, interview by author, Tempe, AZ, February 7, 2012.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

out feeding the ducks popcorn (“palomitas,” which means literally “little doves”), when she is discovered by Clemente. He sees her in a very important moment of transformation. Suddenly it is snowing, which does not happen in the tropics, an element of magic realism, creating a sort of fantasy world. The strange occurrence of snow at this time also represents great change in Ventura. When the ducks reach up to taste the snow they thought was popcorn, she “laughed and laughed and opened her mouth without making a sound.” This experience of opening the mouth without making a sound was Rios’s equivalent to Walt Whitman’s great human “yawp,” the moment when a person becomes who he or she is. Clemente, “behind the bouganvillas,” witnesses this beautiful moment while smoking his “colored cigarette,” watches her and then “simply lets her go, like smoke to its most secret place.” He falls in love with her at this moment, so sacred, “the crickets stopped to listen.”

Next, the story turns the reader’s focus toward the character of Clemente. The text describes Clemente as sweet, but also young and vigorous.<sup>68</sup> “The world had always erupted through him, and always bad” refers back to the volcano and also Clemente’s unsettled feelings, or inquietude. He wanted Ventura, and overcome with romance, he wanted to “whisper the Spanish love songs, breaking through to the side of what might be,” a portion of the movement that acts as a connector to the final section. The movement ends with the *tutti* voices exclaiming the two names, Ventura and Clemente, even though Ventura is the primary subject. Even when Clemente is introduced, it is in direct relation to his

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<sup>68</sup> Alberto Rios, interview by author, Tempe, AZ, February 7, 2012.

reaction to Ventura. The final repetition of the two names indicates the two lovers calling to one another, ending in what is the fifth aspect of love, young teenage infatuated love. DeMars strayed slightly from the original poem to this current uplifting ending. In the original text, following “breaking through to the side of what might be,” the text continues somewhat differently:

But he dared not.  
In this town, he knew well,  
in this life, one must wait.  
Nothing could be more simple.  
He blew circles of new smoke  
the size of himself standing,  
the large himself  
where the pain most certainly was,  
wishing he could so easily  
erase the pain with his hands,  
put his hands fisted  
into the face of a bad man  
but he could not.  
The inquietude of this matter  
of love, of loving how she saw  
the ducks, how she laughed out  
her true self in that moment,  
how he wanted her  
he could not endure.  
But he would. This was his test,  
to say nothing.  
Although the general story of this poem remains founded on young love,

DeMars chose to use only a few of the lines from its final portion, something on which Rios agreed and collaborated, such as:

nothing could be more simple;  
the inquietude of this matter of love,  
how she laughed out her true self in that moment,  
how he wanted her, he could not endure.

It may have been a wise choice to end the work on an uplifting note, where the characters come together in love as they did in reality, rather than the somewhat dark ending of the poem shown here.

DeMars chose to open the movement in 10/8 because of the opening text, “Ventura had hair of the jungle,” which divides easily into 3+3+2+2, and the rhythm itself is reminiscent of a Latin dance rhythm, although it does not coincide with any particular dance (see figure 3.24).

Figure 3.24: Brass and percussion, opening of Movement 5, mm. 1-2.

The musical score for the opening of Movement 5, measures 1-2, is written in 10/8 time with a tempo of 126, marked "Brisk". The key signature has two flats. The score is divided into two systems. The first system includes the brass instruments: two Trumpets (C Tpt.), two Trombones (Tbn. and B. Tbn.), and Timpani (Timp.). The second system includes Percussion 1 (Perc. 1) and Percussion 2 (Perc. 2). The percussion parts specify "med. sus. cym." (medium suspended cymbal), "Chinese cym." (Chinese cymbal), "Temple Blocks", "med. yarn mallets", and "wood blocks". Dynamics include forte (f) and mezzo-forte (mf). A rhythmic pattern of 3+3+2+2 is indicated above the first measure. Percussion 2 includes a "(reverse stx.)" instruction.

After a celebratory twelve measure introduction played by instruments with emphasis on the brass, the chorus enters with two repeated musical phrases in homophony, two measures in length, followed by a short melodic fragment on “like vines and the roots without end,” finalizing the musical idea.

Figure 3.25: mm. 15-17.

Sop. words of the mon keys and par rots, long, long like vines and the roots with out end,  
Alto words of the mon keys and par rots, long, long like vines and the roots with out end,  
Ten. words of the mon keys and par rots, long, long like vines and the roots with out end,  
Bass words of the mon keys and par rots, long, long like vines and the roots with out end,

After the initial statement of thematic material, the soprano solo follows with a seven measure solo on only “ah,” changing the character slightly, sounding lilting and playful, indicating the character of Ventura. In the following section, chordal harmonies move chromatically on the text “knotted and tight with the help.” The upper strings often move in a descending chromatic fashion, and the lower strings typically ascend in transitional places throughout the movement (see figure 3.26).

Figure 3.26: mm. 23-25.

Vln. I *f*  
Vln. II *f* *arco*  
Vla. *f*  
Vc. *f*

Measures 28 and 29 provide the listener a brief repose in common time, then after a fermata, return abruptly to 10/8 with a condensed version of the material from the introduction. A new section begins with the choir at m. 33, in which the text is being passed back and forth between the women and the men. The choir comes back together homophonically on m. 41 (“skull white bone...”), with the women in parallel fifths moving in contrary motion to the men who are also in parallel fifths, lending itself well to the next line, “unconnected” (see figure 3.27).

Figure 3.27: mm. 41-43.

The musical score for measures 41-43 features four vocal parts: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. Each part is written in a treble clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The lyrics are: "skull-white bone and big clack teeth like the car - toon". The Soprano and Alto parts move in parallel motion, while the Tenor and Bass parts also move in parallel motion, creating a homophonic texture. The music is characterized by parallel fifths and contrary motion between the women's and men's parts.

Another chromatic passage occurs in the strings in measures 45 and 46, transitioning to a repeat of the opening thematic material, “Ventura had hair of the jungle.” Instead of ending with “like vines and the roots without end,” DeMars suddenly shortens the text and inserts a portion of earlier material, making a new statement “vines and the roots and the skull white bone and big clack teeth,”



essentially combining all her physical attributes described earlier. The music accompanying the text for this section is the same music that accompanied the text in its original statements, providing motivic continuity.

The women and men of the chorus then continue to pass the text back and forth, using onomatopoeic language on “clack, clack, clack-clacking so,” referring to the fat ducks she feeds after her work. The string accompaniment here calls for pizzicato articulation, adding to the hopping character of the ducks. Most of the melodic movement throughout this section is stepwise, harmonized with thirds and fourths. The soprano solo returns at m. 75, on “ah,” reminiscent of the opening portion, painting the picture of Ventura tilting around and feeding the ducks. The bass solo enters here for the first time (m. 77) in the movement, declaiming, “Ventura!” as he is watching her. The choir follows suit, singing “Ventura” on ascending octaves, followed by a sparse and rhythmic setting of “she laughed and laughed and opened her mouth without making a sound” (see figure 3.28).

Figure 3.28: mm. 85-87.

The image shows a musical score for four vocal parts: Soprano (Sop.), Alto, Tenor (Ten.), and Bass. The score is in 3/4 time and features a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The lyrics are: "laughed and laughed and o-pened her mouth with - out mak-ing a sound\_". The Soprano and Alto parts have identical lyrics. The Tenor part has a long note on "o-pened her mouth" with an *ord.* marking above it, and then "with - out mak-ing a sound\_". The Bass part has the same lyrics as the Soprano and Alto. The music is characterized by stepwise melodic movement and is harmonized with thirds and fourths.

During this section, the soprano soloist sings, “palomitas,” and “esquite,” the two Spanish words for popcorn, symbolizing Ventura calling out to the ducks. The bass soloist sings in a stepwise ascending line, “so sacred in one freedom, the crickets stopped to listen,” followed by the soprano soloist on, “but no less than he.” The gravity of this moment where Clemente is falling in love with Ventura calls for a change. In m. 97, the music briefly moves to 9/8 meter, followed by a transition in m. 98 to 2/2. The mood becomes more serene here, and the choir is singing polyphonically, long slow descending lines on triplets on “late afternoon,” as though time is frozen in this moment, combined with ascending lines on “Clemente.” The strings change to an ostinato accompaniment of trembling notes, moving in stepwise motion, in groups of 5 subdivisions per beat. This meter and mood change signals the change of focus to the new character, Clemente. In one of the most beautiful and sweeping melodic lines in the work, Clemente is introduced “from behind the bouganvillas,” by the bass soloist. The melodies by the bass, and the men of the choir, are in ascending stepwise motion, with subtle turns downward at the end of each phrase. Measures 127-132 mark an interlude where the choir is passing around the names of the two main characters (see figure 4.31). The strings are playing tremolo block chords, and at measure 133, the subtle dreamlike state of Clemente’s infatuation snaps back to reality with a change back to the more exciting tempo and rhythms of the earlier portions of music, “Ventura, leaving a memory” although now in 4/4 (see figure 3.29).

Figure 3.29: mm. 130-133.

The musical score for measures 130-133 is presented in a standard orchestral layout. The vocal parts are arranged in a four-part setting: Soprano (Sop.), Alto, Tenor (Ten.), and Bass. The instrumental parts include Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), Cello (Cb.), and Double Bass (Cb.). The key signature is B-flat major (two flats), and the time signature is 10/8. The tempo is marked as  $\text{♩} = 120$  Tempo com prima. The lyrics for the vocal parts are: Soprano: "Cle - men - te, Cle - men - te, Ven - tu - ra,"; Alto: "Cle - men - te, Cle - men - te, Ven - tu - ra,"; Tenor: "tu - ra, Ven - tu - ra, Ven - tu - ra,"; Bass: "tu - ra, Ven - tu - ra, Ven - tu - ra,". Dynamic markings include *f* (forte) for the vocal parts and *mp* (mezzo-piano) and *f* for the instrumental parts. The score shows a transition from a more melodic vocal line to a more rhythmic and textured instrumental accompaniment.

After another five measure transitional section, measure 138 marks a return to the 10/8 meter, similar to the beginning of the first movement. The listener may expect to hear the opening choral theme again at this point, but instead DeMars chooses to move forward with more new text and music. This text is describing the attributes of Clemente, and continues until m. 157. An abrupt change at measure 158, the women of the choir suddenly sing, “he dared not,” while the men answer, “nothing could be,” which is repeated, then followed by “so simple” (see figure 3.30).

Figure 3.30: mm 157-160.

Sop. he dared not, he dared not!

Alto he dared not, he dared not!

Ten. no-thing could be, no-thing could be,

Bass through to the side of what might be! no-thing could be, no-thing could be,

Yet another transition at m. 162, the women of the chorus sing “how he wanted her,” on a descending melody, gentler now, harmonized in parallel fifths, and echoed by the strings. “He could not endure,” ends on an ethereal cluster chord consisting of C#, D#, E, F#, and B, held with a fermata. A sudden shift occurs again, reviving the introductory material from the first movement, “The inquietude of this matter of love,” which, in this case, is part of the poetry. The brass also presents the triplet theme from the first movement here again in m. 167, reminding us that this scene is taking place somewhere near the border of Mexico (see figure 3.31).

Figure 3.31: mm. 166-167.

166 A tempo ♩ = 126

Solo

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DeMars took the line “the inquietude of this matter of love,” and put it at the beginning of the entire work, emphasizing its summation of the cantata as a

whole, inserted here as a perfect segue back to the original thematic material from the current movement, which the listener is now hearing for the third time.

Though the phrase, “Ventura had hair of the jungle,” is not repeated on this third hearing, the portion that follows signals the dramatic ending of the movement, and the work as a whole. The choir sings ascending lines on “Ventura” and “Clemente,” while the soprano soloist reminds the listener of her presence by singing “Ah,” as the character of Ventura. The bass solo sings the final bit of text, somewhat covered by all the other parts, “How she laughed out her true self.” The soloists then join the choir in singing out the names Ventura and Clemente, emphasizing the lovers’ acknowledgement of one another (see figure 3.32).

Figure 3.32: mm. 185-188.

The musical score for measures 185-188 is presented in a six-staff format. The top staff is for the Soprano Soloist (S. Solo), the second for the Bass Soloist (B. Solo), the third for the Soprano (Sop.), the fourth for the Alto, the fifth for the Tenor (Ten.), and the sixth for the Bass. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is common time (C). The S. Solo part begins with the lyrics "ah, ah, ah, ah, ah," and features a melodic line with a fermata. The B. Solo part has the lyrics "How she laughed out her true self!" and a melodic line with a fermata. The Sop. part has the lyrics "ah, Cle - men - té," and a melodic line with a fermata. The Alto part has the lyrics "men - te," and a melodic line with a fermata. The Ten. part has a fermata. The Bass part has the lyrics "men - te," and a melodic line with a fermata. The score concludes with a dynamic marking of *f* (forte) in the final measure.

Rios says that this movement represents the moment that the young girl, Ventura, is experiencing growing up and feeling good about herself.<sup>69</sup> Clemente is the observer in the situation, and sees this transformation, falling in love with her, unable to avoid being drawn to her strong character.

The type of love presented in this movement is one of the most common themes throughout all of history, that of young, exciting, infatuated love. In contrast to the earlier movements, focusing on longing, yearning, or missing something that is lost, in this movement, the love is actually achieved. The entire final movement gravitates toward f minor, but frequently changes tonalities avoiding a consistent key. The work ends on an F major chord, harkening back to the first movement, which spent most of its time moving between F Dorian and F major or minor. Returning to the F tonality also gives the entire work a feeling of completion.

DeMars's setting of this text mirrors the dramatic story telling of Rios's words. Again, using prosody, with no regular meter or rhyme, the music follows the ebb and flow of the characters, their descriptive attributes, the occurrence of their meeting, and their subsequent falling in love. The structure of this movement can be divided into three large sections. The first is the introduction and description of Ventura, mm. 1-88 (twelve introductory measures + seventy-six measures with chorus). When the soprano solo (Ventura) first sings "Clemente" at m. 88, she is introducing his character, and the transition begins into the second large portion, Clemente. This section begins with the text "in the late afternoon."

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<sup>69</sup> Alberto Rios, interview by author, Tempe, AZ, February 7, 2012.

Clemente's portion is mm. 89-165 (also seventy-six measures in length). At measure 166 an important transition occurs. This is the moment where the thematic material from the first movement is reintroduced, and signals the third and final large section of the movement, Ventura and Clemente together. This portion is only thirty measures in length and most of the latter portion of the music is ascending to the climactic ending.

The final movement, "Ventura and Clemente," serves as an uplifting and rousing end to the cantata. In contrast to an early cantata that may have ended in a chorale, many contrasting sections of music are present, including some homophony, some polyphony, and solos as well. The final movement also ties together musical ideas that had been presented in earlier movements, particularly the first and third, bringing the work to a triumphant close.

## CHAPTER 4

### UNIFYING ELEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE CONSIDERATIONS

James DeMars has created a work with many unifying elements from the first movement through to the last. He chooses simpler tonalities for the first and last movements, while chromaticism is the primary means for harmonic and melodic motion in the middle three movements. The melodies he writes are singable, and often stepwise in motion.

A motivic theme across all of the movements is rhythmic repetition of the same note, followed by a step up or down. For example, see figures 4.1 through 4.5:

Figure 4.1: Movement 1, mm. 1-3.



Figure 4.2: Movement 2, m. 36.



Figure 4.3: Movement 3, mm. 85-86.

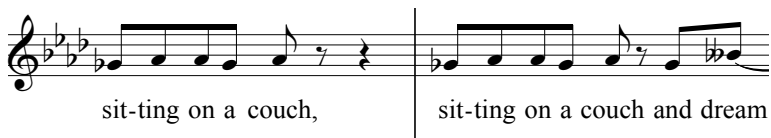




Figure 4.4: Movement 4, mm. 43-46.

When I was young, head-strong and full of

Figure 4.5. Movement 5, mm. 12-13.

Ven tu - ra had hair of the jun - gle,  
Ven tu - ra had hair of the jun - gle,

The first time the listener hears this stepwise theme is during “The inquietude of this matter of love.” Use of this motivic theme is symbolic in its constant reminder of inquietude.

The harmony in this work is primarily tonal, with emphasis on modes and parallel fourths and fifths. DeMars prefers using parallel fifths in root position to emphasize shifting tonality, and also to give the music a raw and gritty character.<sup>70</sup> When chromaticism is used, consonant tonality always follows.

Changing meter combined with dance rhythms adds to the overall vibrancy of this rhythmic work. The unique 10/8 meter appears in both the first and last movements, providing consistency. The rhythmic bass lines in the first movement give it character and are also seen again in the third movement. The second movement’s very slow sinking rhythm contrasts with that of the first and

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<sup>70</sup> James DeMars, Interview by author, Tempe, AZ, February 3, 2012.

third movements. The third movement introduces the tango rhythm including the habanera, and another with emphasis on the pick-up to beat one in 4/4 meter, creating a sultry and sensual ambiance. The fourth movement's opening rhythm, although it is in 4/4 meter, feels very free due to the sporadic placement of accompanimental chords, thereby conjuring up a sensation of lacking foundation, or 'gravity,' which is the 'suitor' referred to in the song. As the piece continues, the rhythm becomes more regular, however. The final movement expresses a wide variety of emotions with music that is exciting, dance-like, calm, ethereal, and uplifting combined into one movement with multiple metric and rhythmic patterns, ending in the same 10/8 meter in which the entire work began.

DeMars said that it would be acceptable to perform this work with only the piano reduction if resources are limited, believing in flexibility when it comes to varying performing groups. He hopes to see more performances of his work in the future.<sup>71</sup> When working with a choir on preparing this work, the director will find a few challenges along the way. The highly chromatic harmonies can be difficult for the singers to learn, especially in the second and third movements. The melodies here are also highly chromatic, and the rapid tonal shifts can cause difficulty in key recognition. Even advanced choirs may struggle with this.

The director must also make a decision about whether to use the word "nipples" or "lashes" in the second movement. Maturity is the order of the day when it comes to this text because it is regarding aging, perhaps something to which younger singers may have difficulty relating; it may require some finesse

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<sup>71</sup> James DeMars, interview by author, Tempe, AZ, February 3, 2012.

and explanation by the conductor to properly execute the lines. Even though the language is somewhat suggestive, it is not overtly obscene in any way. Lines such as “ten parts in a leg, the back of a neck, the hair that she holds in her hand,” are present throughout. DeMars mentioned that while writing *Tito’s Say*, he may have been influenced somewhat by Samuel Barber’s cantata, *The Lovers*. The language involved in that work is far more suggestive, with lines for the chorus like, “Close your eyes wherein the slow night stirs, strip off your clothes, like new cut flowers your arms, your lap as rose,” with additional lines describing breasts, thighs, and the act of lovemaking. *Tito’s Say*, on the other hand, is quite dignified, and even the use of the word “nipples” is justified, and in its own way, beautiful. Overall, the choral parts are well written and pleasant and enjoyable to sing.

The orchestral parts, particularly for the strings, may be somewhat difficult to play because of the extensive usage of flats in the key signatures. When asked about this subject, DeMars replied by saying that he specifically wanted the flat key for the singers, and that if string players can play the Schubert *Symphony in B-Flat*, he would expect them to play this. He said he could simply go to his computer and strike a button and change the entire key, but he does not think it is “worth it”<sup>72</sup> because he likes the current key, and that is what he intended for the singers. There are some other instrumental considerations as well. In addition to some very complicated rhythmic writing, the harp part is virtuosic and requires a seasoned harpist.

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<sup>72</sup> James DeMars, Interview by author, Tempe, AZ, February 3, 2012.

When considering performance of this work, the conductor should take into account the level of difficulty in the choral parts as well as the instrumental parts. The choral parts are well written, in a comfortable tessitura for most choirs, and written in keys with the singers specifically in mind. The abundance of chromaticism in the second and third movements will pose a challenge to even advanced singers. Though not insurmountable, a reasonable amount of rehearsal time will be required. Regarding the instrumental parts, the strings will have some difficulty adjusting to the movements with many flats (particularly movements two and four), and though it is possible to be performed well, it will definitely require an adequate amount of rehearsal time for the players to adjust to the keys.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper has been to explore the composition *Tito's Say* and answer the hypothetical question, “why is it a work worth knowing and performing?” Upon listening to it for the first time, the listener will experience rhythmic vibrancy, excitement, rousing dance rhythms, gentle reflection, sensuality, poignant humor, and a wonderful love story with a storybook happy ending. Its most memorable traits are those that come inherently in music, those that are so difficult to describe in detail, possessing the power to move the listener and the performer, allowing them to experience a variety of emotions. Through *Tito's Say*, the poetry of Alberto Rios is presented to a larger audience that may have been otherwise unfamiliar.

Here, DeMars has tied the concept of five aspects of love together well, opening the work with a small portion of the text that comes from the final movement, and encompassing the main subject of the cantata as a whole, “The Inquietude of this Matter of Love.” The inquietude of love is seen in every movement in some way. DeMars sets the opening statement of this text with pitches that repeat and move in a simple stepwise motion. This melodic motive appears in every subsequent movement as well, reminding the listener that no matter what is happening at the time, the inquietude is still present. The structure of the work opens with a fast movement, followed by a slow one, a dance-like (tango) movement, the soprano solo, then the final fast and exciting movement. A summary of the five aspects of love in this cantata is as follows (Table 3):

<b>Movement</b>	<b>Aspect(s) of Love</b>
1. The Industry of Hard Kissing	Passionate love, longing, the taboo of an affair
2. The Bath	Self-love, loss of sexuality, loss of self
3. Listening Into Night	“Hot night,” love’s potential, excitement
4. Her Secret Love, Whispered Late in her Years	Self love, feeling alive, gravity becomes the woman’s companion after everyone else has gone
5. Ventura and Clemente	Young love, infatuation

Table 3: Aspects of love presented in *Tito’s Say*.

The music and the text cumulatively communicate ideas about humanity, love stories with which everyone can identify, whether it is about having love, finding love, losing love, or missing love. DeMars expertly expresses the drama in all of these stories, especially considering that the poems were written in prosody, or free verse. With this composition, he demonstrates the ability to reorganize the texts to create form and structure, by choosing to repeat certain sections of text and placing them strategically in varying places in the movements. For example, in movement one, ‘ordinary life falls the quickest, is easy to make breathe hard,’ and in movement three, ‘I am sitting on a couch and dreaming of the outside. Ten things, ten songs, ten parts of a long, long woman.’ These lines of text, combined with their respective musical settings, create the pillars of structure that support the entire work. These are its memorable moments, the choruses or refrains.

The use of Mexican and Hispanic musical sounds combined with classical traditions make this work unique in its ability to represent the American Southwest. Although not every part of the text suggests life on the Mexican-American border, all of it was most certainly influenced by those experiences. The first, third, and fifth movements contain the larger amount of this cross-cultural sound world. Movements two and four, however, if extracted from the work, would feel as though they are in a different, more traditional style. The use of the mariachi-style trumpets in the first and last movements, and the tango rhythms in the third make *Tito's Say* special in the world of choral/orchestral music by combining the sounds of two different cultures.

During the twentieth century, music in general has become more diverse in many ways. Styles vary to the point that it is difficult to assign any one particular style of music as the prominent one. *Tito's Say* is a contribution to modern choral writing in that it combines aspects of many different sounds including folk idioms, rock, Latin dance rhythms, aspects of musical theatre, minimalism, and modern language. Alberto Rios thought the piece was fantastic, noting that the music brings the characters alive and gives them a voice, not the voice he had ever imagined, but making them feel more alive than captured.<sup>73</sup> He created these characters, and DeMars's music has given them a medium to speak for themselves. The music elevates the text in a new way, breathing new life and inspired movement into the characters that once lived only on the page.

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<sup>73</sup> Alberto Rios, interview by author, Tempe, AZ, February 7, 2012.

DeMars composed many works before and since *Tito's Say*. Choral works include *An American Requiem* (1994) and *Anthem for the United Nations* (1995), among others. His *Two World Concerto*, a work for Native American flute and orchestra, is featured in the textbook, *American Music, A Panorama*, by Daniel Kingman. He has also written an opera in two acts, *Guadalupe*, which also features the Native American flute. Many of DeMars's works contribute to the musical landscape specific to the American Southwest, and *Tito's Say* is the first to combine the sounds of Mexico into a large-scale cantata such as this.

DeMars writes music for the experience of writing and performing it. He is not concerned with his place in the history of music or his contribution to the current musical landscape, but with the experience and enjoyment the music provides at this moment. He is very much an existentialist, and says about the future, "I won't be here. I think there's beauty in there, in those pieces, but you would have to be a classical musician, you'd have to be sensitive to the poetry, and be the kind of person who really wants to reflect on it."<sup>74</sup>

DeMars's work in combination with Rios's texts are worthy of reflection. The five aspects of love expressed in *Tito's Say* are relative to the human experience, and will continue to be relevant for future generations. This work is a unique creation of the Southwest region of the United States in that it combines Hispanic, Latin, and classical music within traditional forms and structures. The use of Rios's text and its vibrant magical realism links it even more strongly to the Hispanic culture of the southwest. Seemingly opposing stylistic attributes such

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<sup>74</sup> James DeMars, interview by author, Tempe, AZ, February 3, 2012.



as Mariachi, tango, chromaticism, and impressionistic writing combine to create a work that speaks universally in its message of love.

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APPENDIX A  
PERFORMANCE REVIEWS AND INTERVIEWS

## **Classical Music in Review**

By BERNARD HOLLAND

Published: April 28, 1992

New York Choral Society Carnegie Hall

"Tito's Say," with music by James DeMars and words by Alberto (Tito) Rios, was the new piece in the New York Choral Society's concert at Carnegie Hall on Friday evening. Four poems of skewed love are set to pleasant and chatty music. The style negotiates a path between Broadway ensemble singing and the chanting repetitions of Philip Glass. John Daly Goodwin's singers seemed better prepared for Mr. DeMars's off-center antics than the accompanying pick-up orchestra. The latter, sounding barely rehearsed at all, muddled its way uneasily along.

Mozart's "Vesperae solennes de confessore" and the Haydn "Nelson" Mass surrounded "Tito's Say." The New York Choral Society was well drilled and eager, but these assets never quite compensated for the hard, dull, amateur timbre, the elongated American vowels and a strained tone that drooped consistently into flatness under pressure. Mr. Goodwin's quartet of soloists went about their individual tasks with little sense of mutual listening and adjustment. Among themselves -- and as a part of a larger ensemble -- they were indifferently tuned and balanced hardly at all.

Indeed, concerts such as these seem more for the benefit of those on stage and for the gratification of friends, families and benefactors in the audience, than for the broader interest of New York musical life and music in general. Seen as private entertainments, events like Friday's can take on an endearing quality, with an ad hoc mutuality that makes the lack of finish and sometimes marginal professionalism less troubling. Mozart and Haydn were not particularly well served.

Lila Deis was an honorable soprano in the Mozart, though she was overmatched by some of Haydn's florid writing. Both Deidra Palmour, the mezzo-soprano, and Kevin Deas, the baritone, sang with clear attractive voices. Gregory Cross was the tenor.

## **Meet John Daly Goodwin- Conductor Leads NY Choral Society in Finale May 1**

By Playbill Arts Staff 23 Mar 2010

John Daly Goodwin

A chat with NYCS music director John Daly Goodwin, who leads the ensemble in a May 1 concert to close out its season. The evening welcomes soloists Joyce El Khoury, Elizabeth Batton, Michele Angelini and Daniel Mobbs.

The 8 PM Carnegie Hall performance will offer Mozart's Requiem, Leonard Bernstein's Chichester Psalms and James DeMars' Tito's Say.

Mozart's Requiem is one of the most popular and beloved works in the choral repertoire. The work was commissioned by Count Franz Walsegg zu Stuppach (who had the intention of passing it off as his own) to honor the memory of his wife. At the time of his death, Mozart had completed the "Introit" and "Kyrie," leaving only the chorus parts and a bass line with occasional remarks to indicate the orchestration for the rest of the movements up through the beginning of the "Lacrymosa." His student Franz Xaver Süssmayr assumed the task of realizing the sketches and completing the work. There have been many debates and discussions surrounding the piece ever since; and although Mozart may have died in poverty, his musical legacy – and particularly his Requiem – has brought outstanding beauty and richness to Western culture like few other composers.

Described by The New York Times as “one of Mr. Bernstein's most irresistible works,” Chichester Psalms is a piece of great strength and beauty. Commissioned in 1965 by the Dean of Chichester in England, the vibrant Chichester Psalms is one of the composer’s most successful and accessible works on religious texts, contrasting spiritual austerity with impulsive rhythms in a contemplation of peace. Each of the three movements features a setting, in Hebrew, of one complete psalm, along with a verse or more of a second.

James DeMars' Tito's Say is a four-movement cantata set to texts by Alberto "Tito" Rios. This engaging work was commissioned by the Arizona Choral Arts Society and received its world premiere in 1989 under the baton of New York Choral Society’s Music Director, John Daly Goodwin. The final movement, "Ventura and Clemente," is a rollicking account of the courtship of two young Mexican lovers and is representative of the entire piece.

In the following interview, Goodwin discusses the upcoming performance and chats a little bit about his own tastes and interests:

So you’re leading the New York Choral Society in a program that features the legendary Mozart Requiem. As a conductor, do you find that your approach to an epic masterpiece such as this differs at all from that of other choral works?

JG: Of course, every piece of music has its own unique set of characteristics that must be addressed during its preparation, and the Mozart Requiem is no exception. One thing that sets this great work apart is the particular circumstance of its genesis, including many misconceptions. Part of my preparation of the

NYCS for a performance of the Requiem includes putting the piece into a historical and musical context. There are also many considerations that remain constant from work to work, such as intonation, choral blend, healthy production, etc.

The Requiem is paired with Bernstein's Chichester Psalms, a piece that The New York Choral Society first performed under the baton of Bernstein himself at the opening of the New York City Ballet's American Music Festival in 1988!

JG: Our performance of Chichester Psalms on May 1st will be the eighth time we have prepared and produced the piece in NYC since 1970, including a memorable performance under Lenny himself in 1988. We have performed the work on tour in China, in Israel, and we will be bringing it on tour to Mexico this summer. Although it was commissioned by an English Cathedral, Chichester Psalms is a quintessentially New York piece of music and it is wholly appropriate that the New York Choral Society makes it such a central part of its programming.

You conducted the world premiere of James DeMars' *Tito's Say* in 1989 with the Arizona Choral Arts Society, and now, 21 years later, you're presenting the work at Carnegie Hall. How would you describe this work to those who aren't familiar with it?

JG: I fell in love with this work the first time I saw Jim's score in 1989 and my enthusiasm for it has continued to grow over the years. *Tito's Say* is a four movement cantata featuring texts by the acclaimed Arizona poet, Alberto (Tito) Rios, who is known for an insightful "magical realism" infused with the border town imagery of his youth. The poems provide four aspects of love and life; from the gritty twist of a cheating spouse to the poignant reflections of old age, the sensual flirtations of tango and finally the imagined childhood love of his grandparents Ventura and Clemente. Jim DeMars' music is spectacular, sexy and a lot of fun. The singers in the NYCS are loving the piece and we can't wait to share it with our audience!

What is one of the most memorable choral programs you've conducted, and why?

JG: I am often asked a similar question, "What is your favorite piece of music to conduct?" My answer to that question truthfully is whatever I happen to be working on at the time! I am blessed to have had the opportunity to conduct many of the great works in the choral/orchestral canon in performances that have included singers that I count among my closest friends. That some of these concerts have taken place in Carnegie Hall, and in Notre Dame or Chartres in France, or in San Marco in Venice, makes these memories even more special. Every such experience is unique and precious to me.

Describe a classical performance you've attended that you will never forget.

JG: My wife and I heard a magnificent Mahler "Resurrection Symphony" in Carnegie Hall just last month, whetting our appetite for our upcoming performances of that great score in Mexico in July. Performances of the Beethoven Missa Solemnis and Berlioz Requiem conducted by Robert Shaw are seared into my mind. One of the most moving performances I have ever witnessed

was the beautiful children of the Young People's Chorus of New York City singing "New York New York" on the stage of Carnegie Hall in December of 2001 before a wounded and fragile audience of New Yorkers.

Any specific recording, of any genre, that you couldn't live without?

JG: I cannot imagine a world without the sound of people singing and I love to hear it live. I feel less passionately about recordings because they never change. When I listen to recordings for anything other than research, I gravitate toward classic rock and roll.

If you were not a conductor, what profession would you see yourself in?

JG: I love to cook for my family and friends, so I imagine I could enjoy cooking for small groups of people. I supported myself for a while doing apartment renovation work and actually enjoyed that a lot, especially the demolition part!



APPENDIX B

JAMES DEMARS, WORKS LIST

*2010 Tito's Say*, (25') for Bass and Soprano soloists with Chorus and Orchestra; revised and re-orchestrated for brass, percussion and strings, performed by the New York Choral Society conducted by Jack Goodwin at Carnegie Hall, New York on May 1, 2010.

*2009 Intermezzo*, (7') one movement for string orchestra for I solisti di Zagreb. Premiered in Zagreb by I Solisti on April 26, 2009 at the Zagreb Conservatory of music.

*2008 Provence*, (5') a setting of Nabakov's poetry for coloratura soprano and string orchestra. Premiered by coloratura soprano Julia Kogan and Jeffery Meyer conducting the St. Petersburg Chamber Philharmonic on December 25th, 2009 at Glinka Hall in St. Petersburg, Russia.

*2008 Concerto for Violin and String Orchestra*, (25') arranged for I solisti di Zagreb. Premiered in Zagreb by I Solisti on April 26, 2009 at the Zagreb Conservatory of music.

*2007 Guadalupe* (80') An opera in two acts. For dramatic soprano, tenor, high soprano, bass, baritone, chorus and chamber orchestra. This work features the Native American cedar flute. Premiered May 16, 2008 at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Mesa, Arizona.

*2006 Native Drumming* (25') arrangement for Wind Symphony and Pow-wow Drum Ensemble. Performed by the Black Lodge Singers (and composer) and the Arizona State University Wind Ensemble conducted by Gary Hill.

*2006 This* for Solo Tuba and Recording (also for Tuba ensemble).

*2006 Sonata for Cello and Piano* (20') arrangement of vln. Sonata for Thomas Landschoot; premiered by Thomas Landschoot and pianist Caio Pagano at Arizona State University in May 2007.

*2005 Tapestry IX for Unaccompanied Violin* (10') commissioned and premiered by Boro Martinic-Jercic, 2007.

*2005 Sonata for Violin and Piano* (20') commissioned by Boro Martinic-Jercic premiered with pianist, Walter Cosand in 2007.

*2004 Violin Concerto* (25') commissioned by the Phoenix Symphony for Boro Martinic-Jercic.

*2003 Quartet for Piano and Strings* for piano, violin, viola and cello (14') premiered by Caio Pagano, piano, Jonathan Swartz, violin, Nancy Buck, viola, and Thomas Landschoot, cello.

2003 *Crow Wing* (5') arranged for oboe, English Horn and Native Flute, premiered by R. Carlos Nakai 2003.

2003 *Lux aeterna* for Boys Choir (3 part arrangement of *Lux aeterna* from in *An American Requiem*).

2002 *Desert Songs II* for Boys Choir (9') commissioned and premiered by the Phoenix Boys Choir, 2003.

2001 *Blessingway Songs* (15') commissioned by Canyon Records and premiered by mezzo, Isola Jones and Cedar flute R.C. Nakai with Gor Hohvanisian, viola and cello.

2000 *Arias for Brass Quintet* (12') commissioned and premiered by the St. Louis Brass Quintet.

2000 *Balkis Sketches* (20') a mezzo solo, tenor/mezzo duet and sop., mez., ten. trio. For Isola Jones, premiered at Phoenix Opera Board Meeting and an Art Renaissance Foundation chamber concert.

2000 *Sabar Concerto* (25') a concerto for Senegalese drum and dance ensemble with orchestra premiered by the Phoenix Symphony, Phoenix, Arizona.

1999 *Sabar*, a one act opera for African drum ensemble, chamber orchestra with Soprano, Mezzo-soprano and Baritone performed by ASU students with native African drummers conducted by the composer at the Scottsdale Center for the Arts, Scottsdale, AZ.

1999 *Concerto for Flute and Chamber Orchestra* (15') a concerto for flute; performed by Linda Lasansky with the Catalina Chamber Orchestra conducted by Enrique Lasansky (this is an revised transcription of *Big Two Hearted River* ). performed in Tucson, AZ.

1998 *Big Two Hearted River* (20') a concerto for alto flute; performed by Eric Hoover with members of the Phoenix Symphony conducted by the composer.

1997 *Concerto for Piano* (30') for Caio Pagano; premiered in August 1999 in Santos, Brazil.

1997 *Quartet* (14') for piano, cello, violin and clarinet performed by Robert Spring, Natalie Lipkina, Alexandre Debrus and the composer in Biarritz, France.

1997 *Dedicaçe* (5' ) for piano and horn (or cello) performed by Toni-Marie Montgomery and Tom Bacon; the cello version was premiered by Alexandre Debrus and the composer in Biarritz, France.

1996 *Native Drumming* (25') a concerto for Native American pow-wow singers and orchestra performed by the Black Lodge Singers and the Phoenix Symphony conducted by Clotilde Otranto.

1995 *Anthem for the United Nations* (14') an anthem for chorus, narrator and chamber orchestra performed by the Classical Philharmonic (San Leandro, CA) conducted by Lawrence Kohl.

1995 *Sonata* (23') for piano duet performed by Chantal de Salaberry and Walter Cosand.

1994 *An American Requiem* (70') an ecumenical mass for SATB soloists, chorus and orchestra performed by the ASU choirs, soloists and members of the Phoenix Symphony conducted by the composer.

1993 *Two World Concerto* (30') a concerto for Native American Cedar Flute and orchestra performed by R. Carlos Nakai and the Phoenix Symphony conducted by James Sedares.

1993 *Crow Wing* (5') for saxophone and cedar flute performed by Michael Hester and R. Carlos Nakai.

1993 *Spirit Call* (15') for piano, cello, percussion, saxophone and cedar flute performed by the Tos ensemble.

1993 *Lake That Speaks* (7') for piano, cello, percussion, and cedar flute performed by the Tos ensemble. 1991 *Two World Overture* (13') an orchestral overture at Symphony Hall, Phoenix, AZ; performed by the Phoenix Symphony conducted by James Sedares.

1990 *Ventura & Clemente* (12') an overture for symphonic band performed by the ASU Symphonic Band conducted by the composer.

1990 *Tapestry VI* (10') for euphonium, koto and shakuhachi flute performed by Daniel Perantoni at the International Tuba and Euphonium Conference, Saporu, Japan.

1989 *Two World Symphony* (35') for narrator, soprano soloist, cedar flute, African drums and chamber orchestra commemorating the Bicentennial of the French Revolution featuring by R. Carlos Nakai, Mark Sunkett, and Judy May, conducted by the composer.

1989 *Tito's Say* (30') a cantata for soprano and bass soloists, chorus and orchestra performed by the Arizona Choral Arts Society conducted by Jack Goodwin.

1989 *Night Speech II* (5') for mezzo soprano, koto, and tuba performed by Daniel Perantoni, Yukido Takagaki and Judy May in Saporu, Japan.

1989 *The Colors Fall* (3') for silver flute and cedar flute performed by Eric Hoover and R. C. Nakai.

1988 *Tapestry V* (10') for cello, alto sax., perc., cedar flute and synthesizer performed by the Tos ensemble.

1988 *Gila Bend* (13') for string quartet performed by the Sartori String Quartet.

1987 *Neon Babylon* (12') for saxophone quartet performed by the Joseph Wytko Saxophone Quartet.

1987 *The Prophet* (25') a cantata for soprano soloist, chorus and orchestra performed by the Arizona Choral Arts Society, conducted by the composer.

1986 *Spirit Horses* (22') a concerto for cedar flute, percussion, synthesizer and string orchestra performed by R.

1986 *Tapestry III* (9') for Tuba and electronic tape performed by Daniel Perantoni.

1985 *Concerto for Saxophone and Chamber Orchestra* (22') performed by Anita Wright and the Nouveau West Chamber Orchestra conducted by Terri Williams.

1984 *Ammo* (10') a performance art collaboration choreographed Sybil Huskey performed by the Tos ensemble. 1984 *Desert Songs* (22') six songs for soprano, cello, alto saxophone, piano and percussion performed by Beverly Claflin and the Tos ensemble.

1983 *The Seventh Healing Song of John Joseph (Blue)* (9'), for flute and tape premiered by Eric Hoover at Eastman School of Music, Rochester, NY.

1983 *Tapestry II* (10') for solo piano premiered by Caio Pagano.

1982 *Tapestry I* (12') for solo harpsichord performed by John Metz.

1981 *Elevation* (14') for soprano, cello, piano and optional percussion performed by the Zeitgeist ensemble.

1980 *THIS (a contracrostipunctus)* (8') for three keyboard mallet instruments, amplified cello, saxophone with performed by the Zeitgeist ensemble at Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN.

1980 *Passages* (22') a symphony performed by the St. Paul Civic Symphony conducted by Edouard Forner. 1979 *Premonitions of Christopher Columbus* (15') for saxophone, two pianos and two percussionists performed by the Zeitgeist ensemble.

1978 *MRI-973 (Images of Conflict)* (15') for cello, piano and percussion  
performed by Camilla Heller and the Zeitgeist ensemble at Walker Art Center,  
Minneapolis, MN.

1977 *Elegy for August Noon* (10') performed by the St. Paul Civic Symphony,  
conducted by Edouard Forner.

APPENDIX C  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

**To:**  
Gregory Gentry MUS

**From:**  
Mark Roosa, Chair Soc Beh IRB

**Date:** 01/25/2012

**Committee Action: Exemption Granted**

**IRB Action Date:** 01/25/2012

**IRB Protocol #:** 1201007309

**Study Title:**  
Dissertation on Tito's Say by Dr. James DeMars

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(2).

It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.



APPENDIX D

JAMES DEMARS BIOGRAPHY

James DeMars was born in 1952 in a small town called Wadena about 150 miles northwest of Minneapolis, in Minnesota. He and his family moved shortly after his birth to a nearby town called Battle Lake, where he spent his formative years. Being somewhat isolated, the DeMars family still made a point to fill their home with music. Everyone in the household played an instrument. James's brother played the organ, and James himself played the piano and trombone. The trombone was the only other instrument the family owned, so having little choice, James played it in the Battle Lake High School band. He also enjoyed singing and participated in the school choirs. Even at a young age, James DeMars was writing and improvising music. He began writing music in sixth grade, and together with a good friend would improvise entire concerts. Despite the limited resources associated with living in a very small town, he enjoyed a quality education with good schools and access to music competitions and programs offered by traveling around the state of Minnesota.<sup>75</sup>

James's parents owned a small collection of classical music recordings, but because the town at that time was fairly isolated, finding and purchasing new recordings of classical music would require a twenty-minute drive to a nearby town. James satisfied his curiosity about classical music by choosing a composer, about one per week, and listening to all of the music of that one composer he could hear. Among all of the composer's recordings he spent time studying, two of them made a particular impression. They were Prokofiev and Stravinsky. He recalled hearing Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* for the first time, and interestingly, noted his embarrassment. He felt it was so childish and wild, he did not think that adults would write such embarrassingly wild things, although he also admitted that changing views come with maturity. The whole classical music world was like a dream to him. What he had known about great orchestral music throughout his entire childhood had come from records. He did not hear a live orchestra until he was eighteen years old, and when he finally did, the experience thrilled him. Seeing and hearing proof of its beauty, the proof that something so beautiful and perfect could actually exist, moved him to tears.<sup>76</sup>

Although James harbored a deep love for music, he attended Macalester College as a Mathematics and Psychology major. Macalester College is located in St. Paul, Minnesota, which is a very large city in comparison to DeMars's hometown of Battle Lake. He had some difficulty adjusting to city life, and after dealing with a very painful personal tragedy in his early time there, he found it difficult to focus on his studies. At the encouragement of his father, DeMars was to stay away from music and focus on his more "serious" schooling. Despite that, DeMars was sneaking piano lessons at the school. He found that the piano practice room offered him solace and comfort, and turned out to be one of the only places where he could think, close the door, leave the world outside, and heal. If it had not been for these life events and the comfort he found through

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<sup>75</sup> James DeMars, interview by author, Tempe, AZ, February 3, 2012.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

music, James DeMars might have been a psychologist rather than a composer. Even though his father did not have much interest in James pursuing music as a career, he had a change of heart, and decided to support him through the completion of his music degree.<sup>77</sup>

While pursuing his Bachelor's degree in music, DeMars studied conducting and piano. He was composing all along, and even though he had serious interest in it, he was not sure that a person could make a real living as a composer, so he focused on conducting. In 1974 he went out to Los Angeles to begin work on his Masters degree in conducting at University of Southern California, Los Angeles (USC). He began his conducting studies with Daniel Lewis and Hans Behr, a large program with many other conducting students. The highly competitive cut-throat atmosphere soured him to conducting, and when one of his professors decided that he had to re-learn all of his repertoire up to that point, he became very discouraged and lost the drive to complete the conducting track.<sup>78</sup>

While DeMars was coping with his lack of enthusiasm for conducting, a young composer named Morten Lauridsen, on the composition faculty at USC, approached him and mentioned that his transcript said he composed music. DeMars replied, "yeah, but you can't get a job in that," to which Lauridsen replied, "well, I did!" Lauridsen thereby encouraged DeMars to work on his composition degree, urging that if he could get enough music compiled for a recital, they would accept him into the composition program, and he would be able to finish. Around the same time, DeMars' father had called him from Minnesota informing him that Dominick Argento was teaching at the University of Minnesota and had won a Pulitzer Prize (1975). He suggested a return back to Minnesota to study with Argento. James was relieved to leave Los Angeles and take his father's advice.<sup>79</sup>

James DeMars studied at USC for one year, and did not complete his degree in conducting, however, he has conducted performances of his own music many times throughout his career. Although DeMars was accepted into the composition program at USC, he was happy to return to his home state of Minnesota and the University of Minnesota, where he received a meticulous education with very specific course offerings, based heavily on fundamentals such as score reading. As a Teaching Assistant, DeMars honed his skills in ear training, an area where he had been previously insecure. He built his confidence in music and composition by building his skills in the fundamentals of music.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> James Demars, interview by author, Tempe, AZ, February 3, 2012.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

DeMars loved working with Dominick Argento. He was drawn to the lyricism of his music, and the fact that it was enjoyable to sing. One of the most important aspects of composition for DeMars is that the music is enjoyable to sing or play, something he learned from working with Argento. He continued studying there until he completed his Masters, followed by his Doctoral degree in Music Composition and Theory, which he completed in 1981.<sup>81</sup>

While at Minnesota, DeMars participated in choirs under the baton of Dale Warland, and was also in the company of some notable classmates, composers Libby Larsen, Stephen Paulus, and Michael Shelly. While Libby Larsen and Stephen Paulus were forming the Minnesota Composer's Forum, James was involved as a pianist with an avante-garde ensemble called Zeitgeist. His involvement with this group led him to his current faculty position at Arizona State University, where he has worked for more than thirty years.<sup>82</sup>

When DeMars arrived in Phoenix, he assumed he would only stay for a short while. But once he saw how much both the city and the University were growing, he decided to stay. After realizing some difficulty finding performing ensembles for his compositions at the University, DeMars decided to create his own performing ensemble called Tos. After he began performing with this ensemble in the Phoenix area, he was contacted by a man named Richard Romero, who initiated the commission and creation of *Tito's Say*.<sup>83</sup>

James DeMars has written a variety of compositions for many different combinations of instruments and voices. Some of his best known works are *An American Requiem* (1975), for chorus, soloists, and orchestra; *Guadalupe* (an opera in two acts), *Sabar*, a concerto for African Drums and Orchestra; and *Two World Concerto*, for Native American flute and orchestra.<sup>84</sup>

When asked about his style, he admits he may have gone in two different directions, although he continuously tries to pull things toward the center. One of the directions that seems evident is that he often incorporates music of various ethnicities, or folk music, with classical idioms. Even though this may seem like a prominent style trait, he maintains that his music is about singability and pleasure. He writes melodies that are mostly modal in nature, because they feel good to him and they take him back to the joy of singing that he experienced in his childhood. The other compositional direction is that of a more traditional, standard repertoire, including his *Violin Concerto* and his *Piano Concerto*.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> James DeMars, interview by author, Tempe, AZ, February 3, 2012.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

He admitted that for a while he was an adamant avante-gardist, writing pieces with justifications for every single note. His teacher, Argento, would ask him to sing it, and if he couldn't, Argento might say, "well, the counterpoint looks a little odd, why don't you play it at the piano?" And in some cases he was not able to play things he wrote at the piano either. These lessons encouraged him to write more melodically, that it was acceptable, and possibly even desirable to write melodies, a concept DeMars struggled with at first. Along with his modal melodies, DeMars prefers rapidly modulating harmonies, sometimes polytonalities, sometimes Impressionistic chord structures, and sometimes simple harmonies that help to emphasize the mood or message of the piece. He does not particularly like upper tertian harmonies, he thinks they sound a little too jazzy or slick. His overall ideal for composing is that the music brings pleasure to the performers and well as the listeners, finding the innate joy in music that makes a person finish a performance and then immediately want to do it again.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> James DeMars, interview by author, Tempe, AZ, February 3, 2012.

APPENDIX E  
ALBERTO RIOS BIOGRAPHY

Alberto Rios was born in the border town of Nogales, AZ in 1952. He describes it as “a different time in space, a different place.” His father was born in Tapachula in Chiapas, on the border of Guatemala, the southern end of Mexico, and his mother was born in Lancashire, England. Alberto Rios does not look at all like his father who had very dark skin and black hair, in fact he looks much more like his mother. His parents had found themselves on the border, which is where Alberto “Tito” grew up. Because of the varied backgrounds of his parents, he lived in a house full of languages, where there was always more than one way to say something, to eat something, to think something, or anything else. The Border for him had become, as he realized in retrospect, a metaphor that later helped him become the writer he was going to be, in that there was never just one way to say something. He believes that as a poet, he had been given one of the greatest gifts. Speaking different languages, obeying different laws depending literally upon where a person stands, all of this helps to understand that creativity is the order of the day, not order.<sup>87</sup>

Rios clearly remembers when he started writing. It was in second grade. What transpired had nothing to do with writing directly, but writing is evidence of these events. Rios was a good student, primarily because of the influence of his mother who had English in the household. He always finished his homework more quickly than others. He was excited about the things he was learning in school. For example, when he learned about an explorer, he wanted to immediately go out and explore the world! But a second grader is not even allowed to cross the street without holding someone’s hand. Young children are often so excited about what they learn, and the activity is often followed by something like nap time, the exact opposite of what a child wants to do when he or she is excited about learning. So young Alberto took to daydreaming, what he called the “egregious second grade crime.”<sup>88</sup>

Because of daydreaming, Alberto got in trouble and his parents were called in for a meeting with the teacher. This meeting is significant because Alberto was very frightened about what might happen to him. His parents were not told specifically what he had done before they arrived at the meeting. In the 1950’s, parents took teacher meetings very seriously, and this was no exception. They were seated across from the teacher in those small second-grade chairs, and Alberto was also there, seated at the back of the room. His teacher began by saying what a good student he was. His parents, perplexed, wondered what he had done. The teacher slowly stated, “well...he was...daydreaming.” They looked at each other and said, “daydreaming?” And the teacher repeated, “daydreaming.” A word which became like a mantra, carrying all the meaning it needed to carry. So

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<sup>87</sup> Alberto Rios, interview by author, Tempe, AZ, February 7, 2012

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

his parents said, “OK,” and they said goodbye to the teacher, and the meeting was over.<sup>89</sup>

Driving home in the car, Alberto remembered feeling so small in the giant football-field like back seat, petrified of what his punishment might be. He thought he might get spanked or worse. His parents said nothing on the ride home. When they arrived at the house, his mother began cooking dinner, and he thought “that’s what they are going to do, no dinner for me.” But they had dinner and still nothing was said. After dinner, neighbors would come to the house to watch one of the only televisions in town, which they owned, and still everything went on as normal. Alberto was waiting for some kind of explanation or punishment, or something, but it never came. He admitted that looking back on these events, the silence of his parents surrounding this issue was one of the best gifts they could ever give him. They had nothing to say to him, so they did not say anything. He had done nothing wrong, nothing to deserve punishment, nor nothing to reward. It was a disconcerting feeling as a child because things seem so black and white, right or wrong. It was the first time he had to decide something for himself and did not know how, it was difficult. The fact that his parents did not tell him whether his actions were right or wrong was unsettling, but it opened up something. It opened up the possibility that the world was not about right or wrong. It started him doing his very own thinking, which led to writing.<sup>90</sup>

Rios finished high school in Nogales, graduating in 1970 with a class of about one hundred students. The freshman class had nearly one thousand students in it, and the decline in attendance over four years was primarily because of students dropping out for various reasons. It was not a college preparatory environment. Rios did not really know how to go about attending college, but he did know that Tucson was nearby and the University of Arizona was there. Because he had done so well in school, he was offered a scholarship to attend. Although he had been writing as a child, writing was not anything he ever considered as a career path. He arrived at The University of Arizona not knowing what his major would be, so he was assigned an advisor. His advisor’s field was Political Science, and after going through the many possibilities for a major, in alphabetical order, Alberto had been sold on the Political Science degree. In fact, most of his friends also became majors in the same field as their advisors. He took mainly general education courses for the first two years of school. In his junior year, when it was time to really focus on the courses within his major, a revolution was happening - computers had come to the college. He now had the ability to look up courses and choose what he wanted to take. He spent the summer with his friends trying to find that mythical and elusive “easiest classes they could find.” So in the search for “easy” classes, he came across a listing for English 9, Introduction to Poetry Writing, but the title had nothing to do with his choice to schedule the class. It was the last two words in the course description,

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<sup>89</sup> Alberto Rios, interview by author, Tempe, AZ, February 7, 2012.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.



“No Final.” Introduction to Fiction Writing said the same thing, so he signed up for both courses, and therefore began his writing career.<sup>91</sup>

He feels he would have come to writing somehow anyway, but attending these courses shifted the entire paradigm of what school meant to him. School had always come at him, and he knew how to “play school.” He knew where he could go to look up the answers, but now the answers had to come from within. He was in a place that was both familiar (second grade) and scary, with no real answers, but he knew he was in the right place. Rios finished his Bachelor’s degree in both tracks, poetry and fiction writing.<sup>92</sup>

When faced with finding a job, he struggled to know what he might be able to do, so he decided to attend Law School. Again crediting his Nogales background, he walked over to the U of A Law School and asked to sign up for classes. They informed him that he had to take a variety of exams and apply for the school first, so he decided to get another degree in Psychology while preparing to attend Law School. He was soon accepted, and began his studies in law. He was capable of everything required of him to be successful at law, but he absolutely hated doing it, so he left law school and returned to writing, earning his MFA degree in 1979. Looking back on these events, he realized he did not quit law school, but he had quit writing, and had finally come back to where he belonged.<sup>93</sup>

Shortly after graduating with his MFA, he had won some major awards, one of them the Walt Whitman Award for writing. In the years 1979 to 1982, he traveled around Arizona as part of the “Poets in Our Schools” (PITS) program. In 1982, Arizona State University contacted him about the possibility of becoming a faculty member. He accepted and has been working there for thirty years, and became a Regents Professor in 1994, one of the youngest ever to do so. During his career he has garnered acclaim as a poet and public speaker. He has published 10 books and chapbooks of poetry, most recently *The Dangerous Shirt* (2009); *The Theater of Night* (2006), winner of the 2007 PEN/Beyond Margins Award; and *The Smallest Muscle in the Human Body* (2002), which was a finalist for the National Book Award.<sup>94</sup>

Rios’ writing style is often referred to by critics as Magical Realism, a primarily Latin-American literary phenomenon in which fantastic or mythical elements are incorporated into otherwise realistic fiction. He would classify his own style somewhat differently, calling it “Cultural Realism.” He describes it as objects having a life of their own. In English, a person might say something like “I dropped the book.” But in a romance language, the same idea might be phrased

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<sup>91</sup> Alberto Rios, Interview by author, Tempe, AZ, February 7, 2012.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

as “the book has fallen from me.” The romance language gives the book some responsibility, while the English language is subservient to the “Great I.” Rios believes that in that sense, the English language is impoverished. Romance languages also genderize objects (“el” and “la”), which opens up the possibility that all objects have life, and in Rios’ work, he exploits the potential that objects have for doing something beyond what they are expected to do, that the world is alive with itself.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Alberto Rios, interview by author, Tempe, AZ, February 7, 2012.

