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Commercialism, Accessibility, Popularity, and Originality in American High-Art Music: Richard Danielpour, a Case Study

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COMMERCIALISM, ACCESSIBILITY, POPULARITY, AND ORIGINALITY
IN AMERICAN HIGH-ART MUSIC:
RICHARD DANIELPOUR, A CASE STUDY

By
RUTH RUGGLES AKERS

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation considers the life and music of Richard Danielpour (b. 1956) and how they intersect with the issues of commercialism, accessibility, popularity, and originality in twentieth- and twenty-first century American art music. It also explores Danielpour’s motivations for composing and the position of his music in American culture within the context of the changes that have occurred—particularly in the last twenty to thirty years—in the criteria for assessing musical value and meaning in American high art.

Much of the music being written and performed well into the third quarter of the twentieth century was completely unintelligible to a majority of concert goers, and a huge gap had developed between classical composers and their public. Richard Danielpour is one of many composers in the late twentieth- and early twenty-first centuries who have sought to bridge that gap, in part by aligning themselves with the tradition of writing music that is emotionally evocative and musically valid. Danielpour’s concern for reaching his audience underscores his sincere desire to be appreciated artistically and understood intellectually.

Danielpour writes in an accessible, neo-romantic style that embraces tonality despite frequent dissonances. Some critics suggest that he borrows too much from others, but his music possesses many distinctive qualities. In addition, Danielpour’s detailed programs help listeners relate to music that they might not otherwise understand.

Of the ten recordings of his music, the Pittsburgh Symphony’s CD of his Concerto for Orchestra was nominated for a Grammy in the category of “classical contemporary composition.” Yo-Yo Ma’s recording that included Danielpour’s first cello concerto won three Grammies. Frequent commissions from major orchestras and well-known soloists indicate the degree of popularity that Danielpour has achieved in the classical musical world. Although this may not equal the commercial success of pop composers, Danielpour can still be considered financially
successful: in an age when many contemporary composers struggle to be heard at all, Danielpour’s compositions receive multiple performances here and abroad.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

This dissertation considers the life and music of Richard Danielpour (b. 1956) and how they intersect with the issues of commercialism, popularity, accessibility, and originality in twentieth- and twenty-first century American art music. The importance placed on the latter two concepts and the desirability of having a composition deemed “popular” have fluctuated throughout the course of music history in the United States. According to historian Daniel Kingman, prior to about 1830 there was no clear dividing line between popular and classical music in this country. The general consensus was that music needed only to be functional and attractive. During the Jacksonian era (1829-1837), the distinction between the two styles became more apparent. Over time, compositions that were morally uplifting came to be known as “good” music, and the term “popular” was applied to music that was considered merely entertaining. The gulf widened, and by the end of the Civil War, the new middle and upper classes, hoping to improve their cultural status, began to suggest that fine art should be educational and enlightening.¹

Exponents of an abstract high art had developed lofty goals; composers of art music were expected to produce works of considerable substance that would edify their listeners. Writing a composition that was merely pleasing to the public was no longer sufficient. Originality and complexity became goals for many of the high brow musical establishment in the first decades of the 1900s. As a young man in his twenties studying in Paris, Aaron Copland wrote a letter to his family dated 3 August 1921: “Sad to say, my composition made quite a hit; I say it is sad,

because I can’t get over the idea that if a thing is popular it can’t be good.”

His lament reflected a prevailing belief among many musicians and critics that if a piece of serious music was enjoyed by a large audience it must not possess artistic validity. Many composers consciously strove to create works that challenged the ears and the intellect. As music historian Richard Crawford concludes, “Since the 1910s, exploring new musical territory has often been considered a higher artistic goal for a composer than communicating with general audiences.”

The more “modern” music became, the greater the distance between composers and their public grew.

Charles Ives, a prolific composer in the first two decades of the twentieth century, made a living in insurance. His music was neither accessible nor popular at the time. Despite his practice of borrowing from other sources, his compositions were original, among other reasons, because of the unique manner in which he used the quoted material. He assimilated American musical resources such as hymns and popular tunes into his own music, but his manipulation of the familiar into a sometimes barely recognizable shape produced puzzlement and misunderstanding. Ives believed that, given time, audience taste could be expanded. His contention was that the general public, if unchallenged by thoughtful composers, would find that its ears had become “flabbier and flabbier.”

In Essays before a Sonata, Ives wrote, “Beauty in music is too often confused with something that lets the ears lie back in an easy chair. . . . When a new or unfamiliar work is accepted as beautiful on its first hearing, its fundamental quality is one that tends to put the mind to sleep. A narcotic is not always unnecessary, but it is seldom a basis of progress—that is, wholesome evolution in any creative experience.”

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2Aaron Copland and Vivian Perlis, Copland: 1900 through 1942 (New York: St. Martin’s/Marek, 1984), 51. Copland does not specify which of several early piano pieces he was referring to, although two paragraphs later he mentions Jacques Durand approaching him about publishing The Cat and the Mouse.


4Charles Ives, Essays before a Sonata, and Other Writings (New York: Norton, 1962), 98.

5Ibid., 97-8.
exclamation—“My God! What has sound got to do with music!”—did not make sense to many who equate music with sound. His refusal to be confined by existing musical conventions meant that the majority of his music languished in a barn for forty years.

Composer Henry Cowell (1897-1965) appreciated Ives’s musical creativity even if the larger public did not. He became the elder composer’s most ardent champion. Cowell was also an experimenter, and his compositional innovations included tone clusters and playing directly on the strings inside the piano. The idea of playing existing instruments in unusual ways was just a starting point for others. American composer Harry Partch (1901-1974) ultimately created his own instruments from unexpected materials in order to realize his musical goals. Large numbers of listeners did not know how to react to such novelty. Challenges to musical practice had begun as early as the mid-nineteenth century, but they accelerated in the early decades of the twentieth century with concepts such as atonality and the twelve-tone method. But “flabby ears” expected tonality; they preferred traditional instruments used in conventional ways and tunes that could be recognized and sung.

Many composers in the early twentieth century began to use the rich language of the American folk culture. Copland spoke for these colleagues when he recalled: “Our concern was not with the quotable hymn or spiritual: we wanted to find a music that would speak of universal things in a vernacular of American speech rhythms.” Only five years after Copland had expressed dismay about the popularity of his student piece, he consciously embraced the popular idiom of jazz in his Piano Concerto (1926). Influential music critic Paul Rosenfeld, who was considered “one of the defining figures in American modernism,” disparaged jazz. In one column, he wrote that it was “impregnated with a superficial spirit,” but he continued by

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6 Ibid., 84.
complimenting Copland on the manner in which he integrated jazz elements and related them to the past.  

Copland’s concerto appeared just two years after George Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue*, which also combined popular music with a classical genre: an improvisatory clarinet introduction and jazz chords and rhythms define the loosely-formed piano concerto. Audiences appreciated the *Rhapsody* \(^9\) and *An American in Paris* (1928), but Gershwin’s Tin Pan Alley background caused some reviewers to carp that the mass appeal of his music suggested it had no lasting musical or intellectual merit. Rosenfeld denigrated Gershwin and dismissed popular music as inferior to classical music: “Gershwin himself is assuredly a gifted composer of the lower, unpretentious order; yet there is some question whether his vision permits him an association with the artists.” \(^11\) Rosenfeld opined that *An American in Paris* was “deficiently expressive of essences and of ideas, even the lighter, saltier, more comic ones that are the vulgar American composer’s objects, these strings of melodies and rhythm put one in touch with little that is real.” \(^12\)

An anonymous newspaper column from 1927 reflects the concern of Rosenfeld and others: “With no effort at all the listener visualizes a jazz dance hall next door to a poultry yard. . . . It may be that [in time] we shall all agree that Copland’s Piano Concerto and Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue* mark the highwater mark of American composition. Or it may be we shall not.” \(^13\) These critical comments were echoed in subsequent reviews of new works in the

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\(^10\) After the premiere, Paul Whiteman and his band recorded the work for RCA Victor; a million copies were sold. *Rhapsody* premiered in Europe in 1925, and within a decade, the royalties from sheet music, records, and other subsidiary rights earned over a quarter of a million dollars. On the concert stage, the *Rhapsody* has “outstripped any other single contemporary work for frequency of performance.” David Ewen, *A Journey to Greatness* (New York: Holt & Co., 1956), 113-5.

\(^11\) Rosenfeld., 253-4.

\(^12\) Ibid., 259-60.

next two decades. It was as if these writers found it necessary to maintain their distance from hoi polloi.

Rosenfeld, in addition to his crusade against the low art of jazz, proposed that America forge a new music. He applauded innovative ideas and commended Charles Ives: “Artists such as Ives can help enormously to create a democratic society in America. In investing American essences with worth and presenting them with beauty, they help to convey the national idea as it actually relates these warring and still cognate forces . . .”\(^{14}\) Rosenfeld was instrumental in encouraging composers to be more “modern” and to create music that could be considered “high art.”\(^{15}\)

The economic downturn caused by the Great Depression modified this mode of thinking. There followed an increase in populism and a desire to simplify art to make it palatable to larger audiences. The music of Gershwin, Copland, and fellow American Roy Harris challenged the previously held idea that there was little cultural value in folk or popular musics. They composed in an immediately acceptable style, occasionally including familiar tunes or their derivatives. Harris and Copland captured the attention of the American people, the former with his Third Symphony (1939)\(^{16}\) and the latter particularly with the American-themed ballets \textit{Billy the Kid} (1938), \textit{Rodeo} (1942), and \textit{Appalachian Spring} (1944). Copland later elucidated why composers began writing more accessible music:

\begin{quote}
In all the arts the Depression had aroused a wave of sympathy for and identification with the plight of the common man. In music this was combined with the heady wine of suddenly feeling ourselves—the composers, that is—needed as never before. . . . Functional music was in demand as never before in the experience
\end{quote}

\cite{copland} Copland: His Work and Contribution to American Music (New York: Dutton, 1955), 94. Also quoted in Copland and Perlis, 131.

\(^{14}\) Rosenfeld, 248.

\(^{15}\) Ibid. Also, Oja, 262-3.

of our serious composers. Motion-picture and ballet companies, radio stations and schools, film and theater producers discovered us. . . . No wonder we were pleased to find ourselves sought after and were ready to compose in a manner that would satisfy both our collaborators and ourselves.17

During the thirties and forties, concertgoers expressed appreciation for the music of Gian Carlo Menotti and Samuel Barber: works such as Barber’s *Adagio for Strings* (1936) and Menotti’s *The Old Maid and the Thief* (1939) contained lyrical melodies and elicited emotional responses from the audience. The opera brought Menotti celebrity status, reviews about “the new young genius of opera,” and became one of his most popular works.18 Barber’s *Adagio* became the most frequently performed of all his pieces.19 Non-musicians could relate to these compositions and their tuneful melodies at a time when the musical intelligentsia was touting dissonance. A year prior to *Adagio*, the twenty-five year-old Barber explained, “My aim is to write good music that will be comprehensible to as many people as possible, instead of music heard only by small, snobbish musical societies in the large cities. . . . The universal basis of artistic spiritual communication by means of art is through the emotions.”20 Many critics, however, complained about the conservativism and the unabashed romantic emotion. Menotti, in defense of Barber, responded to such criticism: “If Mr. Barber . . . experiments successfully with melodic line and new form, is he not to be praised for his courage? . . . Isn’t it high time that a young David appeared and struck on the forehead that inflated monster which still parades under


the anachronistic name of modern music?"21  Equating audience acceptance with musical mediocrity, however, became even more widespread as the century unfolded.

After World War II, the gap between many classical composers and their potential audience widened still more. Richard Crawford attributed this to the increasing role of academia in determining musical values and creating aesthetic agendas; academia emphasized the intellectual impact of a composition rather than musical expression and audience reception.22 Elliott Carter, who wrote “advanced” works that were difficult both for musicians to perform and listeners to comprehend, protested that it was not his professional duty nor his social responsibility to write interesting or understandable works: “[It was] my First String Quartet, written around 1950, in which I decided for once to write a work very interesting to myself, and to say to hell with the public and with the performers too.”23 Carter’s comment illustrates that some composers did not care if they distanced themselves from everyone.

The very definition of “music” became the subject of debate. John Cage’s experiments with sound in the 1950s led to 4’33”, a work in which ambient sounds constitute the entire substance of the otherwise “silent” composition. Cage explained that he preferred music which was “attractively disinteresting” rather than that which provided “distraction, entertainment, or acquisition of ‘culture.’”24 Cage and other composers including Morton Feldman and Earle Brown also adopted chance methods of composition. Relinquishment of compositional control, coupled with a desire to expand music’s boundaries and stretch imaginations, led to conceptual works such as Composition 1960 No. 9 by minimalist La Monte Young. In Young’s words, this


piece “consists of a straight line drawn on a piece of paper. It is to be performed and comes with
no instructions.”

Much of the new music that was written and performed well into the third quarter of the
century was completely unintelligible to a majority of concert goers. In order to avoid pandering
to an uneducated consumer, composer Milton Babbitt prescribed isolation from the general
population. In 1958 he wrote,

I dare suggest that the composer would do himself and his music
an immediate and eventual service by total, resolute, and voluntary
withdrawal from this public world to one of private performance
and electronic media, with its very real possibility of complete
elimination of the public and social aspects of musical
composition. . . . The composer would be free to pursue a private
life of professional achievement, as opposed to a public life of
unprofessional compromise and exhibitionism.

Not all composers have enjoyed the freedom of elective isolation. Compromise has
played a role in artistic endeavors from the time of the Middle Ages and Renaissance to the
present day. Artists have had to respond to those in control, whether that was the church, the
aristocracy, wealthy patrons, or political regimes. In the 1930s and ‘40s, the Nazi party placed so
many restrictions on composers that many emigrated to the United States in search of personal
and artistic freedom. At the same time Soviet composers such as Sergey Prokofiev and Dmitri
Shostakovich were publicly chastised for not adhering to the official policy of Socialist Realism
which stressed the social responsibility of composers: music should be conservative and
straightforward, appealing to a mass audience. The Communist party, having previously


25La Monte Young, Selected Writings, ed. La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela

Conly (February 1958), 126. The provocative title was provided by the editor who disregarded
Babbitt’s original title, “The Composer as Specialist.”

27Robert P. Morgan, ed. Source Readings in Music History Vol. 7 (New York: Norton,
1998), 127, 129. The reference is to Morgan’s introductions to Pravda’s condemnation of
Shostakovich’s Lady Macbeth and to Prokofiev’s three essays, two from the late 1930s and one
from 1951.
embraced Shostakovich’s *Lady Macbeth*, castigated the opera in a 1936 *Pravda* article, “Chaos Instead of Music.” *Pravda* condemned the “deliberate dissonance,” “fidgety, screaming, neurotic music,” and the composer’s method of “confusing all the sounds in such a way that his music would reach only the effete ‘formalists’ who had lost their wholesome taste.”28 Over the next several decades, the Soviet government continued to exert its influence. Years later, in 1966, American composer Roger Sessions placed such remarks in context: “In providing the public with ‘what it wants’ it will inexorably tend to provide it with what is understood with least effort. Under such conditions, music ceases to be vital experience and becomes a mere amusement or, as totalitarian governments seem to wish, a drug.”29

Reconciling personal artistic integrity with the tastes of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century patrons or the requirements of twentieth-century governments was not easy. Neither is the formidable task that confronts post-World War II composers: pleasing many thousands of consumers and critics if they are to enjoy financial success. No longer members of small, artistic communities, composers since the 1950s have become part of the bigger world of industry—of supply and demand. A modern-day Haydn, without an Esterházy family to isolate, support, and protect him, must produce works that appeal to his publisher’s and recording studio’s public. As Sessions complained, “He [a composer] is asked and even in a sense required to justify his existence as a plausible economic risk; to, as we say, ‘sell’ himself as a possible source of economic profit. Then, having done so, he must produce what is required of him in this sense.”30 Because of the modern obsession with “the bottom line,” many composers have felt the pressure to conform to the tastes of a large and varied musical public. The era of consumerism that has dominated the second half of the twentieth century has placed tremendous importance on the marketability of composers and their art.

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30 Ibid., 86.
The necessity of “making the sale” extended to live performances as well. Programs of modern music did not sell as many tickets as those featuring acknowledged masterworks. Monetary considerations, public apathy, and occasionally outright rejection caused many symphony boards to restrict the programming of contemporary works starting in the 1950s and ‘60s. Thus began a time of crisis in the music world. The livelihood of many musicians depended on their positions in performing ensembles, and more than one hundred orchestras in the United States folded between 1965 and 1971. The ongoing difficulty in securing performances for unknown works convinced a few composers to try to narrow the huge schism between themselves and their public by reconsidering the goals of art music. In a 1963 speech Leonard Bernstein asked fellow composers:

Does anyone care anymore — really care — if any one of us here ever writes another note? You see, our crisis is different from the historical precedents: it is concerned with human expressivity, the mirroring of our inner lives in music. Are we still living in a world where an octave leap upward implies a sense of yearning, or reaching? Or has it become only an intervallic symbol? Do we still base our forms on the concept of struggle and resolution, or are we now condemned to reveal ourselves as forever unresolved?

In the sixties, composers responded to developments in the visual arts with a new style of music. Reducing the quantity and variety of sounds that bombarded a listener, they produced

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33 Leonard Bernstein, Findings (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1982), 214. This speech titled “Varèse, Koussevitzky, and New Music” was delivered 23 May 1963 at the Plaza Hotel, New York City, at an event sponsored by the International Music Fund to pay homage to Edgard Varèse.
simpler works that were more understandable to larger segments of the population. In 1964, Terry Riley (b. 1935) wrote *In C*, a piece comprised of an unspecified series of repetitions of fifty-three short motives. He credited La Monte Young (b. 1935) as his inspiration. Amidst barely perceptible shifting patterns in other instruments, the piano steadily intones eighth-note Cs, creating an almost hypnotic repetitiveness. This type of music, generally known as “minimalism,” condenses composition to the simplest of materials. Steve Reich (b. 1936) and Philip Glass (b. 1937) are both composers associated with this idiom, although neither is fond of the term “minimalism.” Kyle Gann applauds minimalism as “the first musical movement in a hundred years that has threatened to close The Gap.”

Glass spent five years at Juilliard, two of them studying with Vincent Persichetti, who subsequently taught Richard Danielpour. In developing his own style, Glass admits that he purposely sought to bridge the divide between composer and audience: “I wanted to play for thousands of people; I was always interested in a larger audience. . . . I personally knew that I didn’t want to spend my life writing music for a handful of people.” He was just one of a group of serious composers who were beginning to care again, or admit to caring, about audience approval. Glass’s desire for a big audience became reality when his opera *Einstein on the Beach* premiered at the Metropolitan Opera House in 1976.

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34 Gann, 194. As Riley explains it, “I was really impressed with La Monte in every way—his lifestyle, the kind of music he was writing, everything he did was different. . . . The main feature of LaMonte’s music in those days was the total disruption of time as I knew it. It was like being in a time capsule and floating out in space somewhere and waiting for the next event to happen.” K. Robert Schwarz, *Minimalists* (London: Phaidon Press, 1996), 28.

35 Gann, 186.

36 Ibid., 184.


39 Schwarz, *Minimalists*, 137. The Metropolitan Opera House was available for Sunday
these performances himself, however, underscores the continued scarcity of financial support for many musical pursuits.

In a 1978 college lecture, composer/educator/critic Gunther Schuller commented, “By now it must seem obvious to everyone that what we call ‘contemporary music’ (the music of the last few decades) has failed to capture the sustained interest of either lay audiences or professional performers.” He emphasized the necessity of reclaiming the attention of the listening public. Encouraging composers to return to writing music that is memorable and readily intelligible, Schuller observed, “It is not so much about conserving the past, but rather about accessibility and communication with our lost audience.” Connecting with listeners, a non-issue for many composers during much of the twentieth century, was revalued.

The power of music to make an emotional impact, accepted in Western tradition since the time of Plato and Aristotle, had been disregarded by many composers in the twentieth century. As Schuller explained it, composers were “seduced into the pursuit of complexity and intellectualism for their own sakes.” The visceral appeal of music was denied. Schuller recognized this when he asked, “When have we had music that gave you goosepimples, that made you choke with emotion, that brought tears to your eyes?” Much of the distaste for modern music can be traced to composers’ indifference to music’s power to arouse emotions. Danielpour is one of many composers in the late twentieth- and early twenty-first centuries who align themselves with the tradition of writing expressive music. He believes that music can be emotionally evocative and still be artistically valid.

 night rental, so Einstein premiered there on 21 November 1976. Glass sold out two consecutive Sunday nights but lost $10,000 each night.


41 Ibid., 181.

42 Ibid., 178.

43 Ibid., 181.
For some, it was difficult to abandon their position of disengagement. Composer David Del Tredici, whose music from the 1960s and ’70s was described by one critic as “stern, serious, atonal, and disjunct,” surprised himself in 1976 by writing a tonal composition. It was not, however, a sudden flight of fancy that caused him to reconsider tonality: “I fought it all the way. I came of musical age in the 1960s when atonality, whether you happened to like it or not, was widely considered the only viable contemporary musical language. So I had a lot of conditioning to shed.” Del Tredici was afraid of being rejected by his colleagues who might question his sanity for writing tonal music in the ‘70s. A decade later he observed, “Composers now are beginning to realize that if a piece excites an audience, that doesn’t mean it’s terrible. For my generation, it is considered vulgar to have an audience really, really like a piece on a first hearing. But why are we writing music except to move people and to be expressive?”

Composers and critics alike had to modify their stance that only music that was difficult, esoteric, and generally atonal qualified as good music.

As Del Tredici’s mode of expression changed, so did his emotional state. He described his metamorphosis as “kind of a musical nervous breakdown. I thought, ‘I can’t be so tonal in 1976.’ . . . On the other hand, I had to look deeper into that part of my personality which had always done the composing, and it was as excited about the tonic and the dominant as it had always been about retrogrades and inversions. So I went with the excitement factor: I really had no choice.” Other composers also began writing in a more accessible manner. According to cultural historian Nicholas Tawa, the notorious gap between composers and audiences began to shrink in the final quarter of the twentieth century:

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45David Del Tredici, liner notes, *Steps and Haddocks’ Eyes* (New World Records), NWR 80390-2.

46David Del Tredici, notes to *Final Alice* (New York: Boosey & Hawkes, 1984). Quoted by Rockwell, 83.

From the mid-seventies on, art composers took an indisputable step away from serial, atonal, experimental, and other types of radical writing. . . . Their music affirmed a new freedom, the freedom not to write in one or another of the modernistic styles of the past three decades if they so wished; the freedom to jettison rigid credos, musical theories, and what was currently in vogue among extremists; and the freedom to write works whose sounds might prove understandable and please a large music public, rather than confounding and acceptable to just a few other composers, professional reviewers, and to listeners tolerant of unusual sounds.  

It was within this context that Richard Danielpour came of age musically. Although the composer claims that he writes first and foremost for himself, he is always conscious of his audience. In an effort to clarify his music so that others will better understand and appreciate it, Danielpour usually provides detailed programs. He wants listeners to enjoy his music. “If my music has not been understood from the immediate impact of listening, or if I need to explain a piece for 20 minutes, something is dreadfully wrong. Maybe it won’t be understood on every single level at first . . .” Depending on one’s viewpoint, Danielpour’s concern for reaching the public may or may not indicate superficiality in his compositional approach, but it underscores the composer’s sincere desire to be appreciated artistically and understood intellectually. Those who like his music probably do so because it does not venture too far from their preferences for and expectations of tonality, drama, and expressiveness.

Danielpour is comfortable writing in an accessible style. Along with others, he believes that music which is pleasing is not necessarily bad, and music which is not immediately accessible is not necessarily good. In a seminar at the Berkshire Music Center in Tanglewood, Massachusetts, in 1984, composer John Harbison created a series of equations which debunked the prevailing criteria for assessing music:


1. difficult = advanced
2. accessible = conservative
3. advanced = Steve Reich
4. conservative = Roger Sessions
5. difficult = advanced = Steve Reich!
6. accessible = conservative = Roger Sessions!

The notion that “difficult” music is superior is still fading slowly. In 1997 Kyle Gann observed, “There was (and still is) in the modernist mindset a kind of macho disdain for attractive music, a haughty contempt for the lay public, a feeling that one should stand tough against what David Schiff has nonsensically called ‘the tyranny of the audience.’” Why did so many composers distance themselves from their audience when ultimately it is that same body that determines the survival of art? A 2001 Los Angeles Times review criticized Danielpour’s “overriding desire to please listener and performer.” It concluded, “Many critics distrust him.” Suspicious of his popular appeal, critics have accused Danielpour of selling out, of trying too hard to please the public at the expense of originality.

Ned Rorem, the first composer ever elected president of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, argued in 1993, “Originality per se is not a very important issue. Anyone can be original. Anyone can do something nobody else has done, but that’s not necessarily going to make what you do any good. Nothing comes from nothing, everybody is influenced.” Throughout history, compositions have been compared to earlier works. Mozart’s string quartets exhibit Haydn’s influence. Brahms’ First Symphony was nicknamed “Beethoven’s Tenth.”

54 Cliff Eisen and Stanley Sadie, “Mozart, (Johann Chrysostom) Wolfgang Amadeus,”
was not until the twentieth century that the concept of originality became an overriding issue. Musicologist William Rosar suggests that this “cultivated hypersensitivity to originality” developed specifically in the United States. The obsession with novelty also appears to be particularly an American issue.\(^56\)

Inherent in Rorem’s comment on originality is the question of whether it still exists as a primary criterion for musical evaluation in the twenty-first century. In a 1991 essay, American composer Evan Ziporyn explored the validity of the concept of an individual compositional voice. Citing “famous borrowers such as Handel (melodies) . . . and Webern (formal principles),” Ziporyn suggested that the goal of discovering one’s own voice or an original or innovative structural idea is no longer as important as it was for much of the twentieth century. He continued, “Across the globe musicians are begging, borrowing, and stealing from each other at a rapacious pace.”\(^57\) Ziporyn concluded that the boundaries governing musical originality were not clearly delineated. He was influenced in part by composer Chris Maher who argued in 1977 for what he called “Marxist music”—in essence a socialistic co-operative in which composers may borrow anything from anyone and use it in any way they wish.\(^58\)

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\(^{56}\) William H. Rosar, e-mail to AMS list as part of an ongoing discussion of Copland, Bernstein, and originality, 16 June 2003. That Americans are more interested in things that are new may be observed in the custom of Europeans whose homes are several hundred years old and are passed from generation to generation; in the United States, people generally want new homes, and the average homeowner moves every seven years. Bert Sperling, *Cities Ranked and Rated* (Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley, 2004), xi.


\(^{58}\) Ibid., 42. Ziporyn refers to Maher as “composer and massage artist.” I have not found any other information on him despite searching multiple sources.
Other American composers prior to Danielpour were chided for borrowing. In 1925, Lawrence Gilman noted: “Mr. Copland, even though he does present us with some second-hand Stravinsky—his second movement is redolent of ‘Petrouchka’; [sic] even though he suggests to us in his first movement a kind of Prospect Park Schoenberg, is . . . working out his own musical destiny in his own way.”\textsuperscript{59} Simultaneously, while Copland himself recognized George Antheil as an “extremely talented young American composer,” he complained that Antheil had not yet found his own voice and accused him of “unconscious plagiarism.”\textsuperscript{60} This type of thinking raised the question of whether a composer could completely avoid any resemblance to previous works. Menotti maintained that he would not be original merely to be different: “What people consider originality is nothing but a tiresome mannerism that enslaves the artist to the point of sterility.”\textsuperscript{61} Many agreed that originality was overrated.

Certainly a composer does not set out to write something unoriginal, but rather writes from within, from a wellspring of years of listening, absorbing, and training in different styles. Now, more than at any other time in history, musicians are aware not only of music from the past but also the music of their contemporaries all over the globe. As Gann acknowledges, every American composition written in the twentieth century was influenced by all the music that preceded it as well as by the multiple choices and the freedom of expression that confronted its author.\textsuperscript{62} At the start of the new millennium, originality appears to be less of a requirement for artistic merit than it was for most of the twentieth century—or perhaps it is just understood

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\textsuperscript{61}Gian Carlo Menotti quoted by John Ardoin, \textit{The Stages of Menotti} (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1985), 10. Also, Tawa, \textit{American Composers and their Public}, 131-2.

\textsuperscript{62}Gann, xiii.
differently. To paraphrase William Rosar, the acid test of good music should not be whether or not it resembles another’s.

Although Richard Danielpour has been criticized for sounding like others, as his compositional style has evolved, more reviews recognize an original voice despite hints of earlier composers in his work. In 1995 The New York Times’ Allan Kozinn referred to Danielpour as an “unapologetic eclectic.” Kozinn elaborated: “Mr. Danielpour draws freely on the impatient jazz rhythms of early Bernstein, the lyricism and openness of Copland’s prairie style and even a touch of Shostakovich’s bitter edge while somehow maintaining an original impulse throughout.” Danielpour has assimilated the music of the past, including that of Bernstein, Copland, Stravinsky, Messiaen, and Shostakovich, and he has made it part of his own.

This incorporation of heterogeneous styles in one composition was common at the end of the twentieth century. Tawa identifies the late seventies as the beginning of an era of eclecticism in classical music. Composers openly acknowledged multiple influences and incorporated many different compositional techniques in a single composition. Diverse systems such as tonality and atonality, the additive processes of minimalism, and musical collage techniques might all contribute to one multi-stylistic work. Defending his own choices, composer John Adams commented in 1989, “I don’t think of style as the basic unifying factor in music . . . I feel very strongly that a composer has a right to do anything he feels is appropriate, and that stylistic consistency is not what makes a piece impressive.” The wealth of resources available to composers at the end of the century was unprecedented. Kyle Gann suggests that out of this

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64 Rosar.


“chaotically diverse” pot, one characteristic style did arise in the 1990s; he names it totalism: “music that appeals to audiences on a sensuous and visceral level, and yet which still contains enough complexity and intricate musical devices to attract the more sophisticated aficionado. It also implies using all of the musical resources available, so that Indian raga-like melodies may fit together with jazz harmonies within classical structuring devices. . . .Totalist music can generally be characterized as having a steady, articulated beat, often flavored by rock or world music.”

This “ism” characterizes Richard Danielpour’s music. His rhythms exhibit the influence of popular music on totalism. Danielpour has also absorbed and combined minimalism, neoromanticism, tonality and atonality, compositions using pitch series interspersed with composed melodies, and quotations from earlier music.

Attempting to explain this situation, Harbison stated that composers do not choose to write in a particular style; they merely follow their basic nature. “He sold out, we often hear, as a comment about an accessible piece the hearer didn’t like. But no one ever sold out! Instead, their character, their genes, their fatal pull emerges. The result may be great, it may be weak and venal, but it is beyond planning and design. Its realization can be hastened, but never determined by the pull of the marketplace. (Besides, the yield from a ‘sellout,’ at least in concert music, is so paltry it is hardly worth the trouble.)” As has been seen, high art composers are often criticized for pandering to the public. But the greatest commercial gains today are not found in the realm of art music.

In 2004, the concept of selling out by writing more accessible concert music is almost paradoxical. If one really wants to achieve commercial success, one should sell out by writing popular music, not by writing serious music that is more popular. And yet, perhaps it is true that many of today’s high art composers are popularizing serious music, whether consciously or subconsciously. Most of them were immersed in popular music when they were younger. As Glass points out, classical musicians of his generation (growing up in the fifties and sixties) saw the rapport between popular artists and the public, and they wanted a similar connection. Glass

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68 Gann, 353, 355.

69 Harbison, 51.
elaborates, “It didn’t mean writing popular music; that wasn’t possible for people like myself . . . I have no inclination to do it. But it did mean that we saw the role of the artist in a much more traditional way—the artist being part of the culture that he lives in.” In similar fashion, Danielpour has no desire to write in a popular vein, but he seeks that same interaction with his audience.

Across a wide spectrum, boundary lines between various musics are blurring. What used to be called country-western music is now generally known as “country,” and much of that has been modified by the influence of rock. There are some who would say that country musicians sold out in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Others might add that rock in turn sold out to country at the end of the century. Cross-over artists such as Charlotte Church and Josh Groban sing hybrid songs in multiple languages in a pseudo-operatic/popular style. “Serious” performers such as flutist James Galway and cellist Yo-Yo Ma perform light music and make recordings with “popular” musicians.

Christopher O’Riley has premiered and recorded several Danielpour piano works. A medalist in such prestigious events as the Van Cliburn, Leeds, Montreal, and Busoni piano competitions, he performs the standard concert repertoire all over the world. In June 2003, O’Riley, the founder/host of National Public Radio’s “From the Top,” released a CD of his own piano transcriptions of music by the alternative-rock band Radiohead. He comments that sixteen of the twenty-three Radiohead arrangements are among the most difficult compositions he performs. O’Riley maintains that he is merely following precedent. He considers Beethoven’s Diabelli Variations, based on a popular tune of the day, “a good example of making a mountain out of a molehill, really an innocuous melody . . .” He also notes that Mozart and Beethoven entertained at parties by improvising on familiar themes.

70 Glass, in Duckworth, 337.


Did Mozart and Beethoven “sell out?” Is it possible that Galway, Ma, and O’Riley have sold out? It is more likely that they all simply embrace(d) a wide variety of musical expression. Performing artists as well as composers have become increasingly eclectic. Danielpour readily acknowledges that rock and jazz generate the rhythmic energy in his compositions. His “formal” concert music is informed by diversity and by the informality of “pop.” Even the classical concert dress code has relaxed. It used to be de rigueur for artists to perform in tuxedos, but young performers like Joshua Bell have shed the black ties for more casual attire. William Duckworth suggests, and Philip Glass agrees, that the changes in the distinction between classical and popular music are as much a social and cultural phenomenon as a musical one. Americans are typically considered an informal people. And, reflecting the mores and customs of the day, twenty-first century American music—even serious music—has also become less formal.

This dissertation assesses Richard Danielpour’s music and his motivations for composing. In addition, it considers the position of his music in American culture within the context of the changes that have occurred—particularly in the last twenty to thirty years—in the criteria for assessing musical value and meaning in American high art. The first four chapters provide general biographical background on Danielpour. The remaining chapters present an overview of his compositions according to genre and note various compositional traits. Selected compositions are discussed in relation to accessibility, popularity, and originality. Comments from colleagues and critics concerning these issues as well as questions of eclecticism and the desire for commercial success are also presented as they relate to Richard Danielpour’s music.

73When people accuse O’Riley of trying to get rich off Radiohead’s name, he responds, “Well, let me know when that happens so I can get over having frozen pasta for dinner every night.” Thanks to O’Riley, some audience members are crossing over: “The rock kids are now asking me for recommendations. . . . I get e-mails from kids saying, ‘I really like the record. I notice on your calendar that you’re doing a Mozart concerto soon. I’d really like to hear that.’” Woodard.

74Duckworth, 337.
CHAPTER TWO

CHILDHOOD INFLUENCES AND EARLY EDUCATION

Richard Danielpour was born in New York, but his ancestors are Persian (Iranian) and his roots are in Judaism.\(^1\) His maternal great-grandfather, Yusef Rabban Moatamed, was an Iranian rabbi who kept a strict kosher home. Yusef’s son Ibrahim, however, did not practice his religion formally. In 1944, Ibrahim emigrated to the United States with his wife and three children; Richard’s mother Mehri was eight years old. Jewish traditions were not an important aspect of her upbringing, and she remembers her father professing at age eighty that he was “an intellectual Christian,” although he never formally converted.\(^2\) His grandson Richard, who never had a formal \textit{Bar Mitzvah} ceremony, also struggles to reconcile his Jewish heritage and the concept of Christ as Messiah. Pointing out that the word “Israel” means “one who wrestles with God,” Danielpour emphasizes the importance of studying and discovering the relevance of faith in one’s own life.\(^3\) As will be discussed later, at different periods in his compositional career Richard Danielpour’s music has exhibited his Persian-Jewish roots, a temporary conversion to Roman Catholicism, and an interest in New Age mysticism and spirituality.

\(^1\) The ancient Persian Empire was a center of culture and learning. Persia became known as Iran in 1935. In 1979, Iran became an Islamic Republic and a hotbed of religious persecution. Bernard Lewis, \textit{The Middle East} (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 25, 345.

\(^2\) Mary Danielpour Weil, personal interview with author at her home, West Palm Beach, Florida, 1 May 2001; FAX to author, 6 May 2002. Unless otherwise specified, every letter, e-mail, FAX, and personal conversation in this dissertation is addressed to the author.

\(^3\) Richard Danielpour, phone conversation, 23 March 2002. All references to communications with Danielpour are phone conversations unless specifically noted otherwise.
Danielpour’s father Sayid moved to the United States from Tehran in 1946 to attend Long Island University, where he earned a masters degree in English literature. He settled in New York but traveled frequently as a partner in the business interests of his family who were still living in Iran. In Iranian culture at the midpoint of the twentieth century, parents still arranged marriages for their children, and although they were living in New York, Sayid and Mehri were introduced by their families and had a traditional courtship. They married 9 November 1952, when Sayid was twenty-seven years old and his bride not quite seventeen. Richard Dane Danielpour was born in New York City on 28 January 1956. Nineteen months later his sister Debbie Karen arrived. Mehri Danielpour describes their life as “idyllic” until 1962, the year Sayid was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis.

In the summer of 1963 the family of four went to Iran to settle business affairs with Sayid’s family. They hoped to stay only a few months, but the visit to their ancestral homeland expanded to almost a year. In a published article about this period in their lives, Debbie Danielpour Chapel writes, “My father brought us to Iran because he owned $50,000 worth of shares in a business which he and his brothers had started many years before. . . . His impaired vision and loss of balance had already made it difficult for him to work, let alone travel frequently to Tehran and back. But his brothers . . . needed his brains. They resented his leaving.” Their resentment was so great that, unknown to Richard and Debbie, Sayid’s family took his, Mehri’s, and the children’s passports and had them stamped in such a way as to prevent their return to the U.S. When Richard nearly died of nephritis, one of Sayid’s brothers became sympathetic to their plight and arranged a surreptitious 4 a.m. departure for Mehri and the two children. Debbie explains that this uncle fixed their passports: “[He] stuck two pages together—‘with a simple paper clip!’” my mother still marvels today—hiding the stamp which forbade our

4Weil, letter, 1 April 2002; FAX, 6 May 2002. The Danielpour enterprises included textile manufacturing, hosiery production, and real estate investments.

5Weil, letters, 12 March 2002, 1 April 2002; FAX 6 May 2002.

6Weil, 12 March 2002. Debbie Danielpour Chapel has also been diagnosed with MS.

escape. This uncle had also slipped the customs attendants enough cash to ward off further questions.8 Mehri says she will never forget arriving at the airport in New York and watching her children kiss American soil.9 Her children never forgot their experiences in Iran; Richard Danielpour’s exploration of his Persian ancestry in the second cello concerto, *Through the Ancient Valley*, is discussed in chapter nine.

Although Sayid extended his time in Tehran to work out an equitable business deal, financial discussions did not go smoothly, and he finally agreed to give up most of his shares in the family businesses. His brother Albert, who maintained control of much of the family’s wealth,10 eventually became a leader of a small group of Iranian Jews in his community.11 After Shah Reza Khan Pahlavi’s government was overthrown in 1979 and Iran became an Islamic republic, religious persecution in Iran was rampant.12 Albert Danielpour was in the unfortunate position of being a visible, wealthy Jew. In January 1980 he was arrested for allegedly acting as a spy for Israel and for the CIA. Despite Albert’s denial of all charges, he was executed on 5 June 1980 and his businesses were appropriated by the authorities.13 In Richard Danielpour’s assessment, his uncle was assassinated for the crime of owning land in Jerusalem.14

During his time in Iran, seven-year-old Richard was introduced to Persian music, which fascinated him. According to Debbie, their time in Iran included “lots of parties with Iranian music, the sitar, the tambak, the opium wafting through the doors where kids were sequestered

8Ibid., 162-3.
9Weil, 12 March 2002.
10Ibid.
12Lewis, 345.
13Delloff.
. . . erotic, sensual [music].” Richard later included the *tambak* (*dombak*) in *Through the Ancient Valley* and *In the Arms of the Beloved*. Since there was no television programming in Iran until four o’clock, Richard, unable to attend school because of his extended illness, turned to his mother’s limited record collection for amusement. He recalls hearing Mozart, Chopin, Debussy, and Tchaikovsky. Debbie also remembers recordings of Frank Sinatra, Johnny Mathis, and various jazz singers during her childhood. Neither side of the family claims any musicians. In Mehri’s assessment, Richard’s musical ability “just came out of nowhere.” She remembers her young son dancing to the radio, producing a strange humming sound. When asked why he didn’t sing the melody, he responded, “I’m listening to the back of the music.”

Six months after Sayid’s return from Iran, the family moved to South Florida. Sayid was unable to work because of his illness, and Mehri began to work as an artist to provide for the family. While her career as a sculptor was capturing attention, Richard served as a bat boy for the Atlanta Braves in 1969, 1970, and 1971 during their spring training in West Palm Beach. An April 1969 *Palm Beach Life* article about Mehri’s sculpture of Empress Farah of Iran

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16 Royal S. Brown, “An Interview with Richard Danielpour,” *Fanfare* 20 No. 5-6 (May/June 1997), 42. Anticipating a stay of three or four months, the family took a number of personal items to Iran, including some of Mehri’s records. Mehri Danielpour Weil, phone conversation, 2 September 2003.

17 Chapel, 15 May 2002.


prompted Hank Aaron to ask Richard for an introduction to his mother, who was subsequently commissioned to do Aaron’s portrait bust. 21

Richard was an excellent student, due in large part to his photographic memory. He began playing piano quite late, around age fourteen or fifteen when he started a rock group, “Life.” Serving primarily as keyboardist in the band, he also played drums occasionally and, when needed, even sang—“terribly” in his own estimation. 22 Debbie thought her brother had a decent voice and was pretty good at imitating Elton John at the piano. “Much of the band’s success (if you can call it that) had to do with Richard’s dramatics.” 23 They did a few original numbers, but Mehri recalls that the Beatles’ hits were everyone’s favorites. In his junior year at Twin Lakes High School in West Palm Beach, Richard, who was the class president, 24 began studying classical piano with Juliette deMarcellus, a local music critic. According to his mother, deMarcellus “opened up a whole new world to him.” 25 Debbie doubts that Richard would have chosen to pursue “serious” music if it had not been for deMarcellus, 26 and Richard acknowledges a great debt to her tutelage. 27

During his last year in high school, Danielpour also began studying music and composition with Dr. Paul Csonka, director of the Palm Beach Civic Opera. They explored Danielpour’s original compositions and analyzed works such as Beethoven’s *Hammerklavier Sonata* and Bartók’s string quartets. Csonka also taught his young student to appreciate

21 Weil, 1 May 2001. While working on the baseball legend’s bust at her home studio one day, Mehri repeatedly caught glimpses of movement from the corner of her eye. All the neighborhood kids were taking turns peeking through the window because Richard had bragged to everyone that Hank Aaron was at his house.


26 Chapel, 15 May 2002.

twentieth-century French music, which he initially resisted. “I was much more interested in Bartók when I was young—and Stravinsky later became an acquired taste. . . . We got inside what makes the music work. Every lesson with him was . . . a joy!” 28 Studying with deMarcellus and Csonka increased Danielpour’s desire to learn. While continuing lessons with both of them, he arranged additional piano tutoring with Philippe Drevet, a former Alfred Cortot student who taught in Palm Beach from 1961 to 1996. Danielpour remembers working extensively on technique as well as ear training, and he admits to possessing an eccentric pianistic style. “I played Beethoven in ways that just weren’t right—projecting something of my own creative person on the music.” 29 Drevet agrees and relates stories about entire Sunday afternoons spent with Danielpour; lessons occasionally lasted six hours. “He brought so much intensity and passion in his studies that his being was only music and nothing else.” 30 As Drevet tried to explain something or demonstrate a concept at the piano, his student would frown, pace, concentrate, and then shout in excitement when he understood. Early original compositions or improvisations reflected whatever composer Danielpour was studying at the time, and Drevet was impressed by his ability “to grasp and appropriate to himself so quickly without copying.” 31 The young musician eventually parted company with DeMarcellus, and Csonka has passed away, but Danielpour still maintains contact with Drevet. In fact, each of the past several years he has spent weeks at a time composing at Drevet’s home in Thodure, France. 32

Although Debbie estimates that by Richard’s junior year in high school he spent more time practicing than studying, 33 he did well enough academically to graduate fourth in his high

28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
30 Philippe Drevet, letter to author, 6 May 2002.
31 Ibid.
33 Chapel, 15 May 2002.
school class of 297 in June 1974.\textsuperscript{34} After only eighteen months of formal music training, Danielpour entered the Oberlin College Conservatory of Music that fall with a full music scholarship.\textsuperscript{35} He recollects spending his freshman year as a piano major isolated and alone in a practice room, devoting hours to the instrument and, as a result, developing tendonitis.\textsuperscript{36} On 10 June 1975 Danielpour debuted as a recital artist at the Norton Gallery of Art in Palm Beach. Since Drevet was in France at the time, he asked this author, his Palm Beach Community College faculty colleague, to review the performance. The program included works by Bach, Mozart, Schubert, Brahms, Chopin, and a piece called \textit{Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse} by Richard Danielpour. Unfortunately the only comment I wrote about this final number was “apocalyptic!”\textsuperscript{37} My informal comments, written on the recital program itself, which Drevet still possesses, recognized Danielpour’s gifted musicianship and expressed amazement that he had studied piano formally for only two-and-a-half years.

Unhappy at Oberlin, where professor Arthur Dann told him he almost certainly would never be a professional musician,\textsuperscript{38} Danielpour took a year’s leave from college classes and moved to Boston to study with Theodore Lettvin. In the fall of 1976, he entered the New England Conservatory. He continued lessons with Lettvin that first year and subsequently studied piano with Jacob Maxin (second semester only), Veronica Jochum (second year), and Gabriel Chodos (last year and a half). It was Danielpour’s goal to excel at the piano, in part

\textsuperscript{34}Lee Lively, former social studies teacher and self-appointed historian of Twin Lakes High School, was Danielpour’s class sponsor all three years. According to the yearbook \textit{Aquarian 1974}, Vol. IV, Danielpour was in the Honor Society, International Thespian Society, and was president of the Spanish Club his senior year; but what Lively remembered immediately about Danielpour, in addition to the fact that he had been class president one year, was that he was a musician. Personal interview at his home, Lake Worth, Florida, 1 April 2003.

\textsuperscript{35}Danielpour, phone conversation, 20 August 2002; also, program notes, Norton Gallery Recital, 10 June 1975.

\textsuperscript{36}Danielpour, phone conversation, 3 March 2000.

\textsuperscript{37}Program notes, Norton Gallery Recital, 10 June 1975, commentary by Ruth Ruggles (Akers).

\textsuperscript{38}Danielpour, 20 August 2002.
because he was considering a career in performance, but also because he knew it would be useful if he became a composer or conductor. When the tendonitis in his right hand became so severe in 1977 that he could not play for nine months, he became even more interested in composing. “I was obsessive-compulsive when it came to practicing the piano, [but] when I’m tired, I stop writing. I’m not obsessive-compulsive in composing, but I did have an unhealthy relationship to playing the piano. I would practice for nine hours and not realize the time had gone by.”

Although he had difficulty finding the right piano teacher, Danielpour consistently enjoyed composition lessons with John Heiss at New England Conservatory. They met weekly for almost five years, and Danielpour still has high praise for Heiss’s teaching. Danielpour began to devote more of his time to composition. His original plan was to graduate as a piano major, but he expanded his goal, completing all the course work for a double major in piano and composition. He never presented the required piano recital, however, due to time constraints, and thus graduated with Distinction in Performance and a Bachelor of Music in Composition from the New England Conservatory on 18 May 1980.

Danielpour claims to have embraced a more disciplined work ethic after his father died in June 1977 at age 52. “From maybe my last year at New England, or at least since I was 24 years old, composing has been part of my life every day.” The composer speaks often of his father’s gentle and loving spirit and the important role he played in his life. String Quartet No. 1, Requiem (1983), is a tribute to his father. Mehri writes, “His [Sayid’s] death not only affected Richard and his music, but it affected all of us. He left us all with a legacy of deep love that lives with us every day of our lives. When Richard told us at the age of eighteen that music was his life, his father’s concern was how he was going to make a living. But he was very proud of him

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40 Danielpour, 20 August 2002.
41 Robert W. Winkley, Registrar, New England Conservatory of Music, e-mail to author, 22 April 2003.
42 Danielpour, 2 October 2001.
and very encouraging and very supportive. He once told me that when a person is doing what he loves, he couldn’t help but be successful.”

Mehri Danielpour Weil has been quite successful herself; her bronzes are in museums and private collections across the United States, and she has exhibited all over the world, including Brazil, Canada, Egypt, Germany, Iran, Israel, and Venezuela. In addition to her sculptures of Empress Farah and Hank Aaron, she was commissioned to do portrait busts of the Shah of Iran and his children, Crown Prince Reza and Farah-Naz, and President Anwar el-Sadat of Egypt. Tragically, while she was traveling to meet Sadat, he was assassinated. It is certain that Mehri’s precedent of personal and artistic self-sufficiency, strong family ties, and Richard’s special bond with his late father contributed to Danielpour’s self confidence and his musical development. It is also clear that Mehri’s creativity and disciplined example influenced her son’s impassioned but steady, methodical approach to his craft.

In January 1978 Lorin Hollander presented a piano recital in Palm Beach while Danielpour was home for the holidays. The young man had returned to practicing following his 1977 hiatus but did not feel that anyone on the New England Conservatory piano faculty was able to help him with his physical problems. He approached Hollander about lessons because the pianist had experienced similar difficulties with his own hand. Traveling from Boston to New York where Hollander was living, Danielpour had a piano lesson every few months throughout 1978-79. They listened to Glenn Gould's recordings, paying specific attention to the way Gould treated the independent voices. Danielpour says Hollander taught him how to really listen to music, to hear every individual line, to imagine the sound and then play. Hollander also

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44 Self-published promotional brochure, “Mehri Danielpour.”

45 Weil, 1 April 2002.

46 Danielpour, 16 March 2002.
encouraged him to compose. Remembering the first time he heard some of Danielpour’s original works, Hollander says, “I noticed immediately that this was no dabbling at composition, that these were profoundly inspired, masterful, contrapuntal works with a great deal of power, a great deal of promise, and that there was no doubt this was a born composer.”

While reminiscing about his time with Danielpour, Hollander echoes Drevet’s comment about his student’s passionate and often loud reaction to music. “We would talk about various works, whether it was Stravinsky, or Bartók, or Mozart, or Beethoven or Brahms, you know how Richard is—the enthusiasm. He just jumps up and down with the sheer beauty of it, the sheer wonder. It was a privilege to have been around such an incredible, creative genius.”

When Danielpour mentioned his interest in graduate studies at Juilliard with Vincent Persichetti, Hollander immediately telephoned the composer/teacher. Although he had never previously recommended anyone to Persichetti, Hollander thought Danielpour had “an incredible gift.”

Danielpour, who is still very appreciative of this intercession on his behalf, met Persichetti in January 1980. The composition professor proved to be gentle and patient, reminding Danielpour of his father. At their initial meeting, Persichetti agreed to teach the young man if he was admitted to Juilliard; however, acceptance into the program depended on the approval of the entire composition faculty. Persichetti made numerous suggestions regarding Danielpour’s preparation for the audition, but there was no further contact between the two until the formal interview at the school in June 1980. Looking forward to his audition and the chance to pursue a masters degree in New York City, the composer remembers, “I made a very conscious decision to return to the city where I was born, if not to conquer, at least to find my place.”

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47 Danielpour, 2 October 2001.


49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

51 Danielpour, 16 March 2002.
CHAPTER THREE

GRADUATE STUDIES, EARLY WORKS, AND IMPORTANT CONTACTS

According to Danielpour only half of the approximately 120 applicants to Juilliard’s graduate and undergraduate programs in composition in the fall of 1980 were invited to interview in person. It is impossible to determine how much weight was given to his application because of the January contact with Persichetti. Danielpour described his June audition. “I went into a smoke-filled room—at a long rectangular table moving from my right to left were Roger Sessions, Elliott Carter, Milton Babbitt, and David Diamond, with Persichetti roaming around or occasionally sitting at the piano or behind the desk.”¹ His recollection is that only four new graduate composition majors were accepted: Ken Fuchs, who went on to be the assistant dean at the Manhattan School and who is now at the University of Oklahoma; Scott Eyerly, who is an opera composer; Stephen Mercurio, an opera conductor; and Danielpour.²

Richard Danielpour spent six years studying with Vincent Persichetti, who began teaching at Juilliard in 1947, became chairman of the composition department in 1963 and chairman of the literature and materials department in 1970. Persichetti taught composition concurrently at the Philadelphia Conservatory for twenty years, acting as head of the theory and composition department from 1941 to 1961. In addition to the influential text Twentieth-Century

¹Danielpour, phone conversation, 2 October 2001. Presented with an ear training test which became progressively harder, Danielpour said he did well on the first ten examples before encountering much difficulty. He expected to be more intimidated but remembers generally enjoying the experience.

²Ibid. Juilliard has no record of the number of applicants/students enrolled, but Andrew King, Associate Registrar, compared composition departmental lists from 1979-80 and 1980-81 and deduced there were five new students (three graduate, two undergraduate) in the composition department in Fall 1980. There were also eight composition students from 1979-80 who were admitted to new graduate programs that fall. Andrew W. King, e-mail, 5 August 2002.
Harmony, his output includes compositions in nearly every medium. The neo-classic and neo-romantic style traits exhibited in Persichetti’s music are seen later in Danielpour’s music as well. Danielpour has great respect for this important mentor who taught him about musical texture and orchestration. “Lessons with Persichetti were wonderful, invigorating, and frustrating at times. I would come in with lists of questions about orchestral writing and he would patiently answer them all.”

In her book on the history of Juilliard, Andrea Olmstead notes that Persichetti was in such demand as a teacher, that students started lining up at five o’clock in the morning to register for his always-filled classes. Frequently invited to speak on college campuses, Persichetti was considered among the most influential and erudite teachers of composition in America.

Danielpour enrolled in David Diamond’s orchestration class, enjoying not only the professor but also his student colleagues, including Andrew Litton, Lowell Liebermann, and JoAnn Falletta. These contacts proved invaluable in the years to come. Falletta, who has conducted the Virginia Symphony Orchestra since 1992 and was appointed music director of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra in May 1998, conducted several Danielpour premieres, including *Canticle of Peace* (1995). In December 1994, Litton was named music director and

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4Danielpour, 2 October 2001.

5Simmons, 460; also, Olmstead, 275.


conductor of the Dallas Symphony. In June 2002 they performed Danielpour’s Piano Concerto No. 1, *Metamorphosis*, with Christopher O’Riley at the keyboard.⁸

Living in New York City and attending rehearsals of the New York Philharmonic was educational and allowed Danielpour to hear more new music and meet many people. As always, he took advantage of any opportunities that presented themselves; sometimes he simply made the opportunities. He recalled stopping Elliott Carter in the hall at Juilliard one day, introducing himself, and asking a few questions about Carter’s piano concerto which he was struggling to play and understand. “To me, Carter’s music made no sense. He was the most interesting composer to listen to when he talked about music, but his was the least interesting music to listen to.”⁹

**Student Works**

During his first year at Juilliard, Danielpour wrote a piano concerto which he premiered as soloist in Venezuela with the Caracas Philharmonic Orchestra on 10 May 1981.¹⁰ It is dedicated to Christine and Alberto Vollmer, whose Vollmer Foundation commissioned the work

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¹⁰Danielpour, 30 March 2002. Danielpour also appeared as soloist with the Juilliard Orchestra in Spring 1982. C.F. Peters published this early concerto, but Danielpour has asked that it be withdrawn from the catalogue. An 11 October 2002 e-mail from Gene Caprioglio, Director of Peters’ Rights Clearance Division, indicates that it is still available along with four other Danielpour compositions, *Music for a Jubilee, Psalms for Piano*, the Piano Sonata, and String Quartet No. 1 (*Requiem*).
and provided financial assistance for Danielpour’s studies at Juilliard.\textsuperscript{11} Awarded Columbia University’s Joseph H. Bearns Prize in 1982,\textsuperscript{12} the work is scored for a standard orchestra with none of the extra percussion instruments that become common in Danielpour’s later compositions. Extreme contrasts in dynamics are characteristic of Danielpour’s style, with particularly jarring juxtapositions occurring in his earliest works. In this concerto the piano is treated alternately as a percussion instrument and as a lyrical string instrument. A sense of tonality is never lost despite the dissonance, and intervals of fourths, tritones, and sevenths are prevalent both melodically and harmonically. These style traits are seen in Danielpour’s mature music, also. Discussing some of his later accomplishments and the highlights of his career-to-date in a 1999 interview, Danielpour revealed that probably the biggest thrill in his life was the first time he heard an orchestra play this concerto. The young composer walked into the Juilliard orchestral practice room and was “overwhelmed with the sound of my own music for orchestra. . . . That was the moment I think I truly knew I would be doing this for the rest of my life!”\textsuperscript{13}

In the fall of 1982, after completing the Master of Music degree at Juilliard,\textsuperscript{14} Danielpour had his first opportunity, with the support of the Norlin Foundation, to work in Peterborough, New Hampshire at the MacDowell Colony.\textsuperscript{15} The former summer residence of American


\textsuperscript{12}<www.columbia.edu>. Accessed 8 July 2001. The Joseph H. Bearns Prize, awarded annually since 1926 for an original music composition, is given to an American aged eighteen to twenty-five. The original manuscript is housed in the Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Columbia University. My thanks to Elizabeth Davis, Columbia University librarian, for her assistance.


\textsuperscript{15}Danielpour, phone conversation, 10 April 2003.
composer Edward MacDowell has operated as an artists’ colony since 1907. Louise Talma, a frequent guest at the MacDowell Colony, was also there that fall. Referred to by Danielpour as “the American Boulanger,” Talma composed in a neo-classic style prior to 1952 but began using serial methods the following year. In 1963 she became the first female composer awarded membership in the National Institute of Arts and Letters. In his usual direct manner, Danielpour took advantage of the chance to talk with Talma about his music, and she suggested numerous orchestral revisions to the first movement of his early piano concerto. Danielpour had several subsequent encounters with Talma. In 1983 he mailed her the score of String Quartet No. 1 and received detailed criticism in reply. Talma attended the 1988 premiere of First Light as well as performances of many later Danielpour compositions. The last time they were together at an artists’ colony was at Yaddo in Saratoga Springs in 1993, when Danielpour was working on his third symphony. That year Jon Klibonoff performed several of the preludes from Danielpour’s 1992 piano work The Enchanted Garden. The composer remembers with pride that Talma turned to him and expressed admiration for his composition.


17Danielpour, phone conversation, 10 July 2000.


19Danielpour, 10 July 2000.

20Allan Kozinn, “The Care and Feeding of the Composer at Yaddo,” New York Times (15 June 1989), C15. Yaddo is the legacy of Katrina and Spencer Trask, who bequeathed their 500-acre estate as an artists’ retreat in 1926. Only four artists can be accommodated at one time, and many writers, visual artists, and composers, including Americans Aaron Copland, David Del Tredici, Ned Rorem, Leonard Bernstein, Virgil Thomson, Marc Blitzstein, David Diamond, and George Perle have enjoyed residencies there. Residency is by invitation only, and a formal application must specify exactly what the artist hopes to accomplish at the colony.

21Danielpour, phone conversation, 23 March 2002.
String Quartet No. 1, the composition Talma critiqued in 1983, is subtitled *Requiem*. There is no dedication, but according to the composer, the work is a memory of his father.\textsuperscript{22} The titles of the three movements, “Requiem,” “Dies Irae,” and “Lux Aeterna,” reflect Danielpour’s interest in Catholicism at that time. The viola plays *expressivo* sustained notes to begin the first movement and is joined after two and a half measures by the cello; the ensuing duet is a programmatic foreshadowing of the dialogue between the *kamancheh*, an ancient Persian spike fiddle, and the cello in Danielpour’s second cello concerto (2000). In the latter work, subtitled *Through the Ancient Valley*, the composer’s notes explain that these instruments symbolize a conversation between father and son.\textsuperscript{23} The cello concerto and its relationship to Danielpour’s Iranian heritage are discussed in chapter nine.

Danielpour received approval from his major professor, Persichetti, to discuss his first string quartet with Peter Mennin, who had been president of Juilliard since 1962.\textsuperscript{24} The resultant monthly lunch meetings with the president were unusual because, as Olmstead’s Juilliard history reveals, very few students ever saw Mennin other than at convocation and commencement. “So far removed was Mennin from the students and many faculty that it was possible to spend years at the School and never enter his office or even know where it was. Those who did find their way . . . encountered a secretary who made sure they did not meet with the president.”\textsuperscript{25} It is typical of Danielpour that he pursued Mennin’s acquaintance and input. As in high school, when he studied privately with three music teachers simultaneously, the young man was insatiable when it came to absorbing insight from as many different sources as possible. It is likely that he identified with Mennin’s compositional style which incorporates driving rhythms and long, lyrical lines. A 1983 *New York Times* article described Mennin’s works as “extremely busy and

\textsuperscript{22}Danielpour, 2 October 2001.

\textsuperscript{23}The substitution of a viola is suggested if a *kamancheh* is unavailable.

\textsuperscript{24}Olmstead, 244. Mennin, Ph. D. from Eastman School of Music, previously director of the Peabody Conservatory (1958-62), was also offered the presidency at Oberlin Conservatory, Eastman School of Music, and Curtis Institute in 1962. He had been among nine American composers featured in a *Life* magazine article in 1956. N.a., “U.S. Composers in a Bright Era,” *Life* (21 May 1956), 141ff.

\textsuperscript{25}Olmstead, 246.
quite dissonant. . . . tonalities are . . . suggested, and there is a strong, if severe, melodic profile.”

When assessing his student works, Danielpour acknowledges they are unmistakably “the works of a young composer.” Canonic entrances in the final movement of the first string quartet, marked Lento sostenuto (Ricercare), are reminiscent of exercises in counterpoint class, a polyphonic conversation among the string voices crafted by an apprentice composer. In Danielpour’s opinion, however, String Quartet No. 1, published by C. F. Peters in 1986, showed “structurally, contrapuntally, harmonically, dramatically, the first seeds of maturity—a good effort.” He absorbed much from his three mentors Persichetti, Talma, and Mennin.

While at Juilliard, in addition to the piano concerto and the string quartet, Danielpour wrote several piano pieces, two symphonies, and his first choral work. The short piece for chorus, Oratio Pauli, was commissioned by Paul Ilecki, who was a priest at St. Paul the Apostle Church at Lincoln Center in New York City at that time. Although Danielpour is an ethnic Jew, he has always been interested in Catholicism. In 1975-6 he took a course in Roman Catholicism at Boston College and regularly attended Mass for about five years. Less conscientious about attendance in 1981-86, he was still intrigued by the religion, so mutual friends introduced him to the priest. Ilecki conducted the Paulist Choristers, a semi-professional church choir, which premiered Oratio Pauli at St. Paul’s in 1982 and performed it at Juilliard later the same year. In 1988 Danielpour wrote a prefatory companion piece, In Prinzipio. The new two-movement composite, titled Prologue and Prayer, was commissioned by Musica Sacra. Both sections are based on the New Testament and are similar in style. Prologue and Prayer was premiered by

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27 Danielpour, 10 July 2000.

28 Ibid.

29 Paul Ilecki, e-mail, 14 March 2002 and 14 April 2002, and Danielpour, phone conversation, 19 September 2001. Ilecki studied at Mannes College and completed a masters degree in oboe performance at Queens College.
Richard Westenburg and *Musica Sacra* in Avery Fisher Hall at Lincoln Center on 20 April 1988.\(^{30}\)

St. Paul the Apostle Church was preparing to celebrate its centennial, and the Missionary Society of St. Paul the Apostle, the first religious order of Roman Catholic priests founded in the United States in 1858, was making plans for a 125\(^{th}\) anniversary celebration. Popularly known as the Paulist Fathers, the society of priests agreed to Ilecki’s suggestion to commission a new Danielpour composition for the festivities.\(^{31}\) The composer began writing Symphony No. 1, *Dona Nobis Pacem*, in 1982. Still a novice at orchestral composition, Danielpour did not complete the symphony until early 1985 by which time it had evolved into his doctoral dissertation.\(^{32}\) It was premiered 25 March 1985 at St. Paul the Apostle Church with Ilecki conducting an orchestra of approximately ninety freelance musicians and Juilliard associates.\(^{33}\)

The symphony is in one movement with three tempo divisions, *Moderato—Molto Agitato—Adagio Sostenuto/ Allegro/Adagio*. Its conclusion is based on a traditional Latin chant, an *Agnus Dei*. Ilecki’s recollection of the work is that the chant is offered several times as a response but is always interrupted by harsh chords. “The piece concludes with the conquering of the darkness by the first successful completion of the *Agnus Dei* chant in a gloriously simple way.”\(^{34}\) As will be seen in subsequent chapters, this repeated interruption of a chorale proves to be a significant technique in the composer’s later works. The symphony’s title, *Dona nobis pacem* (“grant us


\(^{31}\)Ilecki, 14 March 2002, and program notes, *St. Paul the Apostle Church at Lincoln Center Centennial Concert* (23 March 1985), 1-2.

\(^{32}\)Danielpour, phone conversation, 16 March 2002.

\(^{33}\)Ilecki, 14 March 2002, and program notes.

\(^{34}\)Ilecki, 25 March 2002.
peace”) is derived from the last three words of the Agnus Dei. Danielpour described his student symphony as a plea and a prayer for peace.

The symphony’s March premiere prompted pianist Annette Covatta to commission Danielpour to write Psalms for Piano. One month later, at Carnegie Recital Hall on 20 April 1985, Covatta premiered the two original movements of what eventually became a three-movement composition. “Nocturne” and “Toccata” are prayers of contemplation and action, respectively. Danielpour’s program notes explain that the second movement exemplifies the light and energy of day, which, when paired with a “night piece,” demonstrates a characteristic of his music that has continued throughout his compositional career. In Danielpour’s words, “I have always been interested in the contrast and, in some sense, struggle between light and dark, both in the physical and metaphysical sense.”

In the complete edition of Psalms for Piano premiered by David Buechner on 1 February 1987 at Lincoln Center, a newly-composed movement precedes the original two, whose order is reversed. As published by Peters, the revised subtitles for the three movements are “Morning,” “Afternoon,” and “Evening,” signifying a twenty-four hour cycle of light.

35Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi: dona eis requiem. . . . dona nobis pacem. Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world: give them rest. . . . grant us peace.

36Program notes; also, Danielpour, 19 September 2001. A grant from the American Music Center’s “Copying Assistance Program” helped pay expenses for copying and reproducing parts for the premiere. Philip Rothman, Manager of Grantmaking Programs at American Music Center, e-mail, 11 April 2003. Danielpour received a CAP grant of $800 on 17 October 1986. These grants are specifically for works with scheduled premieres. In this case, the symphony had already been premiered prior to the awarding of the grant. Also, see <www.amc.org>. Accessed 10 April 2003.

37Carnegie Recital Hall program, 20 April 1985. Also, Annette T. Covatta, e-mail, 25 February 2002 and 26 March 2002. Covatta, who earned a DMA from Boston University in 1965, had planned a recital after a hiatus from performing. In her words, “Richard offered to write a composition for me.” This was the only time she performed any of Danielpour’s music. She has made personal development and holistic spirituality her primary vocation.

38Danielpour, “Composer’s Notes,” Carnegie Recital Hall program (20 April 1985).

39Ibid.

40Danielpour, liner notes, Urban Dances.
As an expression of gratitude prior to graduating with a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in 1986, Danielpour dedicated each movement of Psalms to a person who impacted his development at Juilliard. He had limited interaction with Milton Babbitt during their respective tenures at Juilliard, but he took advantage of an opportunity to meet the composer/teacher in his office one day for advice on composition and orchestration. Babbitt, who had previously taught mathematics at Princeton University, is credited with introducing to music concepts such as combinatoriality, pitch class, and source set, terms which originated with mathematics and the physical sciences. A student of Roger Sessions and a composer of serial works, Babbitt was concerned that music would stagnate if artists tried to please the uneducated general populace. Danielpour’s courting of audience approval is the opposite of Babbitt’s relative disinterest in public opinion; despite their differences in style and artistic outlook, Danielpour dedicated the first movement of Psalms for Piano to Babbitt. According to Danielpour, “Morning” is one of the few quasi-serial works he ever composed. The opening series of pitches is quiet and reflective. Danielpour’s interest in Bartók is evident in the treble flutterings reminiscent of the earlier composer’s “night music” and in the repeated high pitch at the end of the movement, which is similar to the xylophone repetition in the third movement of Music for Strings, Percussion and Celeste. In Psalms, Danielpour experiments with overtones and sonority. Secco motives in the treble against sustained pitches and chords in other registers, in this movement as well as the third, create a sparse texture reminiscent of the earlier piano concerto.

The second movement is dedicated to composer William Schuman, who, as president of Juilliard in 1947, was the man responsible for hiring Danielpour’s role model, Vincent

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41 Danielpour, phone conversation, 16 March 2002. Degree information from Shulman, 925.


43 A score inscribed “To M. Babbitt, with love and affection,” is part of the circulating collection at the Juilliard library.

44 Danielpour, phone conversation, 16 March 2002.
Persichetti. Although Schuman had retired from teaching at Juilliard before he arrived, Danielpour remembered their initial meeting in 1984 as one of the most inspiring he ever had with another composer, and the two corresponded for many years afterwards. Formerly titled “Toccata,” “Afternoon” exhibits rhythmic single-pitch repetitions similar to those in the first movement. It is energetic, even frenetic at times, with perpetuum mobile sections and repeated syncopations. The music perhaps reflects Schuman himself as well as his style. Composer Christopher Rouse describes Schuman’s personality and music: “The urgency of Schuman’s music is matched only by the vitality of Schuman himself... unflagging energy, boundless enthusiasm, his keen eye and ear for the world’s foibles and strengths, his penetrating wit...” The rhythmic vitality of “Afternoon” is consistent with this assessment of Schuman, for whom Danielpour has repeatedly expressed high regard.

Danielpour dedicated “Nocturne,” re-titled “Evening,” to Persichetti, the composition teacher who exerted the most influence upon him. Indebtedness to him as well as to Charles Ives is exhibited in this movement, although it does not sound like either of these composers except for isolated measures. As he became increasingly aware of American music in the 1980s, Danielpour developed great admiration for Ives, whose influence on the younger composer is evident in overlapping planes of sound, often ambiguous endings, and in glimpses of familiar tunes woven into the compositional fabric. In a Piano & Keyboard description of Danielpour’s piano works, Bradford Gowen recognized “a fusion of many kinds of American music beneath the surface of Danielpour’s writing.” He went on, “Perhaps it is the sense of those influences, combined with Danielpour’s dramatic thrust, poetic intensity, and tonal language, that gives this

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45 Olmstead, 157.

46 Danielpour, 16 March 2002. This correspondence is in a storage box in Danielpour’s apartment, unavailable for perusal at this time.


49 Danielpour, 27 September 2001. The composer commented that he was grateful for John Heiss’s enthusiasm for Ives at the New England Conservatory.
music its accessibility.” His music does not copy or directly quote previous works, although Danielpour absorbs the styles and occasionally uses the techniques of other twentieth-century composers, a manifestation of the artistic gift mentioned by his early teacher Drevet.

After completing Psalms and his doctoral dissertation, Danielpour began composing his second symphony. Symphony No. 2, Visions, did not take as much time to complete as the first symphony because of the composer’s increased fluency with orchestral scoring. Written in 1986 for the San Francisco Symphony, the work premiered on 19 December of that year with Charles Wuorinen conducting. It was Danielpour’s first major commission. Wuorinen, whose own compositional style embraces serialism, was composer-in-residence with the San Francisco Symphony from 1985 to 1987. On the recommendations of Rosalie Calabrese and Verna Fine, widow of the composer Irving Fine, Wuorinen asked Danielpour to submit a work for performance consideration; this resulted in the symphony commission. Fine and Calabrese both worked for A Composer’s Alliance, a composers’ advocacy organization in New York City. They encouraged the young composer and helped with business connections from the fall of 1985 until the beginning of 1988, when he signed a contract with Schirmer Publications. The last composition published by Peters is the Piano Sonata, which is also the last work Danielpour wrote at Juilliard.

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51 Danielpour, phone conversation, 2 October 2001. I do not currently have access to a score or recording.


53 Danielpour, 30 March 2002.
Piano Sonata

Completed in 1986, the Piano Sonata was commissioned by and dedicated to Bruce Wolosoff who gave several performances. The sonata did not achieve much recognition at that time, perhaps because Wolosoff’s understanding of the sonata or his ability to project the work effectively may have been limited. In a review of his 2 April 1987 performance, *New York Times* critic Bernard Holland commented on Wolosoff’s pitch and rhythmic accuracy but lamented his lack of subtlety. “Bruce Wolosoff’s evening of piano music at Weill Recital Hall on Thursday was perhaps more imaginative for its planning than its execution.”  

Danielpour accepted the major portion of the blame for the initial lukewarm reception, and he shelved the composition until Michael Boriskin approached him about recording it five years later. Boriskin’s request galvanized the composer to make a few revisions. In a 1997 interview in *Clavier*, Boriskin concluded, “It is rewarding to find a piece that a composer considered withdrawing from the catalog, then perform and record it, and get an enthusiastic response from the public and critics.”  

A new edition of the Piano Sonata was published in 1992, the same year Boriskin recorded it.

In the composer’s assessment, “It [Piano Sonata] was the first piece that was not just a student piece—it’s more refined.” Glancing at just the first page, one notices numerous contrasts of register, volume, articulation, mood, tempo, and meter. In the space of twenty-two pages there are thirty separate metronome indications. Boriskin does not find this problematic:

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57 Danielpour, phone conversation, 10 July 2000.
“I find the frequent tempo changes to be a function and reflection of the expressive character of
the various sections; they seem completely organic to and grow naturally out of the content of the
music.”58 The score is fraught with additional instructions: agitato, violente, pesante,
sospirando, misterioso, scherzando, martellato, etc. A cursory survey reveals that moments of
quiet lyricism are rudely interrupted by violent cacophony, a style which occasionally seems
contrived. Concerning these extremes, Boriskin commented on what he considers the
psychological implications of Danielpour’s sonata. “The duality embodied in the piece recurs
frequently in his music: light and dark (in both the coloristic and metaphysical senses), outer and
inner emotions, and public and private lives are represented by music that is exuberant and
ruminative.”59 Danielpour explains that his music mirrors life; sudden change is a normal
occurrence in the human disposition, in life itself, and in his music.60 These portrayals of and
transitions between darkness and light, and private and public lives, also occur in Danielpour’s
more mature works; however, in the latter, these abrupt juxtapositions of peaceful and agitated
sections seem less arbitrary than in the Piano Sonata. As this particular characteristic of
Danielpour’s voice has evolved, it has become better integrated in the composition’s flow, with
the composer’s own sense of musical logic.

Boriskin identified five sections in the one-movement sonata,61 although these are not
evident upon initial contact with the score or recording because of the frequent variations of
tempo. Careful study reveals an arch form, similar to Bartók’s fourth string quartet, which
alternates slow and fast tempos around a calm central chorale section.62 At the very beginning,

58Michael Boriskin, e-mail, 30 May 2002.


60Danielpour, phone conversation, 2 October 2001. The composer admits to occasional mood swings, although he says they are not as dramatic now as when he was younger. He remembers “dizzying highs” and “devastating lows” when he was younger and laughingly
describes himself as a “slightly manic” teenager.

61Boriskin, liner notes, 2.

62Ibid.
an accented interval notated as an augmented second (Ex. 3.1, mm. 1-2; A# G in the treble) is perceived by the ear as a minor third, an interval which proves to be important throughout this sonata as well as in subsequent Danielpour compositions.

Minor thirds are prominent melodically, particularly at cadence points (mm. 7, 9-12, 102-3, 253-4). A four-note pitch series appears in the first and last sections, both marked maestoso; originally G# A# (B-flat) B G (Ex. 3.1, mm. 1-3), the motto begins on a different pitch in the last section: E F# G D# (m. 255). In both instances, after a deliberate declamation (fff marcatissimo, mm. 1-3; ff sub. violente, m. 255), the order of pitches changes slightly to create two sets of minor thirds, the first ascending, the second descending (Ex. 3.1, mm. 3-4; G# B, B-flat G; mm. 256ff: E G, F# D#).

![Diagram of musical notation](image)


The second and fourth sections in the arch (mm. 28ff, molto agitato; mm. 142ff, agitato) are faster and more rhythmic, although, as mentioned previously, the mood and tempo fluctuate within each part (mm. 102-3, marked poco piu sostenuto, calmo, in the midst of the agitato second section). In these energetic segments, Danielpour’s familiarity with the keyboard and his ability to write idiomatically are most evident; toccata-like passages with rapid pattern repetitions in different octaves suggest jazz riffs. The primary motive repeated throughout the two agitato segments incorporates a three-note pattern that is derived from the original series (Ex. 3.2, mm. 28-30, also, mm. 144-9), although at times the complete four-note motto is also present (mm. 33-
The composer develops and extends the composition through manipulation of these brief motives. Four-note mottos comprised of notes a semi- or whole tone apart, although sometimes displaced by an octave, are common compositional building blocks in Danielpour’s later works; this is discussed in greater detail in the following chapters.

Reflective, almost nostalgic at times, the middle section of the sonata is marked *misterioso*. This core of the sonata is a respite from the maelstrom, the eye in the storm. An F-major seventh chord superimposed on a D-major seventh serves as a departure point for several brief chordal excerpts (mm. 124ff), an early example of Danielpour’s predilection for chorale fragments and his fondness for polytonality. Each fragment returns to the opening pitch, which is sustained while staccato notes in the bass and treble provide a pointillistic commentary (Ex. 3.3, mm. 130ff). In an interview, the composer revealed that as a child he would play a chord and then listen intently as the sound died away, “just to hear all the complex combinations of overtones. I remember always being mesmerized by sound.”

As in the earlier *Psalms*, Danielpour experiments with the sound capabilities of the piano and the overtone series. At the conclusion of the chorale section, a chord is silently depressed and sustained by the *sostenuto* pedal (Ex. 3.3, mm. 134) followed by treble Messiaen-like flutterings, such as those in his piano

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63Danielpour, quoted in Marienne Uszler, “Write at Home at the Piano,” *Piano & Keyboard* (July/August 2000), 36.
work *Catalogue d’oiseaux*.\(^{64}\) Danielpour acknowledges the influence of various French composers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, particularly Debussy and Messiaen.\(^{65}\)

Ex. 3.3 Danielpour, Piano Sonata, mm. 130-4. ©Copyright 1996 by C. F. Peters Corporation. Used by permission of C. F. Peters Corporation.

In his description of the sonata at its premiere, Holland wrote, “Mr. Danielpour’s six-movement [sic]\(^{66}\) piece is busy, energetic, apparently difficult and always interesting to hear. There are no direct references to jazz, but one felt its presence—in the vitality of the faster

\(^{64}\)Danielpour’s trills, arpeggiations, and written-out tremolos are reminiscent of many places in Messiaen’s *Catalogue*, such as the end of “Le Loriot” in Book I.

\(^{65}\)Danielpour, phone conversation, 2 October 2001.

\(^{66}\)The program for the premiere listed six tempo markings suggesting a six-movement work.
sections and the languorous chord progressions of the slower ones." The work is theatrical and visceral. Bradford Gowen wrote in his Piano & Keyboard article that the sonata and Psalms for Piano are “pieces by a true piano composer,” someone who understands the language and knows how to write for the instrument. A pianist would say the music falls under the fingers well. Boriskin agreed with Gowen’s assessment of Danielpour’s pianistic writing and related that, upon perusing the score, he “fell in love with the work immediately. I was impressed, first of all, by its urgency and electricity, its drama, and its strong, idiomatic keyboard writing.” Gowen favorably compared the sonata, with its moments of lyricism and romantic virtuosity, to Samuel Barber’s, and he encouraged pianists to explore Danielpour’s compositions.

This early piano composition is not as accessible as some of the composer’s later works that are more subtle in their display of dynamic contrasts and dissonance. Audiences are better able to assimilate music that does not upset expectations by veering too often and/or too dramatically from the projected path; however, Boriskin has had considerable success with the piece and estimates that he performed it ten-to-fifteen times in the first five years after the recording. Danielpour himself considers the sonata “chromatic and jagged” but adds, “I wouldn’t change a note.”

The piano sonata is important in this study of Danielpour’s music because it contains in raw fashion many of the elements of the composer’s mature style: rhythmic vitality coupled with nostalgic expression; abrupt contrasts in dynamics and sound; a love of sound, which is exhibited in his orchestral works through instrumental color, textural variety, and spatial effects; use of

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67 Holland, 61.

68 Gowen, 58.

69 Boriskin, e-mail, 30 May 2002.

70 Gowen, 57.

71 Boriskin, 30 May 2002.

72 Danielpour, phone conversation, 3 March 2000. At this point in time, eight years after his revisions and the recording, he remained pleased with Boriskin’s CD and his own composition.
three- or four-note mottos that primarily involve pitches a half-step or whole-step apart; and, above all, duality, both in a physical and in a psychological sense.

### Toward a More Mature Style

Considering the state of the economy and the position of art music in the late twentieth century, one may be surprised by the number of commissions and the amount of publicity Danielpour regularly receives. Jessica Lustig, an agent for several composers (not Danielpour) at Twenty-first Century Music Management, explained, “I can tell you why Richard Danielpour gets so many commissions. He’s always backstage, he’s always meeting people, he knows everyone. He gets his name in front of conductors. It’s his personality.”

Richard Danielpour is friendly and garrulous and, as already noted, he is not shy about introducing himself to people. In 1987 Gerard Schwarz had been music director of the Mostly Mozart Festival in New York for three years and the principal conductor of the Seattle Symphony for two when Danielpour literally knocked on his door with a copy of his first piano concerto. The conductor shared the music with the Seattle Symphony’s composer-in-residence, Stephen Albert, and the two subsequently co-commissioned Danielpour to write an entirely new work for the Seattle

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73 Jessica Lustig, phone conversation, 26 January 2000.


75 Danielpour, 10 July 2000. With no preliminary contact, Danielpour went to the conductor’s apartment, was waved upstairs by the doorman, and was greeted at the door by Schwarz’s young children who were involved in an interactive game of cowboys and Indians. In a matter of seconds, Danielpour had a rope around his leg and a suction cup dart stuck to his forehead, at which point Schwarz appeared.

Symphony and for the New York chamber orchestra known as the Music Today Ensemble, which Schwarz also conducted. The result was *First Light*, a thirteen-minute work completed in February 1988.\(^{77}\)

Dedicated to Schwarz and Albert, *First Light* was premiered by Schwarz in Merkin Hall in New York on 2 March 1988.\(^{78}\) According to Danielpour, the audience included Verna Fine and Rosalie Calabrese as well as composers George Perle, Bright Sheng, Aaron Kernis, George Tsonakis, and Louise Talma. Also in attendance were representatives of several music publishers, including G. Schirmer and Boosey & Hawkes. Danielpour recalls that the *First Light* premiere garnered “a fantastic review, at a time when I still avidly read reviews.”\(^{79}\) The *Newsday* critic mentioned the “fierce, insistent rhythms” but continued with “there is far more than that. The music is fast, dense, propulsive and rich with incident.”\(^{80}\) Allan Kozinn, writing for *The New York Times*, said that *First Light* was “enthusiastically received.” Describing a “vital and eclectic” score, Kozinn recognized touches of minimalism, neo-romanticism, and Leonard Bernstein; however, he said, “Given that stylistic breadth, the piece is surprisingly cohesive, with a visceral appeal.”\(^{81}\)

The result of the successful performance was Danielpour’s invitation to the Schirmer office where he was offered a publishing contract at age thirty-two. According to Norman Ryan, who currently manages Danielpour’s catalog for Schirmer, it is highly unusual for a composer to

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\(^{77}\) Danielpour, 10 July 2000. The program from the premiere indicates that The Hebrew Arts School was responsible for the funding of the commission through a grant from the Jerome Foundation.


\(^{81}\) Allan Kozinn, “Music: Modern Bill by Gerard Schwarz,” *New York Times* (6 March 1988), C15. This assessment appears to support Corigliano’s comment that stylistic consistency is no longer an important issue in a work. And Kozinn’s description of *First Light* reflects Gann’s definition of a “totalist” composition in the late twentieth century.
be signed so quickly. The standard procedure involves monthly meetings where each representative tries to sell a composer he has discovered. Ryan explained, “It may take years before it is decided to sign the composer. . . . We’re looking for something we’ve never heard before—a voice we’d like to hear more from—a composer who has something to say.” Part of Danielpour’s decision to leave the family-run Peters company was his recognition that he needed a publisher that would promote his works, something that Peters was not doing. Upon recommendations from composers John Corigliano and Stephen Albert, Danielpour was taken under the wing of Paul Whitke, who had also been the Schirmer editor for Samuel Barber and Leonard Bernstein.

Danielpour had been fortunate to capture the attention of Bernstein when mutual friend Michael Barrett gave the conductor a score of Danielpour’s Symphony No. 2. Bernstein subsequently invited the younger composer to a 5 November 1988 Carnegie Hall concert and then to a backstage meeting. At the post-performance introduction, Danielpour was surprised and thrilled by Bernstein’s familiarity with his composition. “I was stunned because [Bernstein] actually knew my music [and] was singing some of it back to me. It was wonderful!” In the summer of 1989, Bernstein invited Danielpour, Christopher Rouse, and Bright Sheng to accompany him on a conducting tour of their music in Italy and Germany. Rouse and Sheng were also promising young composers at the time. According to Danielpour the three of them were officially “composers-in-residence,” but their primary responsibility was to explain their musical intentions to the Italian orchestra at the Accademia di Santa Cecilia. The conducting was done by Bernstein and his three apprentices: Mark Stringer, Carl St. Clair, and Eiji Oue.


84Danielpour, quoted in Uszler, 33. Also, Danielpour, phone conversation, 13 May 2001.

They spent a week in Italy and about ten days at the summer festival in Holstein, Germany; the Danielpour work presented at these two venues was *First Light*.86

There are three different instrumental versions of *First Light*. Originally it was written for seventeen instruments. At Bernstein’s request the composition was scored for large orchestra. The first performance with this orchestration was conducted by Mark Stringer at the Schleswig-Holstein Festival in West Germany on 2 July 1989.87 This same arrangement received its American premiere by the American Composers Orchestra directed by Dennis Russell Davies at Carnegie Hall on 7 January 1990.88 When Danielpour was composer-in-residence with the Seattle Symphony during the 1991-92 season, the work was performed with the original seventeen instruments plus an augmented string section, the same scoring on the Seattle Symphony’s 1992 recording with Schwarz conducting.89 *First Light* is Danielpour’s most frequently performed work, passing the 100th performance milestone within ten years of its premiere.90

The composer’s preface describes *First Light* as “a one-movement concerto in four sections.” As in the Piano Sonata, one of the most obvious characteristics is the alternation of what Danielpour refers to as public and private utterings. The first and third sections of the piece, with syncopation, dynamic contrasts, and colorful orchestration, are intended to represent one’s external nature. The more sustained, peaceful, ruminative second and fourth sections of


88Rodda, 5.


First Light are symbolic of the inner man, the private nature. In addition to expressing the two aspects of man’s personality, Danielpour is interested in the ancient Greek concept of the music of the universe, the unheard music that is behind the mathematical predictability of the stars and planets, as expounded by Boethius in the early sixth century A.D.\textsuperscript{91} This notion of the “music of the spheres” is evident in the Robert Duncan poem, Four Pictures of the Real Universe, from which the phrase “first light” is taken. A segment of the poem is included in the score:

And does not the spirit attend secretly
the music that is hidden away from me
chords that hold the stars in their courses
outfoldings of sound from the seed of first light?
Were it not for the orders of music hidden
we should be claimed by the preponderent void.\textsuperscript{92}

Confessing a leaning towards mysticism, Danielpour has also pursued connections between Eastern religion and early Christianity.\textsuperscript{93} His spiritual inclinations are evident in all his compositions, particularly those written during the time he seriously studied Christianity. The composer especially enjoyed the rituals, the sense of history, and what he termed the emotionalism that comprises the Roman Catholic religion.\textsuperscript{94} Liturgical chant is suggested at two different places in the concluding pages of First Light where the composer has written “alleluia” in the score. The stepwise melodic pattern is typical of early chants, but, when questioned, Danielpour acknowledged he had borrowed the motive from Randall Thompson’s choral work Alleluia. Compare Danielpour (Ex. 3.4, mm. 282-84) with Thompson (Ex. 3.5, mm. 1-4). The concluding “alleluia” motive, which encompasses a major third in Randall Thompson (Ex. 3.5, mm. 3-4), is reduced to a minor third in Danielpour (mm. 290-1).

\textsuperscript{91}Boethius, De institutione musica, excerpt in Oliver Strunk, Source Readings in Music History: Antiquity and the Middle Ages (New York: Norton, 1965), 84.


\textsuperscript{93}Danielpour, 19 September 2001 and 16 March 2002.

\textsuperscript{94}Danielpour, 19 September 2001.
In Danielpour’s second “alleluia” (mm. 306, 311-12), the violas intone a perfect fourth, which imitates the last section of Thompson’s composition (mm. 69ff). Borrowing from an American composer, suggesting a reference to Catholic chant, and quoting a poem whose title possesses metaphysical implications is typical of this composer who appears to retain everything he reads and hears and who has embraced various religions over a period of time. Danielpour describes First Light as “a piece of contrasts, a search for harmony, a search for inner alignment and inner peace.”

First Light employs syncopation, ostinatos, repeated motives, percussive piano writing, and pedal points such as those used by Igor Stravinsky in The Rite of Spring. Glimpses of other composers include nostalgic, Barber-like lyricism (mm. 104ff, 187ff). A review of a Baltimore Symphony performance of First Light suggested that the meditative sections recalled Copland, and the brassy sections, Bernstein; however, the critic emphasized that these other voices do not detract from the piece: “Calling First Light eclectic doesn’t do justice to music whose passion and conviction—the quiet ending was a particular knockout—declares the presence of a

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distinctive and interesting voice.”

Danielpour’s own compositional voice is evident on the very first page of *First Light*. A descending half step in the horns (Ex. 3.6, mm. 2-3) is immediately repeated and then imitated by the trombones (mm. 5-8); the *glissando* moves from *pianissimo* to *sforzando*, creating an effect that is at once exciting and discomfitting.

![Ex. 3.6 Danielpour, *First Light*, mm. 1-3. Copyright © 1988 by Associated Music Publishers, Inc. (BMI) International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Used by permission.](image)

A *crescendoing* semitone, usually marked with a slur, is present in many of Danielpour’s compositions, from this work to the third piano concerto (2000). Traditionally a descending half-step slur *decrescendoes*, symbolizing a sigh. Danielpour’s gesture captures attention because of its unconventionality, although in some compositions it is less obvious than in others. Prominent in the first pages of *First Light*, the *crescendoed* sigh alternates between trombones and trumpets (mm. 10-13) and horns (mm. 16-21) and makes many other appearances throughout the piece, the last statements concluding three measures from the final cadence.

Instead of a sigh of resignation, Danielpour’s slur creates a sense of unease, of foreboding, of imminent danger. There is a wrestling of unseen forces in this music. The *crescendoed* slur symbolizes active confrontation rather than passive acceptance. Danielpour’s music owes much to the past, but this motive flaunts convention with a tiny but significant gesture.

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97See measures 105, 120-1, 142ff, 187-8, 204-5, 255-6, 272ff, 292ff, 310ff.
Intervals that used to be considered dissonant, such as minor seconds/ninths and major sevenths, are an important part of Danielpour’s melodic and harmonic language. It is common for these intervals to exist between the outer voices at key points in his work, as can be seen from the opening notes of *First Light*. There is no consistent tonal center, and yet tonality never seems too remote. Occasional cadences, such as the B-minor chord immediately preceding the alleluia motive in measure 282, provide aural tonal centers although they are not approached in a traditional manner; it is typical of Danielpour to place these chords in first or second inversion. Stepwise melodic motion, open fifths, and frequent outlining of triads, although constantly changing and moving, provide the sense of a tonal framework; e.g., the arpeggiations in cellos and the restless movement of fifths in the string basses beginning in measure 182 (Ex. 3.7).

![Ex. 3.7 Danielpour, *First Light*, mm. 182-4. Copyright © 1988 by Associated Music Publishers, Inc. (BMI) International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Used by permission.](image)

Tonal ambiguity and stagnant harmonies resulting from extended pedal points, such as the prolonged D in the piano bass from measure 310 to the end, are consistent elements throughout Danielpour’s oeuvre. *First Light* finally transcends the general implication of the minor mode and a sense of darkness by concluding peacefully in a D major tonality, figuratively the first light. James Oestreich called the final “placid” D major chord “the most striking gesture” in *First Light*, and he quoted the composer’s explanation that the chord is “surprising and inevitable, a kind of answer implicit in the question of the piece.”

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comment and Danielpour’s description on two separate occasions of both Ives’s *The Unanswered Question* and *First Light* as “a search for harmony,” one may assume the earlier work consciously influenced *First Light*. The similarity to Ives in the contrast of timbres and the different planes of sound is evident in the sustained, *pianissimo* strings which are seemingly impervious to the woodwind and piano flutterings (Ex. 3.8, mm. 132 ff).

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99 Danielpour used the phrase “a search for harmony” to describe Charles Ives’s *The Unanswered Question* in a 19 September 2001 phone conversation. A week later, he used the same words to describe *First Light*, as seen previously (page 55, fn 95).

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Regardless of the fleeting presence of voices of earlier composers, it is in First Light that Richard Danielpour believes he began to discover his own voice. Certainly the composition is pivotal in his career as it helped him secure an important publishing contract. It also guaranteed him name recognition in musical circles. In his words, “Everything started with First Light.”100 With this pronouncement, Danielpour acknowledged his move toward a more mature compositional style.

100 Danielpour, 10 July 2000.
CHAPTER FOUR
TEACHING, TRAVELING, AND COMPOSING

In reality Richard Danielpour had begun to capture attention prior to First Light. In chapter three it was noted that he had received the 1982 Bearns Prize for the piano concerto composed at Juilliard, the same piece he showed Stephen Albert that had resulted in the commission for First Light. The composer also submitted the concerto to the American Academy of Arts and Letters to be considered for a Charles Ives Fellowship. The $5000 Ives Scholarship awards had been initiated in 1970, but the Ives Fellowship was newly instituted as a special award for a more advanced composer. Danielpour garnered this first annual $10,000 prize in May 1983. Other recognition and awards that Danielpour has received to date include a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship (1989) and two grants from the Barlow Foundation—in 1989 to write for the New York Chamber Symphony (Piano Concerto No. 1, Metamorphosis) and in 1991 for the Muir Quartet (String Quartet No. 2, Shadow Dances). The American Academy of Arts and Letters honored him again in 1996 with an Academy Award for Music. In

1Danielpour, phone conversation, 27 September 2001. The composer now refers to the early concerto as “that terrible piece for piano and orchestra.”

2Rafael Diaz Toshman, American Academy of Arts and Letters, phone conversation, 10 April 2003. The Ives Scholarship is now a $7500 prize and the Fellowship is $15,000.


4Toshman. The Academy Award, sometimes referred to as a Lifetime Achievement Award, is given annually to an artist, architect, composer, or writer, not for a specific work but for an artist’s collected works.
addition Danielpour was one of six composers commissioned to write for the 100th anniversary of the Philadelphia Orchestra, with the aid of a 2000 Philadelphia Music Project Award.\(^5\)

Beginning with his position as “composer-in-residence” at Germany’s Schleswig-Holstein Festival in 1989, associations with performing ensembles have given Danielpour numerous opportunities over the years to write and to be heard. In addition to the Seattle Symphony in 1991-92, other residencies have included a two-week stay with the University of Southern California in October 1992, and the Sante Fe Chamber Music Festival in 1994; the latter resulted in the commission and premiere of *Sonnets to Orpheus II*.\(^6\) During his term as composer-in-residence with the Pacific Symphony (1998-2001), Danielpour wrote two major works for the orchestra to perform and record, *The Night Rainbow* and *An American Requiem*.\(^7\) In July 1999 he was the first composer-in-residence chosen for the program inaugurated at the Saratoga Chamber Music Festival.\(^8\)

Stays at both Yaddo and the MacDowell Colony have regularly provided opportunities to concentrate on composition. Danielpour worked on his Third Symphony and the piano concerto *Metamorphosis* at Yaddo in May and June 1989 and subsequently spent two weeks that same summer at the MacDowell Colony.\(^9\) Since 1982 he has made fifteen visits to the New Hampshire retreat, thirteen to Yaddo, and three to Bellagio, Italy.\(^10\) These composer retreats have been crucial to Danielpour’s productivity, but not just because of the uninterrupted time they afford.

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\(^10\) Michelle Aldredge, MacDowell Colony, e-mail 21 April 2003 (fifteenth visit was May/June 2003). Thirteenth visit to Yaddo was July 2003. Danielpour, phone conversation, 10 April 2003.
He has also learned much about his working habits and discovered his most productive periods of the day.\textsuperscript{11} Several times he has found himself in what he terms “an emergency situation,” necessitating an escape from New York in order to meet a compositional deadline. He relates a story of contacting Yaddo in November 1993, arranging a December 1-16 residency, and drafting the entire first cello concerto during that stay.\textsuperscript{12} Danielpour’s most recent visit to Bellagio in August 2002 was a team residency that included the general directors of the Detroit, Cincinnati, and Philadelphia opera companies. They are preparing a May 2005 premiere of Danielpour’s opera, \textit{Margaret Garner}, with libretto by Toni Morrison. According to the composer, working with the different personalities involved in this project is perhaps more demanding than the work on the opera itself.\textsuperscript{13}

Although Danielpour has received many awards and commissions, teaching has helped sustain him financially. In this regard, he is like many of his composer colleagues who find it necessary to teach or establish some source of income other than their writing. While still a doctoral student at Juilliard, Danielpour was a teaching assistant in the theory department. Mark Stringer, who conducted \textit{First Light} on the Bernstein tour, first met the composer when Danielpour taught Stringer’s analysis class.\textsuperscript{14} Danielpour’s adjunct teaching experiences during his graduate studies included The College of New Rochelle (1984-5), a position he acquired through Annette Covatta who premiered his early \textit{Psalms}, and Marymount Manhattan College (1984-7).\textsuperscript{15} Teaching at the latter school resulted in one of Danielpour’s earliest published works, \textit{Music for a Jubilee}, which is still in the Peters catalogue. Commissioned by Marymount Manhattan for its fiftieth anniversary, it premiered 23 September 1985 with JoAnn Falletta


\textsuperscript{12}Ibid., 215-6. Also, Paul J. Horsley, liner notes \textit{Yo-Yo Ma Premieres} (Collingswood, New Jersey: Sony, 1996), 5-6. SK66299.

\textsuperscript{13}Danielpour, phone conversation, 20 Aug 2002.

\textsuperscript{14}Mark Stringer, e-mail, 9 April 2003.

\textsuperscript{15}Danielpour, phone conversation, 20 August 2002. Ellen Taaffe Zwilich also taught music appreciation there prior to Danielpour.
conducting a wind ensemble of Juilliard students and alumni. *Music for a Jubilee* received a repeat performance in Alice Tully Hall at Lincoln Center on 13 May 1986 with conductor Arthur Post.\(^\text{16}\)

In 1993 Danielpour was invited to join the composition faculty at the Manhattan School of Music, and he has taught there ever since. He generally has five or six composition students and is the Artistic Director of the Claremont Ensemble, a contemporary group which he co-founded and whose make up varies as repertoire demands. His course load has included orchestral music, a bi-annual opera seminar for composers, and a doctoral seminar at Manhattan. Danielpour has also been a faculty member at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia since 1997. Except for monthly master classes or “composer seminars,” he no longer teaches formal semester courses. All his private students, including those at Curtis, travel to his New York studio for lessons.\(^\text{17}\) Both schools allow the composer considerable freedom in meeting his teaching responsibilities. In an effort to maximize time for composing, Danielpour usually extends his summers away from New York by not returning until October. He worked at Bellagio in September/October 2000 and was at Copland House in upstate New York the whole month of September 2001.\(^\text{18}\) The entire fall semester 2002, Danielpour worked on *Margaret Garner* at the American Academy in Berlin, thanks to an Alberto Vilar Music Fellowship.\(^\text{19}\)

\(^{16}\)“A Concert of Chamber Music,” program notes (13 May 1986), 18. The concert consisted of works by Bach, Brahms, and Danielpour.

\(^{17}\)Danielpour, 20 August 2002.

\(^{18}\)<www.Coplandhouse.org>. Accessed 10 May 2002. Copland spent the last thirty years of his life at this home near the Hudson River. It has functioned as an artists’ retreat since 1998 when Michael Boriskin was appointed Artistic Director. Residency is restricted to American composers, six to eight of whom can be individually accommodated each year for a one- or two-month stay. Selection by jury is based on submission of several compositions and CDs.

\(^{19}\)<www.americanacademy.de>. Accessed 10 May 2002. Also, e-mail from Andrea Brown at the American Academy in Berlin’s New York office, 13 May 2002. This “Berlin Award” is granted by the Alberto Vilar Music Jury (comprised of Marta Istomin, Michael Kaiser, and Tod Machover in 2002-3) and is based on a composer’s submission of two scores with CDs. The other fellow in 2002-3 was Kurt Rohde; John Corigliano was the 2002-3 “Alberto Vilar Distinguished Visitor,” indicating his shorter residency in Berlin.
Danielpour finds his affiliation with Curtis so rewarding that he claims he would continue regardless of financial need. One of his first students at Curtis was David Ludwig, grandson of the late pianist Rudolf Serkin, who was the director of Curtis from 1968 to 1976. Ludwig spent six years with Danielpour, earning first a Master of Music degree at Manhattan (1997), then an Artist Diploma at Curtis (2001). Subsequent study with John Corigliano resulted in a Graduate Diploma at Juilliard. When asked, Ludwig reported it would be difficult to pinpoint the most important thing he learned from Danielpour. In addition to assistance in developing his own harmonic language and orchestral writing skills, Ludwig received instruction in good business sense and ways to further his own ends as an artist. As an active professional composer, he has already received several commissions, and he appreciated the fact that Danielpour discussed practical considerations. He attributed all his success to Richard Danielpour. “I would have absolutely none of this if it weren’t for Richard. . . .There is just no way that I could ever repay him, even fractionally.” Touting his mentor’s personal integrity, Ludwig explained that ultimately he learned to be a professional and a good colleague, one who is generous and encouraging to other composers. Ludwig joined Danielpour on the Curtis faculty in 2002.

Danielpour also presents master classes and composition seminars elsewhere. In May 2002 he spent two weeks at the Atlantic Center for the Arts in Florence, Italy. Six students were invited to bring a first draft of a new song cycle. One of those budding composers was Jorge Muñiz, a student of Danielpour’s at Manhattan. Muñiz, who moved to New York specifically to study with Danielpour, began working on his doctorate in composition in 2000. Muñiz calls the

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23Ludwig, e-mail, 17 April 2002.
24Ludwig, e-mail, 17 April 2002 and 18 April 2003.
Florence seminar one of his “greatest experiences as a composer.” There were daily rehearsals with baritone Mark Oswald and his accompanist, and every afternoon and evening Danielpour conducted master classes of the students’ song cycles. At the residency’s conclusion, all the compositions were premiered at a final concert.

In this country, the New Jersey Composition and Conducting Institute, a three-week July 2002 program at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, included seminars on the practical considerations of leading and administrating an orchestra as well as on musical matters such as rehearsals and performances. Danielpour was instrumental in the design and execution of the program, emphasizing issues that are seldom covered in the traditional classroom, such as how to identify the most essential points to discuss with a conductor in the short amount of time allotted to one’s composition in rehearsal. It is Danielpour’s mission to prepare his students for every aspect of a composer’s business in the twenty-first century. The final concert by the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra gave four current and former Danielpour students, Andrew McKenna Lee, James Ra, David Ludwig, and Gregg Wramage, the opportunity to hear their works performed.

Another young composer who attended the New Jersey Institute was Yevgeniy Sharlat, who, along with David Ludwig, was one of Danielpour’s first students at Curtis. Sharlat, who came to the United States from Russia three years prior to enrolling at Curtis, had already been composing for eleven years before meeting Danielpour. After four years as a Danielpour student, including one semester with Ned Rorem as an exchange teacher, he earned a Bachelor of Music degree (2001). He claims that most of his achievements are a result of Danielpour’s “adroit instruction.” Time management and various practical aspects of being a composer are part of the knowledge he acquired. “The practicalities of [a] composer’s life were brought to light during the seminars alongside deeper questions of artistic integrity. Above all, his [Danielpour’s] was

26Oswald was subsequently one of the soloists in Danielpour’s 2001 An American Requiem premiere and recording.


28Anne Midgette, “Here’s the Baton, Now Go To It!,” New York Times (12 July 2002), E1, 8.
the best example for us all.” Sharlat currently studies with Joseph Schwantner and Martin Bresnick at Yale University, but he considers Danielpour his most important composition teacher.

Sharlat is grateful that he was urged never to stifle his own voice, however different it might be from Danielpour’s own. Danielpour emphasizes listening to many diverse composers and compositions and seldom provides specific rules or even general guidelines for writing effective music. He encourages his students to do everything possible to hear their music performed: “Hearing one’s music is better than ten lessons.” When Muñiz was asked what was the most important thing gleaned from his professor, he replied, “honesty and sincerity in the language.” Echoing Sharlat and Ludwig, Muñiz said that, above all, Danielpour encouraged him to develop his own personal form of expression without feeling intimidated by anyone else’s style or criticism.

Many of Danielpour’s pupils write in a conservative vein with common practice harmonies and forms, but others, including Andrew McKenna Lee, exhibit the influence of composers such as Ligeti and Penderecki. Although Danielpour himself has not utilized new methods of notation or innovative performance techniques, he is comfortable mentoring students who wish to adopt a more modern style of writing. As for Danielpour’s personal compositional approach, Muñiz described it as “intuitive, but well controlled at the same time, a good balance between the external and the internal layer of the composition process.” In other words, the younger composer recognized Danielpour’s innate musicianship and creativity at the same time that he acknowledged the skill with which Danielpour consciously crafts his work. In composing and in teaching, he balances the spontaneous with the controlled.

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28 Yevgeniy Sharlat, e-mail, 16 July 2002.
29 Ibid.
31 Muñiz, 16 July 2002.
32 Ludwig, 17 April 2002.
In 1996, the year Danielpour turned forty, he not only had five world premieres of his music, he was also awarded an exclusive recording contract with Sony Classical. Only three other composers in America have been so honored: Philip Glass, Aaron Copland, and Igor Stravinsky.\textsuperscript{34} This is a remarkable achievement in a business where recordings of contemporary works are often financial risks. At the present time the greatest monetary rewards in the recording business are reaped in the pop field, and the market for serious contemporary art music is fickle. The Sony contract is evidence that the company had faith in Danielpour’s marketability as a composer. In 1998 the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra’s CD of Danielpour’s Concerto for Orchestra was nominated for a Grammy in the category of “classical contemporary composition.” That same year Yo-Yo Ma Premieres Concertos for Violoncello and Orchestra, a recording of cello concertos by Christopher Rouse, Leon Kirchner, and Danielpour, won Grammies for “Best Classical Album,” “Best Instrumental Soloist with Orchestra,” and “Producer of the Year” for Steve Epstein.\textsuperscript{35}

Epstein, who has been with Sony for thirty years, dating back to the time it was CBS Masterworks, worked with George Crumb and Morton Feldman in the 1970s. Most recently, in addition to Danielpour, Rouse, and Kirchner, he has produced music by John Corigliano. When asked why Danielpour was awarded the exclusive contract, he replied that Danielpour’s music is appealing on many levels. The musically uneducated can enjoy it, but there is also an underlying substance that attracts the more sophisticated listeners. Danielpour is no longer exclusively associated with Sony as he chose not to renew the contract after five years, but it is Epstein’s belief that being able to write “exclusive” on Danielpour’s CDs gave the record label added prestige.\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{34}Robert Croan, “Every Note in Place,” \textit{Pittsburgh Post-Gazette} (16 May 1997), 17. Copland and Stravinsky were associated with Columbia Masterworks, Sony’s predecessor.


\textsuperscript{36}Steven Epstein, phone conversation, 11 April 2003. In addition to the \textit{Cello Premieres}, Epstein produced \textit{Concerto for Orchestra/Anima Mundi} (1996) and \textit{Celestial Night/Toward the Splendid City/Urban Dances} (1998). On the 2001 recording of \textit{Elegies} and \textit{Sonnets to Orpheus I}, Epstein was the producer of the latter segment.
To date there are ten CDs of Danielpour’s music, the two most recent being the Pacific Symphony’s 2001 recording of *An American Requiem* and the 2003 release of *A Child’s Reliquary* and *In the Arms of the Beloved.* 37 Danielpour actively participates in the recording sessions, as evidenced by David Zinman’s journal during the Philadelphia Orchestra’s recording of the Grammy-winning concerto album: “Friday, 5 January 1996. Richard Danielpour is in New York City for the premiere of his *Toward the Splendid City* with the Philharmonic. . . . [6 January] Richard, who has been Amtraking between NY and Phillie, looks as if he hasn’t slept in a month.” 38

Recording, traveling, and teaching take time away from composing and can sap creative energy. Fortunately Danielpour possesses a disciplined work ethic. In 1995 he completed a Pacific Northwest Ballet commission, *Anima Mundi*, on the Fourth of July, and the next day began work on a composition for chorus and orchestra (*Canticle of Peace*) already scheduled for an October premiere. 39 He guards his composition time zealously and usually composes three to four hours every morning in his New York studio, teaching in the afternoons. Residencies at retreats afford Danielpour at least twice as much time to write. In addition to applying frequently for artist residencies, he tries to allot a few hours to composing when he is traveling. 40 At the conclusion of the 1997/98 school year at Manhattan and Curtis, he went to London’s Abbey Road Studios for Sony’s June recording of *Celestial Night*, *Toward the Splendid City*, and *Urban Dances*. Danielpour then worked on a new orchestral commission at Marlborough and Yaddo during most of July and August; however, he made time to go to the 4 August 1998 premiere of his Bassoon Quintet, as his Schirmer contract requires his presence at premieres. 41

37 A complete discography is included in Appendix B.


39 McCutchan, 213.

40 Danielpour, 20 August 2002.

Despite the time taken from composing to teach, travel, and attend rehearsals, performances, and recording sessions, Danielpour is a very prolific composer. Major artists and orchestras consistently commission his music, and this usually results in three or four premieres at various venues every year; for example, in the year 2000, premieres included *Voices of Remembrance* in New York City and Washington, D.C., *The Night Rainbow* in Los Angeles, *A Child’s Reliquary* in Iowa City, and the violin concerto, *A Fool’s Paradise*, at Yaddo and its European premiere in France.

In 2001 Danielpour had overlapping premieres. After attending Ma’s premiere of *Through the Ancient Valley* with the New York Philharmonic in March, he went to Lyon, France, for the work’s first European performance. It is not common for American composers to receive European commissions. Since the Orchestre National de Lyon had co-commissioned the concerto along with the New York Philharmonic and Kölnmusik, Danielpour considered the European premiere to be an important milestone; consequently he missed the premiere of his fourth string quartet in Kansas City, Missouri, on 20 April 2001. Two weeks later, however, he was present when the American Quartet repeated the composition in New York.

In addition to premieres, Danielpour used to attend as many other performances as possible, but extensive programming of his compositions as well as time constraints now prevent him from hearing every presentation of his work. At the same time *Through the Ancient Valley* was first being heard in Germany (11 November 2001), Danielpour was in Los Angeles rehearsing for his third important American premiere in 2001. *An American Requiem* premiered on November 14 with Carl St. Clair and the Pacific Symphony. Danielpour then remained in California for several days to assist with its recording.

Another person who is usually present at premieres is his Schirmer agent, Norman Ryan. Ryan, who was working at Lincoln Center at the time, first heard Danielpour’s music when Dawn Upshaw premiered *Sonnets to Orpheus I* at Alice Tully Recital Hall in November 1992. He liked the composition and met Danielpour several times before he began work at Schirmer in

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42 Danielpour, phone conversation, 9 November 1999. He remarked that he had composed an hour and ten minutes of music every year for the previous twelve years.

43 Danielpour, 20 August 2002.
1998 and subsequently began representing the composer. In discussing some of Danielpour’s later works, Ryan notes a focus that was missing in the earlier music: “One was aware of the ‘effects’ in the early stuff; now there is more coh esiveness in his scores.”  Although
Danielpour’s music continues to possess abundant rhythmic vitality, more recent works avoid freneticism merely for the sake of expending energy.

Several of the early compositions do seem concerned with effect, and occasionally they sound contrived. Yet as Danielpour has matured, one can see the methods which he has been synthesizing and developing as part of his own expression. Despite this, Danielpour was criticized as recently as November 2001 for not being original. One wonders if some critics are themselves mired in the past, clinging to their earlier assessments rather than re-evaluating Danielpour’s compositional evolution. Those who see a maturity and depth in his more recent works recognize Danielpour’s increased confidence in his own distinctive style. Norman Ryan, one of those who knows Danielpour’s works best, pointed out in 2002, “There is an honesty now; his works are emotionally honest.”  Although the case could be made that Ryan has a vested interest in the composer, he was willing to be quite frank in his appraisal of the earlier works: “Previously, great ideas were sometimes frantically presented.”  Danielpour’s music has become less random and disjointed and more ordered and individualized as he has become more comfortable with his own expressivity. It is significant that all the Danielpour students contacted by this author emphasized his insistence on the development of their own individual voices.

Danielpour explains that he spends a great deal of time formulating compositions mentally: “The lightning bolt everyone talks about is the result of incessant work.”  The composer points out that he is always thinking about composing, going through long periods of time without writing anything down. Only after an idea is well-conceived does he begin to put it on paper. First drafts are usually written quickly; short scores for both the Concerto for

45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
47 McCutchan, 214.
Orchestra and the first cello concerto were written in less than three weeks. “Usually when I’m ready and I sit down to write, the piece comes. It’s a question of knowing when I’m ready. . . . I heard Stravinsky say, in a BBC documentary, ‘I have learned to wait like an insect!’” That does not mean that he is satisfied with his efforts at that point. Many revisions occur up to and even after the first rehearsal and often following the premieres. Between the dress rehearsal and the recording session following the three premiere performances of In the Arms of the Beloved, fifty measures were eliminated from the double concerto.

Danielpour considers himself an “assimilator,” someone who creates something new out of borrowed material. Some circles would call him a “Mozartian.” According to Ludwig, “The Mozartians are the assimilators who write an awful lot of music with often great facility that borrows various elements from others.” This certainly describes Danielpour’s style and his compositional method. Ludwig continued, “Beethovenians are always trying new things and tend to write less music that can be quite daring and original, but has a greater chance of musical failure.” Thus Danielpour has taken a path that is less original but also less risky; however, Ludwig emphasized that he thinks Danielpour is “extraordinarily good at what he does as a composer.” Danielpour explains that he composes because he thinks it is what he does best and because he can not conceive of doing anything else: “I don’t write music because I want to express myself. That is something that happens in spite of me.”

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48 When discussing his orchestral works, Danielpour frequently refers to composing a “short score,” which he defines as the equivalent of a two-piano reduction, using from three to six staves depending on the instrumentation. Phone conversation, 13 May 2001.

49 McCutchan, 215.

50 Danielpour, 20 August 2002.


52 Ludwig, 17 April 2002. According to Ludwig, another one of his teachers, John Corigliano, considers himself a “Beethovenian.”

53 Ibid.

54 McCutchan, 214.
Danielpour’s compositions unashamedly connect to the past; he is part of a long tradition of composers who consciously assimilate music of previous centuries into their own style. There was a time in the twentieth century when modernism encouraged forgetfulness of earlier musical practices. Discussing the music of the post-World War II era, Danielpour says, “A lot of music of that time has no sense of external memory, meaning that it doesn’t relate to music that came before it.”⁵⁵ In contrast, many musicians today acknowledge an indebtedness to their musical heritage by deliberately embracing traditional compositional processes. In a 2003 article on minimalism and tonal idioms, Jonathan W. Bernard commented on “the larger trends that have emerged in new American concert music in the waning years of the twentieth century and the first few of the twenty-first, particularly toward the music of an ostensibly tonal (and for the most part, markedly conservative) idiom . . .”⁵⁶ Richard Danielpour is one of those composers who recognizes that new repertoire can have a connection with the past and still be fresh.

⁵⁵Ibid., 213.

CHAPTER FIVE
PIANO WORKS

The next four chapters cover four specific genres: music for piano, voice, chamber ensemble, and orchestra. They are intended as an overview of Danielpour’s oeuvre. Since some pieces have not been released for general publication, this author consulted perusal scores on loan from Schirmer Music Publishers. It must be noted that measure numbers in these works are not definitive because of Danielpour’s habit of revising compositions during dress rehearsals and occasionally even after premieres. Appendix A includes complete information on commissions, dates of composition, dedications, and premieres.

Considering that the piano is Danielpour’s instrument, one might expect to find many keyboard compositions in his list of works, but his output in the genre is quite small. The primary reason for this is most likely a practical one: there are fewer requests for solo piano pieces, and Danielpour writes almost exclusively on commission. As the composer points out, one cannot make a living by writing piano music. Commission fees for orchestral compositions are more lucrative.¹ Although he has continued to teach, Danielpour considers composition his primary vocation and prefers that it be his primary source of income as well, hence his concentration on large-scale works.

Danielpour has a gift for instrumental color and enjoys composing for multiple instruments, so it is not surprising that three concerti (1990, 1994, 2002)² form a major part of the composer’s catalogue for piano. Solos include Psalms for Piano (1985) and the Piano Sonata

¹Uszler, 40.

²Again, this does not include the early concerto written at Juilliard that is no longer in Danielpour’s catalogue.
(1986; rev. 1992) which have been discussed previously. His best-known piano piece is *The Enchanted Garden* (1992), a set of five preludes titled “Promenade,” “Mardi Gras,” “Childhood Memory,” “From the Underground,” and “Night.” A brief *Elegy* (1995), dedicated to Drevet, and *Three Preludes* (2003), the middle one entitled “Lean Kat Rag,” were recently premiered in 2003. There is also a miniature *Serenade* that appeared in a 1998 *Piano & Keyboard* article.\(^3\)

That same journal conducted a survey which revealed that despite the wealth of piano music written in the twentieth century, very little of it is performed. Regardless of this disappointing fact, Danielpour indicates that he is interested in eventually writing more for the instrument.\(^4\)

In the summer of 1987, a year after leaving Juilliard, Danielpour made some preliminary drafts of a piano concerto. That November, Bruce Wolosoff performed two of the three movements with JoAnn Falletta conducting the Denver Chamber Orchestra. The composer withdrew the concerto and reworked the material into a piano quintet the following summer after receiving a commission from the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center.\(^5\) He completed *Quintet for Piano and Strings* that September in Bellagio, and it was premiered by Ken Noda, piano, and the Emerson String Quartet on 6 January 1989.\(^6\) Noda explains the work as “the journey of one mortal being (the piano) grappling with his own demons and life’s outer forces (the ensemble) and finding redemption not through a naive affirmation of a higher power but an experience of light after the realization of the darkness within.”\(^7\) In this synopsis one sees the concept of light transforming darkness that is a recurring theme in Danielpour’s music.

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\(^3\)Uszler, 34-5. Dedicated to Cathryn Seaburn, *Serenade* is only two pages long.

\(^4\)Ibid., 39-40.


\(^6\)Richard Danielpour, Program Note, *Quintet for Piano and Strings* (New York: Associated Music Publishers, Inc., 1989), AMP 8060. Danielpour expresses gratitude to not only the Rockefeller Foundation (for the Bellagio residency) but also to the MacDowell Colony and the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts.

The composer himself describes the piano quintet as a “metamorphosis of the soul.” This mirrors the subtitle he gave to the subsequent realization (1990) of his initial vision: Concerto for Piano and Chamber Orchestra, *Metamorphosis*. The piano concerto is essentially the same composition as the quintet except for the instrumentation. Because the quintet has been published, much of the ensuing discussion will refer to that composition and will cite specific measures in the Schirmer score; however, all of the comments are also relevant to *Metamorphosis*, now considered Danielpour’s first piano concerto. Christopher O’Riley, who recorded the quintet, commented that he has enjoyed performing *Metamorphosis* numerous times but, in his opinion, the concerto orchestration dilutes some of the energy and concentration that one experiences with just the piano and four string instruments. It would appear that he is speaking primarily from the standpoint of the performer, but, to a certain extent, the leanness of the chamber work requires more from a listener as well. This leanness perhaps makes the metamorphosis more personal in the quintet.

Many of Danielpour’s works unfold as dramatic narrative, and although the score’s preface indicates there is no program, the composer describes the quintet as “a narrative about transformation: it retells the age-old myth of dying, going into a cocoon, and being reborn.” Subtitles of individual movements—“Annunciation,” “Atonement,” and “Apotheosis”—are identical for the quintet and the concerto and reveal the composer’s interest in religion and spirituality that is evident throughout his oeuvre. The outer fast movements deal with conflict and transcendence respectively. Spiritual journeys ending in transcendence have been observed in earlier Danielpour works. Michael Boriskin, who recorded both the early sonata and

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8Danielpour, liner notes, *Urban Dances*.

9I do not have a *Metamorphosis* score, but a comparison of the quintet score with a recording of the piano concerto reveals occasional added notes and measures in the latter—small details probably changed to better serve the soloist.

10Christopher O’Riley, personal conversation, 7 November 1999.

11Danielpour, liner notes.
*Metamorphosis*, explains the concerto’s three movements as a progression of death, redemption, and rebirth.\(^{12}\)

Danielpour furnishes the *lento* movement with an alternate spelling, “At-one-ment,” and describes it as the heart of the composition.\(^{13}\) It is the pivotal point of the work, dramatically and structurally. In the first twenty-eight measures, the strings weave a motto into a contrapuntal texture before the piano enters with a solo chorale, a reference to a tradition in both the Jewish and Christian faiths. Near the end of the movement, the piano repeatedly intones a bass octave on C ascending to an E-major chord (mm. 126-136). The six-fold repetition of the chord and resultant pedal point give the impression of chimes, an effect which often holds religious significance and is in keeping with a movement subtitled “Atonement.”\(^{14}\) Piano chords in parallel motion, the outer voices at the interval of a minor ninth (mm. 156-63), are to be played “like bells” on the penultimate page. Bells are an important component of Danielpour’s sound, as will be seen in the ensuing discussion of *The Enchanted Garden* and in subsequent chapters on his instrumental compositions. In the quintet (and *Metamorphosis*), the symbolism of chimes at the end of “Atonement” reflects a sense of resolution, of religious absolution.

Rhythm plays a key role in Danielpour’s thinking. *Perpetuum mobile* and rhythms inspired by rock and popular music, particularly accents on off-beats, abound in his compositions. Syncopation, multiple meters, and accented chords propel the quintet’s first movement despite harmonies that are anchored in lengthy pedal points and ostinatos. Rhythmic, accented octave leaps, with the pianist’s hands in contrary motion at the interval of a minor ninth, rivet attention in the opening measures (Ex. 5.1) in a gesture that returns several times in the movement (mm. 50-3, 131-5, 182-5). These octave leaps also recur five times in the second

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\(^{12}\)Michael Boriskin, liner notes to *George Perle Concerto No. 2 and Six Etudes for Solo Piano; Richard Danielpour Metamorphosis for Piano and Orchestra* (Los Angeles, California: harmonia mundi usa, November 1993), 8.

\(^{13}\)Danielpour, program note, *Quintet*.

\(^{14}\)A very similar chord, E major over an open fifth, C - G, is labeled “clock chimes; 6 a.m.” in “Childhood Memory” in *The Enchanted Garden*.  

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movement, “Atonement,” (mm. 66-72), suggesting that the protagonist does not go “into a cocoon” without a protracted struggle. Danielpour provides relief from the syncopation and the frenetic pace of the final movement, “Apotheosis,” with a “slow waltz” in a characteristically abrupt juxtaposition.

Allan Kozinn describes the quintet as “skillfully wrought . . . full of sharp, driving rhythmic figuration and a mystical approach to harmony that called to mind the music of Messiaen.”

Perhaps what Kozinn is observing is sequences of chords chosen for their sound effect rather than their functional progression. Another similarity in Messiaen’s and Danielpour’s music is the delicate filigree in the quintet in the first movement (mm. 101-6) and the second (mm. 76ff); it is even more prominent in the third prelude of The Enchanted Garden. As in the piano sonata, this is reminiscent of Messiaen’s birdsongs. Yale theorist and historian Robert Morgan has pointed out that Messiaen’s work borrows ideas from other composers but still sounds like Messiaen: “His music has always relied on the type of mosaic-like formal structures [Messiaen] favored in the 1930s, in which discrete musical segments are abruptly juxtaposed, with certain elements recurring in static, refrain-like patterns. While this procedure

Ex. 5.1 Danielpour, Quintet for Piano and Strings, first movement, mm. 1-3. Copyright © 1989 (Renewed) by Associated Music Publishers, Inc. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Used by permission.
suggests some kinship with Stravinsky or Varèse, the sound of Messiaen’s music . . . is entirely his own.” In this assessment, one sees that the recognition of Messiaen’s assimilation of other composers’ techniques does not discount his voice as viable and original.

As Danielpour has formulated his individual style, he has discarded some of the elements of modernism exhibited in his early compositions. There is less dissonance in the later works. Abrupt and bombastic interpolations of cacophony, though still present, have gradually become less arbitrary. In his desire to express public versus private natures, the mature Danielpour is more likely to juxtapose pianissimo and fortissimo within a moderately tonal framework, rather than rudely interrupting quiet lyricism with loud discord. Hence, the duality of freneticism and serenity remains an essential characteristic of Danielpour’s style, although the alternation is less antagonistic in the more recent compositions.

Danielpour has not duplicated his early experiment with “quasi-serialism,” which is his description of “Morning” in Psalms for Piano. It was natural for composition students in the twentieth century to practice writing serial works; even Copland and Stravinsky composed serially at one point in their careers. As previously noted, however, audiences have not been as receptive. The influence of serialism is still evident in the twenty-first century, but the majority of contemporary composers, including Danielpour, have not embraced this method. Yet, repetition of brief series of pitches is an important device in Danielpour’s compositional technique, especially in his earlier endeavors.

Danielpour’s treatment of a four-note pitch series in the piano sonata was mentioned in chapter three. In the first movement of the quintet, he embeds a significant motive in a volley of sixteenth notes in the second violin (doubled in the lower note of the first violin); the three-note pattern (Ex. 5.1, mm. 2-3, B-flat B D-flat) occurs four times in succession. Rhythmic displacement is evident in the violins’ initial repetitions of the motive (mm. 2-3) and in the

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17For example, B-flat initially occurs on the second half of the second beat. It then appears as the second sixteenth note in a beat, then on the second beat, and finally as the last sixteenth note in the pattern.
motive’s first appearance in the piano (Ex. 5.2, m. 17); here it again appears four times, spelled enharmonically. The motto returns often, sometimes transposed (m. 180) or hidden in an inner voice (piano, m. 197; viola, m. 211). It reappears in the violin’s first three notes in “Atonement” in a transposed retrograde and extends into a melody that is one note shy of a twelve-tone series. But it is the initial three-note pattern that is explored by the different instruments throughout the second movement.¹⁸

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¹⁸The motto occurs in the first violin in mm. 10-11, 19, and 151-2; the second violin, mm. 35, 50-1; and in the viola in mm. 92-3, 109-10.
Additional brief figures, which are rhythmically altered or whose pitch order is changed, form much of the quintet’s melodic and episodic material. As can be seen in Example 5.2, while the piano plays the motto, the other voices repeat these fragments with rhythmical displacement. This reliance on small motivic cells as compositional building blocks has diminished as Danielpour has become more comfortable with creating longer, more lyrical lines. His most recent music reveals a greater emphasis on romantic expression through linear phrases; this reflects the attitude in the last decade that it is acceptable once again for high art composers to think melodically. However, extensive repetition of brief patterns is a tool Danielpour still uses to develop compositions.

In the last movement of the quintet, “Apotheosis,” the opening four-note theme, C B-flat D-flat A (Ex. 5.3, m. 1), is varied throughout, with rhythmic displacement immediately evident (mm. 2-3) as in the first movement.

Ex. 5.3  Danielpour, Quintet for Piano and Strings, third movement, mm. 1-3. Copyright © 1989 (Renewed) by Associated Music Publishers, Inc. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Used by permission.

The motto appears frequently in different instruments, with individual notes repeated within the cell or with the pattern transposed to a different pitch. “Apotheosis” is the most complex of the three movements. It contains several other four-note motives, all interrelated through pitch and rhythmic similarities, so that in one regard the movement resembles variations on a theme. The concept of metamorphosis is thus present not only in the philosophical sense
but also in the musical infrastructure. Initially, listeners are probably unaware of this involved web of motivic variations, but the excitement and flow of energy in this composition is evident upon first hearing.

In *The Enchanted Garden*, the same motto (transposed, different enharmonic spelling) appears in “From the Underground” (Ex. 5.4, mm. 37-8; also, mm. 41-3; A ♪ G ♪ B-flat ♪ G-flat).¹⁹


At the end of this prelude, Danielpour modifies the pattern slightly to create a perfect fourth between the last two notes (m. 115, F# ♪ E ♪ G ♪ D). The opening motive of the last prelude, “Night” (Ex. 5.5, m. 1; E ♪ D ♪ E-flat ♪ C, the last two notes displaced an octave higher), is very similar to that of “From the Underground” except it ends with a minor third; however, when it is subsequently transposed (mm. 47, 83), it concludes with a major third. As in “Apotheosis,” Danielpour also derives a second motto from the first in “Night” (D-flat ♪ E-flat ♪ E ♪ C, mm. 88ff, 112ff).

¹⁹This is later transposed to G ♪ F ♪ A-flat ♪ E (mm. 48-9, 53-4), spelled as a diminished fourth, as in the first measure of “Apotheosis.” Enharmonically it is G# to E; hence it sounds like the major third of the original motto. Another transposition occurs at mm. 82-3.
The prevalence of stepwise motives comprised of alternating half steps and whole steps in Danielpour’s music indicates a harmonic language drawn from the octatonic scale. One feature of this type of scale is the pervasiveness of the tritone. Both “Mardi Gras” and “From the Underground” in *The Enchanted Garden* begin with a rapid sixteenth-note figure prominently featuring the interval (Ex. 5.6 and 5.7). The presence of the tritone from the opening measures of these two preludes is perhaps an indication of the composer’s enjoyment of musical games, which he revealed during a discussion of his Concerto for Orchestra: “Mozart’s love for puzzles and games and mistaken identity has always fascinated me.” Diabolus in musica (the devil in music) is the nickname that the late medieval period gave to the tritone. Singers were to avoid this intervallic progression, which was seldom used in melodies prior to 1900 because it was considered a “dangerous” interval. The subtitle “From the Underground” implies the devil’s

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20 The octatonic scale is bisected by a tritone; e.g., if starting on C, the scale’s midpoint is F#. Also, the notes of the scale comprise four sets of tritones: C to F#; D to G#; E-flat to A; and F to B.

21 Danielpour, liner notes, *Concerto for Orchestra*, 7 - 8.

abode. And “Mardi Gras” is a pagan carnival probably regarded by the Catholic Church as a dangerous time of masquerades and devilish orgies. The initial tritone pattern recurs in various guises throughout “Mardi Gras” (Ex. 5.8, mm. 7-8).
According to Danielpour, his piano works are “private statements which function . . . almost like a personal diary.” Writing specifically about *The Enchanted Garden*, the composer reveals it is “a garden of the mind” inspired by his dream life. A preface to the score details several dream-related, programmatic explanations of various preludes. Dreams have fascinated people since biblical times; from the first book of the Hebrew Bible, or the Old Testament, dreams have been a source of revelation and/or warning. The five preludes in *The Enchanted Garden* are generally rhapsodic and improvisatory with many evocative, dream-like sequences.

The first prelude, “Promenade,” was inspired by Danielpour’s daily walks through Central Park; the central section symbolizes the composer’s daydreaming while walking. A mesmeric ostinato (mm. 28ff), which suggests being caught in a time loop, enhances the sense of a dream-like state. The outer sections, comprised of diverse episodes, represent the composer’s chance encounters in the park. Danielpour implies various meetings along the way through frequent tempo changes: *con rubato*; hold back; *a tempo*; *accelerando*; *strepitoso*; don’t drag;

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23 Danielpour, liner notes, *Urban Dances*.


25 Ibid.
tentative at first, then becoming sure; più espressivo (pleadingly), etc. Such meticulous control on the part of the composer can be oppressive for the performer, but it insures that the pianist understands the nature of the piece—the sense of timelessness alternating with forward momentum.

A similar wealth of instructions characterized Danielpour’s sonata and first string quartet, also, but one suspects that in those early pieces the composer was not as confident that his music would be interpreted to his satisfaction. Roger Sessions once commented on this problem in regard to his first piano sonata. “I was rather chary of markings, because I didn’t want any exaggeration, and I thought that a really musical pianist would know how to play it anyway. I found that people even avoided doing things if I didn’t put them in . . . Well, of course I wanted it to be played like music. But I’ve learned that a lot of people don’t really know what music is.”26 It seems that Danielpour progressed in a manner opposite that of Sessions; the older composer increased his markings while the younger gradually reduced the number of instructions to his performers.

Although the second prelude in The Enchanted Garden, “Mardi Gras,” does not symbolize a dream, it does reference one of the composer’s dreams subsequent to an experience in Germany with Bernstein in 1988. While in Hamburg, they had encountered anti-Semitism, particularly in the reception several orchestra members gave Danielpour.27 One evening after the two had discussed conductor Herbert von Karajan’s membership in the Nazi party, Danielpour dreamed that an orchestra conducted by von Karajan became a goose-stepping marching band in the French Quarter of New Orleans.28 The tune “Deutschland über Alles,” representing the

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27 Several of the Berlin Philharmonic tutors had made disparaging comments prior to the arrival of Bernstein and his protégés. Bernstein talked to the malcontents and “saved the day for Danielpour” according to conductor Mark Stringer, e-mail, 9 April 2003.

28 Danielpour, preface. The composer suggests in parentheses, “or was it the West Village in New York?”
conductor and the Aryan race, appears in the treble with the pitches modified slightly to fit within a whole-tone scale (Ex. 5.9, mm. 45 ff); accented chords in the bass provide a sharp contrast.

This musical episode and Danielpour’s programmatic explanation refer to an issue which still occasionally confronts Jews. It is significant that the composer shared this dream and his sense of vulnerability as an ethnic Jew; in later works, Danielpour reveals a sense of personal loss as he broaches the subject of the Holocaust (Psalms of Sorrow) and the need for peace for the Jewish race (Canticle of Peace).

The superimposing of the German folk tune on the American march indicates not only Danielpour’s dream, but also the cultural diversity prevalent in much contemporary American music. That this dual-nationalism occurs in the middle of the pagan “Mardi Gras” celebration accentuates the collision of cultures and religions in today’s society. “Mardi Gras,” or Fat Tuesday, is a holiday dedicated to overindulgence prior to the denial of self which many Christians observe during the Lenten season preparatory to Christ’s death and resurrection and the celebration of Easter. It also bears witness to the inclusive nature of Danielpour’s religious allusions: an anti-Semitic encounter is embedded in a prelude whose subtitle references heathen revelry amid a Christian holy season.

American pop culture also influences “Mardi Gras.” Staccato octaves alternate with chords in the left hand to accompany the syncopated tritone pattern that introduces “Mardi Gras”
(Ex. 5.6); the sound is reminiscent of the stride bass in ragtime piano. One sees the correlation of the New Orleans locale, which is renowned for its Mardi Gras celebrations, and the ambience of jazz, for which it is equally famous. The overall effect of Danielpour’s “Mardi Gras” is of someone taxing a honky-tonk piano to its limits. The multi-cultural connections and the allusion to Danielpour’s dream reflect the plurality of both the religious and the musical environments at the turn of the century.

Dreaming continues its integral role in *The Enchanted Garden* in “Childhood Memory,” Danielpour’s recollection of a childhood dream in which he recognized “nature as nurturer.” In this third prelude, the dream is interrupted by the chiming of repeated C major chords, which, according to the score, symbolize 6:00 a.m. (mm. 24-6). The same chord first occurs in measures seven to ten; although not identified as chimes, this earlier passage evokes an insistent ringing in the background, implying a distant awareness as in a dream. Six repetitions of the chord in its first appearance suggest that perhaps a previous six o’clock wake-up call was ignored before the dreamer gained consciousness. After the section labeled “clock chimes,” Danielpour imitates birdcalls (Ex. 5.10, mm. 33-4), a logical presence in a garden. Birds, commonly heard upon early awakening, signify the end of this dream and the return to reality.

The composer’s identification of the chord as chimes in “Childhood Memory” invites a similar interpretation in the first prelude. In “Promenade,” a C major chord with an open fifth in the left hand (mm. 26-9) appears three times; its repetition implies a clock here, also. At this point, right before the middle section, which the composer describes as daydreaming, the cessation of all other movement is again consistent with the timelessness of dreams; time often seems to stand still when one is dreaming. It is perhaps significant that Danielpour’s daily walks, which influenced the first prelude, occur sometimes in the morning and other times at the end of the day; and the church bells that peal at sunrise and sunset in Bellagio, Italy, inspired the last

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29 Ibid.

30 A similar passage occurs in the second movement of Piano Concerto No. 2, with harp, bells, and vibraphone providing a chiming effect while tremolos and trills appear in the soloist’s treble register (mm. 66-80). The birdcalls in “Childhood Memory” extend from measure 29 to 36, the end of the movement. Tritones are again prominent.
Thus, the chiming in *The Enchanted Garden* is symbolic of a continuous twenty-four hour cycle; in Danielpour’s words, “The beginning and the end of the day are perceived as one.”

The preface specifically indicates that a passage at the end of “Night” represents the bells of Bellagio. Danielpour briefly introduces the chiming effect at the beginning of the prelude (mm. 14-5); the right-hand octave is a major seventh above a left-hand octave in a distinctive rhythm \( \left( \frac{\text{loco}}{} \right) \). We recognize this passage as bells because of its melodic- and rhythmic similarity to the concluding passage (mm. 144-152). At the end, with characteristic Danielpour ambiguity, the octaves occur over a first inversion C major chord with an A pedal point. The bass finally moves in plagal fashion to E in the last two measures, closing the cycle of

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31 Danielpour, preface, *The Enchanted Garden*. Danielpour completed the piano quintet at Bellagio. The quintet’s motivic link to the preludes has already been mentioned.

32 Ibid.
preludes on a *pianissimo* first inversion C-major chord. Consequently, in keeping with his concept of a never-ending cycle of time, Danielpour avoids a strong sense of finality.

A series of descending chords in “Night” demonstrates a favored voicing in Danielpour’s piano writing: primarily second inversion chords, often in both hands in the treble register, descend in parallel motion in *The Enchanted Garden* (“Night,” mm. 17ff), at the beginning of the piano trio (first movement, mm. 25ff), and in the second piano concerto (third movement, mm. 150ff). Individual movements of the latter work are titled “Prophecy,” “Lamentation,” and “Dénoüement: A Cosmic Riddle.” Danielpour writes “*sonore!*” over an extended sequence of parallel chords at the end of the concerto’s second movement; in conjunction with chimes, harp, and vibraphone, the piano chords create a celebratory passageway from “Lamentation” to “Dénoüement.”

The second piano concerto also incorporates the rhythms and ragtime bass of *The Enchanted Garden*: in “Prophecy,” along with a stride bass accompaniment, the soloist plays a distinctive motivic pattern (Ex. 5.11, m. 109) that is borrowed from “Mardi Gras” (Ex. 5.12, m. 13) and “Night” (mm. 100ff). Danielpour admits he was looking ahead to the concerto during the composition of the solo work. In an unspoken acknowledgment of Ives, he suggests the piano preludes could be considered “Essays Before a Concerto.”

Like many composers before him, Danielpour’s music often refers to his own earlier compositions. As he explains it, “I tend to write one piece that becomes another piece later. Beethoven did this with Choral Fantasy; it became the backdrop for the ninth symphony. Now, looking back, I realize I’ve done this much more than I realized at the time.”

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33 A review of the premiere cited the first movement’s title as “Premonition,” but the perusal score indicates “Prophecy.”

34 Program notes, *The Enchanted Garden*. This reference is to Ives’s *Essays Before a Sonata*, which helps prepare both listener and performer for his *Piano Sonata No. 2—Concord, Mass. 1840-1860*.

With the last piece in *The Enchanted Garden* titled “Night,” one might suspect that Danielpour has rejected his usual progression to light. In actuality, the preludes do not progress logically one to another. There is no narrative thread or common bond which causes them to be perceived as a cohesive unit. Despite similar mottos in preludes four and five, a shared motivic pattern in two and four, and the evocation of chiming bells in preludes one, three, and five, each can be performed independently.\(^{36}\) There is no sense of the transcendence that is found in many

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\(^{36}\) In a 10 April 2003 phone conversation, Danielpour indicated that he preferred they be played as a set, although he acknowledged that “Mardi Gras” and “Night” would work well as separate pieces.
of Danielpour’s compositions; however, “Night” does not end in darkness. It merely fades away with the “ethereal, distant” chiming of the bells. So although the composer acknowledges that the cycle of time is continuous, and the beginning and the end are one, the knowledge that bells do ring again at daybreak promises daily rebirth.

The theme of renewal, already noted in the piano quintet and Metamorphosis, is also evident in the second piano concerto. Spiritual overtones in the movements’ subtitles (“Prophecy,” “Lamentation,” “Dénouement: A Cosmic Riddle”) as well as the sense of rebirth in other Danielpour compositions are symbolic not only of the possibility of personal transformation but also perhaps of renewal in and through art. Composer George Rochberg, in discussing contemporary art music, expresses his belief that its survival or renewal is dependent upon morality: “...Not the morality of religious orthodoxies although they certainly possess the seeds but a humanistic morality that understands that all human behavior must be integrated into, identified with the processes which sustain the life of the cosmos.”

Danielpour also believes that music is important in the cosmic realm. He considers himself “completely open to music from other cultures and other spheres”; and he creates his own metaphysical spirituality by borrowing elements from various religions and philosophies, including the ancient Greek and Persian belief that music affects the soul. The importance of the interrelationship of renewed life, music, and the cosmos in Danielpour’s compositions has been evident since 1988 when Duncan’s metaphysical poem “Four Pictures of the Real Universe” influenced First Light.

Composers in the twentieth century wrestled with expressivity in their art. Judging from Danielpour’s oeuvre, it is clear that he would agree with Rochberg’s opinion that music must remain “an expressive act. ... The struggle is a spiritual one, for the single individual as for the race. ... In the end the question must take us to see art again as moral in the Kantian sense.”


39 Rochberg, 208.
Music can impart knowledge; it has the power to exert positive and negative influence. If it did not possess such qualities, church fathers and governing authorities would not have tried so tirelessly to control it through the centuries. Danielpour integrates this underlying potential with contemporary concerns in Piano Concerto No. 2; program notes indicate that the problem of AIDS, horrors in Bosnia and elsewhere, and increased violence in the United States are external elements that impacted this composition. These matters are explored individually by the soloist and in the context of the individual’s place within the larger community by the orchestra. Danielpour, who is well-versed in politics and social issues, addresses global interests in other works as well. At times this is implicit, as in the second concerto, and at other times it is explicit: Voices of Remembrance (1998) explores the era of the sixties and the assassinations of John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, and Martin Luther King, Jr.; Song of Remembrance (1991), written at the time of the Gulf War, and An American Requiem (2001) are primarily anti-war statements.

Danielpour is a practical musician; all of the piano compositions discussed in this chapter are the result of commissions: The Enchanted Garden by The Louisiana School for its annual piano festival in 1992; the first concerto by the New York Chamber Symphony; the second concerto for the annual “Absolut Concerto: A Celebration of New American Music” in 1994; and the third concerto, commissioned by Herbert Axelrod. Even though Danielpour was working on a piano concerto in 1987-88, a commission from The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center caused him to abandon his original conception and fulfill the order for a quintet.

It is doubtful that Danielpour would have considered a left-handed concerto if it had not been for Gary Graffman, president/director of the Curtis Institute. Graffman initially asked the composer to consider writing a concerto for him in 1997, the year Danielpour began teaching at the school. The repertoire of concerti for left hand alone had its genesis in the years following World War I when Paul Wittgenstein, who lost his right arm due to battle wounds, asked several composers to write for him. Sergei Prokofiev, Richard Strauss, Benjamin Britten, and Maurice Ravel all responded to his request. Due to an injury to his right hand, Graffman has also had to forego performing the standard two-handed repertoire.
Danielpour’s third piano concerto, *Zodiac Variations*, written for Graffman, reflects the composer’s interest in Renaissance zodiac wheels. Although he does not follow the zodiac calendar sequence (Capricorn, Aquarius, Pisces, Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius), he presents a theme and twelve variations, each with an astrological subtitle. The primary melodic motto, C-flat G G-flat E-flat (Ex. 5.13, mm. 1-2), appears in the highest notes of the soloist’s opening chords.

![Ex. 5.13](image)

Ex. 5.13 Danielpour, Piano Concerto No. 3, Theme, mm. 1-2. Copyright © 2002 (Renewed) by Associated Music Publishers, Inc. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Used by permission.

Danielpour’s fondness for separating outer voices by major sevenths and minor ninths is again evident. He manipulates the four notes by repeating pitches within the pattern, by altering the rhythm, and by changing the notes’ position within a measure to produce a different accentuation (rhythmic displacement). Throughout the variations, he contrasts the motto with a more lyrical theme first heard in flutes and oboes (mm. 9ff).

The fifth variation, “Gemini,” is a sultry *habanera* that includes both the motto and the lyrical theme, the former in the solo piano (mm. 160-3) and the latter in the oboe (mm. 182-4);

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40Danielpour’s order is Aquarius, Pisces, Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Leo, Cancer, Libra, Scorpio, Virgo, Sagittarius, and Capricorn.
fragments of both themes occur in other instruments. Dance rhythms, which have inspired composers since the Middle Ages, have been consistent elements in Danielpour’s music since the 1988 brass quintet, *Urban Dances*. In addition to a second quintet, *Urban Dances II* (whose subtitles include “Fanfare and Rumba,” “Uptown Tango,” and “Tarantella”), and two ballets (*Anima Mundi* and *Urban Dances*, not related to the quintets), subtitles of movements in other compositions also represent various dances. Inclusion of dance elements underscores Danielpour’s fondness for rhythmic vitality.

Along with the excitement that is generated, another advantage of using dance rhythms in ensemble compositions is the opportunity to create colorful orchestral effects. Danielpour accomplishes this in “Gemini” with castanets, guíro, sandpaper blocks, and cloth bag-muted brass,\footnote{The instruction “cloth bag” refers to the use of cloth bag mutes in several of the variations. After discovering the veiled effect in a Saturday Brass Quintet rehearsal in 1988, Danielpour incorporated the felt whisky bag mute in *Urban Dances I* and subsequent works. Richard Danielpour, liner notes, *Urban Dances*.} as well as brief solos for oboe, clarinet, flute, and bassoon. In “Virgo,” one of the darker variations, a different type of instrumental effect appears in the solo part; twice the pianist plays directly on the strings to achieve harp-like *glissandi* as in Henry Cowell’s *The Banshee* (1925). However, most of *Zodiac Variations* is in Danielpour’s conservative style, which embraces tonality and traditional performance techniques.

Because the piano is not capable of producing a true *crescendo* from one note to the next in the same manner as a brass instrument, Danielpour’s signature slur is not present in the solo piano compositions; however, it is included in the orchestral part of all three concerti.\footnote{In *Metamorphosis* the gesture is hidden in the first movement (mm. 124-5, second violin; measure numbers are from the published quintet score). It is more obvious in the second movement (m. 93), although not as prominent as the brass slurs elsewhere. In the recording of *Metamorphosis*, in measures 3-4 of the last movement, one hears the first violin’s descending semitone to *sffp* as a slur, although it is not actually marked as such in the quintet score. In the second concerto, the slur lends its distinctive foreboding to “Prophecy” (mm. 208-10).} In the third concerto it is played four times by the horns in “Virgo”; accompanying tympani *glissandi* intensify the ominous effect (Ex. 5.14, mm. 458-9). Oscillating minor thirds, another characteristic Danielpour gesture, contribute to the gloom. The slur also occurs in the solemn
chorale which opens Variation XII. Instead of its usual treatment as an isolated figure, the gesture uncharacteristically is part of a lyrical solo for the principal horn (mm. 568-9). Generally the effect of this slur is one of foreboding, but as part of a melodic line, the slur adds dramatic intensity.


Also evident in the third concerto is Danielpour’s fondness for alluding to other composers, but in this case, the quotation was in response to a specific request. Herbert R. Axelrod, who commissioned the work for Graffman, stipulated that a reference be made to
Paganini’s Twenty-fourth Caprice. The composer includes whimsical repetitions of the distinctive Paganini gesture in Variation IX, “Scorpio” (Ex. 5.15, mm. 407ff). As if incapable of settling on a particular tonality, the figure appears several times on each of the following keys: E, C-sharp, E-flat, a brief digression for octaves repeated on C and A, then E-flat, and back to C-sharp again. Accented grace notes in the piccolo contribute to the capricious character, which mirrors the original Paganini title. This variation is one of the rare moments of lightheartedness in Danielpour’s œuvre.

In contrast to the mercurial “Scorpio,” No. VI, “Leo,” is an adagio based on slow, undulating ostinati that produce an almost hypnotic effect in this variation scored for piano, strings, and harp only. A glance at the first two pages reveals the mesmeric repetition of patterns

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43 Richard Freed, notes in Kennedy Center Stagebill (April 2002), 19C.
in the harp and piano and the sometimes barely perceptible changes of pitch in the strings. One suspects that the composer’s interest in dreams is again manifested in “Leo.” Multiple repetitions of fragmentary figures in a quasi-minimalistic fashion comprise the bulk of the compositional material in other parts of the concerto as well.

Such minimalistic tendencies and the rhapsodic nature of the Zodiac Variations preclude development and the full exploration of musical ideas; some of the variations seem to end almost as soon as they begin. The solo part is virtuosic, and someone listening to a recording probably would not realize it is performed using only one hand. As might be anticipated, Danielpour created an exciting work to showcase Graffman’s technique. Paganini’s charisma and the more expressive style that marked his works exerted their influence on Danielpour’s piece. Just as solo concerti were designed for virtuosic display in the Romantic era, likewise Danielpour’s third concerto is a brilliant showpiece for the twenty-first century.

Christopher O’Riley premiered The Enchanted Garden and the second piano concerto, and he recorded the piano quintet. In his opinion, “[Danielpour] has the ability to translate his great sense of color, power, virtuosity—and to do that confidently. It’s easy to get your hands around [Danielpour’s piano music], and the harmonies, melodic lines, and patterns have an internal logic.” The piano compositions discussed in this chapter testify to Danielpour’s familiarity with the keyboard as well as his own ability as a performer. The patterns are pianistic and idiomatic. Danielpour composes figures that fit the hand well and he repeats them in sequences or in different octaves in a manner similar to a jazz pianist’s improvisations. Syncopated chords, driving rhythms, ostinati, and scalar passages with jazz figurations reveal the influence of pop, rock, and jazz on his piano playing and on his compositions.

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44 O’Riley, quoted in Uszler, 40. There is as yet no recording of Piano Concerto No. 2. Contractual difficulties with Sony Classical prevented O’Riley from recording the work which he considers rightfully his to record. Personal interview with O’Riley, 7 November 1999.
Danielpour’s interest in writing vocal music began at Juilliard (1980-86), although there was a gap between the 1983 *Oratio Pauli* and his first important vocal work, *Sonnets to Orpheus I* (1991). Danielpour’s musical output during these years demonstrates his interest in instrumental effects, but his love of literature and his natural tendency towards lyricism and romanticism insured his eventual return to vocal writing. Between 1991 and 2001, Danielpour composed eight works for solo voice or chorus, almost one every year. Because of his regard for instrumental color, most of his vocal scores involve at least a few instruments, if not a chamber orchestra. Danielpour’s *oeuvre* for voice includes only one art song cycle scored for voice and piano (*Spirits in the Well*), and that was not written until 1998.¹ That same year Danielpour composed *Portraits* for soprano, clarinet, violin, cello, and piano. Earlier experiments with voice and various timbral combinations include *Songs of the Night* (1993) for tenor, violin, cello, and piano; *Sonnets to Orpheus II* (1994) for baritone and chamber orchestra; and *Sweet Talk* (1996) for soprano, cello, double bass, and piano. “I Am Not Prey,” one of the songs from the cycle *Sweet Talk*, was arranged for soprano with four-hand piano accompaniment. Danielpour has also written for soprano and orchestra, the song cycle *Elegies* (1997), and for SATB choir and orchestra, *Canticle of Peace* (1995) and *An American Requiem* (2001).

The first part of this chapter explores Danielpour’s two best-known solo settings, *Sonnets to Orpheus I* and *Elegies*. Both works exhibit many characteristics that are consistent throughout the composer’s vocal and choral compositions, particularly his sensitivity to text. *Elegies* is also

¹The composer felt that this text required a more intimate scoring than his previous vocal settings; he is not satisfied with *Spirits in the Well*, however, and has temporarily withdrawn this work pending revisions.
important because it directly influenced *An American Requiem*, which is the focus of the latter section of the chapter. The requiem was chosen not only because it is an example of Danielpour’s mature vocal writing, but also because the composer himself considers the work “near the top of my writing.”\(^2\) The composition demonstrates his evolution toward a less dissonant, more tonal, and more lyrical vocal style.

As previously noted, many twentieth-century composers rejected past notions of beauty and did not place a high value on lyricism. They refrained from writing overtly emotional works, memorable tunes, and music that was easily accessible. Danielpour, however, voices a desire for listeners to relate to his artwork: “We can’t lose the audience. There must be a connection with the people coming to the concerts.”\(^3\) Danielpour embraces the belief that music must communicate on some level if it is to have any social worth. He admits to composing specifically with the audience in mind: “Composers are fundamentally in the communication business. We first have to communicate to the performers, then to the audiences who buy the tickets.”\(^4\) His music expresses universal emotions and concerns of both secular and sacred origins.

Danielpour’s choice of texts is revealing. In 1991, The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center commissioned him to write a piece for a performance with soprano Dawn Upshaw. Danielpour selected six poems from Stephen Mitchell’s translation of Rainer Maria Rilke’s *Sonnets to Orpheus*. In Rilke’s work, Orpheus symbolizes all who explore spiritual and emotional depths in search of greater understanding. As Mitchell wrote in his introduction, “Orpheus is a symbol of absolute connection. Perceiving the world without desire he realizes that, moment by moment, the whole universe is transformed, with all its particular, ungraspable forms. Because he can let go, he is free. He willingly steps into the transforming flame and enters the Double Realm, a mode of being in which all the ordinary human dichotomies

\(^2\)Danielpour, phone conversation, 16 March 2002. The composer also commented that he is very pleased with the recording, “one of his favorites.”

\(^3\)Danielpour, phone conversation, 9 November 1999.

\(^4\)Danielpour, quoted by Croan, 17.
These dualities expounded by Rilke naturally appealed to Danielpour who had portrayed light and dark and public and private natures in his music as early as the 1986 Piano Sonata. *Sonnets to Orpheus I* conveys a wide range of emotions but avoids the abrupt juxtapositions that characterize many of Danielpour’s works. The composer explains that each movement of *Sonnets I* subtly invites the listener to ‘let go’ and be transformed. Indeed, Danielpour has likened working on this composition to being in therapy—with Rilke as therapist.

The works of Rainer Maria Rilke inspired Danielpour again in 1993 with the composition of *Songs of the Night* and in 1994 with *Sonnets to Orpheus II*. *Songs of the Night* addresses love, loss, and solitude, and, as in *Sonnets*, the necessity of facing the darker side of life in order to discover the light. Just as Orpheus searched for spiritual understanding, Danielpour seeks enlightenment and inner growth. Although his earliest compositions are less likely to have memorable moments, certain gestures in his more mature works remain in one’s memory: the eerie major/minor piano arpeggiations in *A Child’s Reliquary* (1999); the poignant cello cantillations in *Through the Ancient Valley* (2000); and, in *An American Requiem*, the baritone’s melodic lines in “Vigil,” the opening of the “Sanctus,” and the “Hosanna” section. Like Rilke’s poetry, Danielpour’s music, both instrumental and vocal, is characterized by haunting lyricism. In his search for spiritual truth and self-knowledge, Danielpour has created moments to which others can relate; it is possible at times to experience vicariously his darkness and suffering (and perhaps confront our own) before undergoing transformation.

In addition to Rilke’s poetry, the composer’s literary interests include many diverse religious sources, such as the Hebrew Bible, Christian New Testament, Elaine Pagel’s *The Gnostic Gospels*, and New Age writings. Subsequent to the influence of Roman Catholicism in

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7 Danielpour quoted by Melinda Bargreen, “Prolific Composer Here for Local Debut Concert,” *Seattle Times* (1 May 1997), G35.
his first choral work, *Oratio Pauli* (1983), and the setting of the New Age textbook, *A Course in Miracles*, in *Journey Without Distance* (1989), Danielpour turned to his Jewish heritage with *Canticle of Peace* (1995). The composer explains, “In the 90s, I was reinvigorated by my own Jewish heritage.” Sung in Hebrew throughout, *Canticle of Peace* was commissioned by the Ohef Sholom Temple of Norfolk, Virginia, for its 150th anniversary. Selected lines from Psalms 147, 149, and 150, all songs of praise and rejoicing, comprise the first movement. Departing from the joy expressed in these Psalms, the second movement is based on Psalm 13, which implores God, “How long will you hide your face from me?” Darkness, anguish, and introspection lead to resolution in the third movement, a setting of two Jewish liturgical prayers which conclude: “He who makes peace in His high heavens, may He make peace for us and for all Israel, Amen.” Although not a practicing Jew, Danielpour acknowledges, “Judaism has the tremendous power of informing the rest of my life.” He derives great comfort from his ethnic background and his readings associated with the Jewish religion.

Danielpour’s interest in spiritual literature, both traditional and contemporary, reflects the culture-at-large at the turn of the century. From the 1985 film *Cocoon* to the futuristic *Matrix* trilogy (1999-2003), spiritual mysteries and dual worlds have intrigued the movie-going public. Reminiscent of Rilke, the popular *Matrix* characters exist in an illusion, a prison that cannot be perceived through human senses—but a prison from which they can be freed. While such themes are not new, the last quarter century has seen a proliferation of movies and books focused upon these issues. Even pop-culture television shows such as *Highway to Heaven* and *Touched by an Angel* have endeavored to provide spiritual enlightenment as well as entertainment. In 1979, Princeton University professor Elaine Pagels wrote a bestseller, *The Gnostic Gospels*,

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9 Danielpour, 9 November 1999.

10 David Van Biema, “The Lost Gospels,” *Time* Vol. 162, No. 5 (22 December 2003), 57. In one scene, the character Morpheus explains to Neo that the Matrix is a world that has been pulled over human eyes to blind them to the truth. Note the symbolism in the characters’ names. From H. G. Wells’ 1898 *The Time Machine* to the 1959-64 television show *The Twilight Zone* to the recent Matrix movies, the concept of parallel worlds has become increasingly popular.
referred to by Danielpour in several conversations. Based on texts discovered in 1945 in Nag Hammadi, Egypt, this book offers alternative versions of the history of Christianity. It appeals to agnostics, nominal Christians, and New Age seekers such as Danielpour who question traditional viewpoints of Christ’s life and death as well as the issue of man’s life after death. The popular success of books such as *The Gnostic Gospels*, *The Da Vinci Code*, and the film *The Passion of The Christ*, among the most controversial artworks of 2004, is confirmation that Danielpour is but one of many who are searching for spiritual truth in the twenty-first century.

In 1993, Yo-Yo Ma introduced Danielpour to author Toni Morrison who subsequently invited the composer to be an artist-teacher at Princeton University’s *Atelier* program. This annual spring project engages guest artists to work with gifted students in the creative writing and music composition departments. Princeton commissioned a Danielpour/Morrison collaboration, *Sweet Talk* for mezzo soprano, cello, double bass, and piano. The composer’s choice of ensemble reflects the other guests at the April 1996 *Atelier*: Ma and double bassist Edgar Meyer.\(^ {11}\) Danielpour set four Morrison poems which ponder the question, “What is the nature of paradise?” According to Danielpour, “The lyrics of each song are an attempt to evoke both the meaning of and the passion in our desire for Paradise.”\(^ {12}\) The titles, “I Am Not Prey,” “Perfect Ease,” “Bliss,” and “Faith,” announce the topics of sadness and joy, fear and faith; the songs encapsulate the journey towards light through death, both physical and spiritual. A year after composing *Sweet Talk*, Danielpour wrote *Spirits in the Well* using excerpts from other Morrison writings. The first excerpt reveals the source of the title: “Down in the well where light does not reach . . . Feel them. The spirits in the well . . .” These four songs continue the themes of dark/light and spirituality present in the earlier Morrison song cycle and in other Danielpour works.

Dualities and paradise also figure prominently in the subsequent vocal piece, *Elegies*. Composed for Frederica von Stade, the song cycle is based on letters her soldier father sent her

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\(^{12}\) Danielpour, program notes, 24F.
mother during World War II. The acclaimed mezzo-soprano wanted to honor the memory of her father, who died in Aachen, Germany, six weeks before she was born. Danielpour selected American poet Kim Vaeth to sift through the war letters and produce a workable text. She created a scenario in which a baritone represents the father in 1945 and the mezzo represents the daughter fifty years later—a duality of time and space. Again, this Danielpour work reflects the twentieth-century’s fascination with parallel universes. At one point in “Litany,” the third song in Elegies, the mezzo and baritone sing together, “What do we in this dark know? Our wounds are wound as if with air, healed far–deep and flowered.” But, again, out of the darkness comes the light; “In Paradisum,” the final song, closes with the words, “Here at redemption’s crossroads—Light the torches, let the voices of children speak. And I will sing to you in paradise.” A different kind of duality, this one harmonic, occurs in Elegies with simultaneous introductory C major/minor chords (Ex. 6.1). These chords, which return later in the first song (mm. 67ff) and in the final song, “In Paradisum” (mm. 42ff), are but one example of Danielpour’s fondness for modal ambiguity.

Danielpour’s gift for orchestration is particularly evident in this song cycle. The instrumentation is lush and colorful, with multiple layers of texture, yet the voice is never overpowered by the sound. By combining treble winds or violins with low notes in the tuba and/or bass trombone, Danielpour reveals the orchestra’s depth without sacrificing vocal clarity. Lengthy introductions, interludes, and codas highlight the importance of the instruments in not only Elegies, but also in Sonnets I and II. Early in Elegies, Danielpour’s foreboding half-step slur crescendoes twice in the horns (Ex. 6.2, “Vigil,” mm. 24–6) as the daughter sings of her desire to reach out to her deceased father. The composer explains this motive as a symbol of the “sting of death.”

13 Although the second occurrence is part of a melodic phrase, in performance the ear perceives the half-step crescendo as the signature two-note slur because it so closely follows the one in measure 24.

14 Danielpour, 6 January 2004.
The half-step gesture is particularly ominous when it occurs three times in the tuba in the lengthy postlude to “Lacrimosa” (Ex. 6.3, mm. 158-63).
The latter song begins with a relentless marching rhythm but syncopations soon create the effect of a military band gone awry, the brass using mutes that create a raucous, complaining sound. Another orchestral episode, with pounding timpani and rhythmic bass drum interjections, introduces a duet for the mezzo and baritone in “Litany”; then, as father and daughter meet across the barriers of time, space, and death, the entire focus is on the voices as they sing with minimal accompaniment, sustained low strings and occasional flutterings in the winds. Danielpour uses his resources sparingly as well as lavishly for maximum effect.

_Elegies_ was completed in 1997, the same year Danielpour received a three-year appointment as composer-in-residence with the Pacific Symphony in Santa Ana, California. His contract stipulated that he compose two works for the orchestra to premiere and record for Sony Classical.¹⁵ Danielpour’s focus on World War II during the composition of the song cycle served as a bridge to one of the new pieces. His study of the war and his interviews with American veterans revealed some common threads: the horror of battle, and the integrity, vigilance, and courage of men who were willing to die for their fellow soldiers. In this work, tentatively titled _An American Requiem_ as early as 1998, Danielpour hoped not only to pay tribute to the

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American soldier, but to examine war, both on the personal level of a combat veteran and on a more global level.\textsuperscript{16}

In the summer of 2000, the composer again turned to Kim Vaeth for help gathering possible texts. That September, at the Rockefeller Foundation’s residence in Bellagio, Italy, Danielpour began composing the requiem in honor of all Americans who had fought in wars during the twentieth century. A year later, while in residence at the Aaron Copland House in Peekskill, New York, he received the orchestral engraving of \textit{An American Requiem} from Schirmer. Realizing there was no dedication, Danielpour called his publisher the morning of September 11 to discuss the inscription; instead he heard his friend’s eyewitness account of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City. Danielpour then wrote the following dedication: “To the memory of those who died in the wake of the tragic events of September 11, 2001; and in tribute to the American soldier—past, present, and future.”

Requiem Masses are documented as far back as the late second century, although they probably existed even earlier. The first extant musical portions of the Roman Catholic Requiem date from the tenth century, and there have been numerous settings of requiem chants from the Middle Ages to the present day.\textsuperscript{17} Mozart, Berlioz, Verdi, Brahms, Fauré, and Britten are just a few composers who have written requiems. Danielpour’s \textit{An American Requiem} compares and contrasts the timelessness of the universal Catholic plea for peace and mercy from an all-powerful God with the more personal accounts of individuals reckoning with death and the hereafter. Some humans spend much of their lives avoiding the thought of death and its inevitability, but “9/11” forced many to confront their own mortality. Danielpour could not have foreseen the events of 11 September 2001, but the appearance of his requiem could not have been more timely.

\textsuperscript{16}Danielpour, program notes, dated 17 October 2001, \textit{Performing Arts Magazine - Orange County Performing Arts Center} (November 2001), P12. Given Danielpour’s age he never experienced combat; he entered Oberlin at the time the Vietnam War was ending.

An American Requiem premiered 14 November 2001 at the Orange County Performing Arts Center with Carl St. Clair conducting the Pacific Symphony Orchestra and the Pacific Chorale. The chorale’s conductor, John Alexander, said in a post-premiere talk, “I am convinced that this [An American Requiem] will be one of the standards of the new century.” Carl St. Clair, who was with Danielpour on the Bernstein tour in 1989, also predicts this piece will remain an important part of the American music repertoire. The emotionally evocative composition appeals to audiences and is surprisingly cohesive despite extremely diverse texts in two languages.

The final requiem texts selected by Vaeth and Danielpour include excerpts from “Memories of President Lincoln,” “Dirge for Two Veterans,” and “Vigil Strange I Kept on the Field One Night” by Walt Whitman; “Threnody” by Ralph Waldo Emerson; “Tribute to the Angels” and “The Walls Do Not Fall” by H. D., Hilda Doolittle, an American who wrote this poetry while experiencing the London bombings in World War II; “Lady’s Blues” and “Last Affair: Bessie’s Blues Song” by Michael Harper, an African-American writer who teaches at Brown University; and “Lay This Body Down,” an anonymous African-American spiritual. The subjects of these works encompass nineteenth- and twentieth-century wars, a tribute to the U. S. President who fought to abolish slavery, and a song of Negro slaves. This is an American requiem that draws from American sources; it is “of the people.” Danielpour explains that he includes traditional Roman Catholic requiem texts for the spiritual dimension they add to the war theme. He adds, “I also found the invoked images of the Apocalypse and the spiritual hell and fear of annihilation to be an appropriate reflection of the hell on earth that is experienced in war.”

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18 They, along with soloists Stephanie Blythe, mezzo-soprano, Hugh Smith, tenor, and Mark Oswald, baritone, recorded the work for Reference Recordings several days after the premiere. RR-97CD


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<td>2. Mezzo-soprano</td>
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<td>“Was there no star” (Emerson)</td>
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<td>3. Chorus</td>
<td>Kyrie Eleison</td>
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<td>4. Chorus</td>
<td>Dies Irae</td>
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<td>Confutatis maledictis</td>
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<td>16. Mezzo, Tenor</td>
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<td>20. Mezzo</td>
<td>“Take me home” (H.D.)</td>
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<td>21. Chorus</td>
<td>Lux Aeterna</td>
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The composer expresses the duality of the spiritual and the physical realms, and the duality of the personal and the global reactions to war, through two languages and two performing forces: soloists and chorus. A similar juxtaposition exists in Benjamin Britten’s 1961 War Requiem, which also draws from both war poetry (English, in this case) and Latin sacred texts. Britten contrasts three ensembles: tenor and baritone soloists represent two soldiers who sing only the World War I poetry of Wilfrid Owen, accompanied by chamber orchestra; soprano, full choir, and orchestra present the Latin Mass portions; and a boys chorus, accompanied by the organ, sings prayers and praises to God in Latin. Danielpour notes that it would be difficult to
write a requiem without previous works in the genre intruding on one’s compositional process in some manner, but it was not his plan to emulate the earlier work. According to the composer, it was dissatisfaction with the English settings in Britten’s composition, rather than admiration for the Latin portions, which inspired him to write his own requiem. As will be discussed, there are two sections in Danielpour’s requiem that are similar to Britten’s, both of which are in Latin.

In *An American Requiem*, the chorus, the collective public witness, sings only Latin texts from the Catholic Requiem Mass; soloists occasionally sing in Latin but primarily serve as personal witnesses communicating in English. In the Sanctus, the tenor soloist sings the title word as a prelude to the choral entrance on “Dominus Deus Sabaoth,” perhaps enacting the roles of priest and congregational response. The tenor also introduces the Benedictus and is answered canonically by the mezzo before the chorus repeats the text. However, the most striking use of Latin by the soloists is the one place where all three sing together. The special quality of this trio is enhanced by the absence of the orchestra except for quiet chords at the cadence points of the four phrases (Ex. 6.4, mm. 133ff)—two repetitions of “Pie Jesu Domine, Dona eis requiem” (Lord, all-pitying, Jesu blest, Grant them Thine Eternal rest). In addition to the sparse accompaniment, a very simple, syllabic, homophonic setting accentuates the importance of the words at this point, the middle of the composition. The trio is the central focus of the requiem, the core of the piece spatially and doctrinally.

*An American Requiem* begins quietly and mysteriously (“misterioso”), as if emerging gradually out of some great void: strings sustain a pianissimo C major/minor chord as timpani softly intone the “re-qui-em” rhythm of two short and one long note (Ex. 6.5; on page 111). The pattern is imitated by the chorus throughout this movement.

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23Danielpour, program notes, P12.

24This rhythm, a logical setting of the syllabic accentuation, is also used by Verdi in his 1874 *Requiem*. The overall effect is quite different, however; the nineteenth-century requiem is for chorus and orchestra only and includes only Latin portions of the Requiem Mass in a choral style that is an outgrowth of Verdi’s operatic background. Ralph Vaughan Williams also incorporates the same rhythmic pattern in the second movement of Symphony No. 6 in E minor, written in 1947-48. In the symphony, the purely instrumental motive appears as an insistent ostinato that *crescendoes* to a terrifying climax.
The subtle rhythmic undercurrent of “re-qui-em” may be considered symbolic of the ever-present undercurrent of unrest during the Vietnam era, the time when Danielpour came of age. An avid reader of history, he is extremely vocal about war; it is his passionate belief that there was a great deal of duplicity about the Vietnam War on the part of the American government in the sixties and early seventies. Along with many others, the composer contends that the public is still unaware of many of the political intrigues and the ramifications of American policy during that time.²⁵ In Danielpour’s musical depiction of war, death, and judgment, this rhythmic motto

²⁵Danielpour, 6 January 2004.
is embedded in one’s subconscious even when it is not externally audible. *An American Requiem* ends the same way it begins, quietly and mysteriously, with primarily unison repetitions of the “re-qui-em” rhythmic pattern.

Danielpour also expresses duplicity/duality through simultaneous major and minor tonalities, an important aspect of the piece. The ambiguous C tonality in the first chord persists in the orchestra for the first nine measures of the requiem, even after the chorus enters on unison D’s (Ex. 6.5, first inversion C chord with both E-flat and E-natural; an added second in a chord is also common in Danielpour’s harmonic language). Similar to the opening of *Elegies* (Ex. 6.1), Sanctus begins with an extended G major/minor dichotomy in glockenspiel, vibraphone, chimes, and piano (Ex. 6.6). Benedictus is punctuated with simultaneous, accented C major/minor chords, played throughout the orchestra (mm 107-15). Dual modes also accompany the mezzo’s solo, “Can’t you see what love and heartache’s done to me”; the same chord that introduces her song, an F seventh chord containing both the major and the minor third (Ex. 6.7, m. 1; on page 114), concludes the ensuing baritone solo, “Lay This Body Down” (Ex. 6.8, mm. 96-8; on page 115). Likewise, in the Agnus Dei, the basses sing A-natural and the sopranos sing A-flat on the last word of one of the choral statements of “Dona eis requiem,” (Ex. 6.9, m. 13; on page 115); this produces not only simultaneous modes, and tension rather than rest on the word “requiem,” but also a characteristic major seventh between the outer voices.

In addition to contrasting simultaneous modes, Danielpour often alternates modes as in the Dies Irae (mm. 43-50); at one point the mode changes on every beat (mm. 49-50). Melodic lines also frequently involve half-step oscillations: on a C minor seventh chord cadence in the Introit, the first sopranos add the sixth and alternate between A-flat and A-natural on the words “Dona eis Domine” (mm. 13-4). A similar vacillation recurs in the concluding pages of the work (mm. 61ff). Although the major/minor dichotomy makes the idea of peace elusive, it is finally achieved at the end of the requiem; restlessness and ambiguity disappear with a clear resolution in E minor.
A preference for sevenths and ninths has been consistent in Danielpour’s vocal compositional language. The separation of outer voices by a major seventh, mentioned above in conjunction with the Agnus Dei, was first observed in the initial chord of First Light (1988); this also occurs in the opening orchestral chord of An American Requiem. When the chorus enters (m. 5), it is on a unison a minor seventh above the bass pedal point. At other times, both at the beginning of phrases and at cadences, sopranos and basses are separated by a seventh (Ex. 6.9, m. 13; also, mm. 44, 46, Introit; m. 53 in Libera Me; m. 53, Lux Aeterna) or a ninth (m. 24, Agnus Dei; m. 55, Libera Me; the latter is also an example of a major/minor chord at a cadence point).

Sevenths and ninths are also favored melodic intervals, and the composer often uses them for text painting. In *Sonnets to Orpheus I*, a predominantly lyrical vehicle for the soprano, Danielpour separates the words “she suddenly” and “lifts” by a major ninth (“Anthem,” mm. 61-2). Ascending melodic major sevenths express the words “the far off” (mm. 44-5) and “all rise” (mm. 58, 61) in “Lamentation: You Who Never Arrived . . .” from *Songs of the Night*. In the same song, the tenor begins the phrase “O shooting star” with an ascending major ninth (mm. 78ff).

There is additional evidence of text painting in other Danielpour vocal compositions, but there are also many instances of melodic leaps that are not associated with this technique. In the second song in *Elegies*, the baritone, haunted by the sights of war and death, sings of “torsos, eyes—half men” in an agonized vocal line that traverses a major seventh, major ninth, and a tritone in the space of five pitches (mm. 39ff). Three phrases in the mezzo’s first solo, “Sea winds, blown,” in *An American Requiem*, begin with the leap of a major ninth; this interval, traditionally considered dissonant, is balanced by triadic outlines at the end of each phrase (Ex. 6.10).

![Ex. 6.10 Danielpour, An American Requiem, “Sea winds, blown,” mm. 82-6. Copyright © 2001 (Renewed) by Associated Music Publishers, Inc. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Used by permission.](image)

Danielpour strategically places disjunct intervals for emotional impact. One of the most poignant instances in the requiem occurs at the end of “I see a sad procession”; after a descending scale passage on “And my heart, O my soldiers,” the tenor line leaps a major ninth and repeats a high G on “My heart gives you love” (mm. 255ff). It is a moment of vulnerability—the
emotional vulnerability of expressing love, the physical vulnerability of giving one’s life, as well as the practical vulnerability of the tenor leaping the ninth and repeating the high pitch. It is a moment that remains in one’s memory.

A descending scale pattern has traditionally been used to signify death or despair. Danielpour clarifies the use of the symbol in his *oeuvre* as “a necessary descent into darkness, a spiritual death.” The gesture is evident in earlier works such as “Swan Song” in String Quartet No. 2, in which Danielpour depicts the death of his grandmother. In *Elegies*, the baritone sings a descending scale on the words “the one thirsting for water” (m. 78, “Lacrimosa”), an analogy to spiritual darkness that is accompanied by scale descents in horn, oboe, and viola. In the same song, after the repetition of the question, “Where is my beloved, the one who might save me,” the father sings a descending octatonic scale on the words “from my beginning and my end,” again with accompanying scales in clarinet, horn, and harp (mm. 110ff, subsequently continued by strings and flute). In the final song, “In Paradisum,” the scales return in the instrumental preparation for the *dénouement* of the song cycle (mm. 48ff, 61ff); the father’s search for salvation is over, and the mezzo concludes, “And I will sing to you in paradise.”

As one might expect, there are numerous examples of this symbolic death in the requiem. The mezzo concludes “Sea winds, blown” with the words “The eager fate which carried thee took the largest part of me”; her lament is followed by descending scales in oboes, then flute, and finally clarinet (mm. 151-7). Similar passages in the winds introduce the tenor solo, “I see a sad procession” (mm. 121-7); as Whitman’s words continue, “The last sunbeam lightly falls from the finish’d Sabbath,” the tenor sings a long descending scale which is interrupted only briefly by an ascending minor third (mm. 193ff). Two phrases later, on a descending scale which spans a minor ninth, he again sings of death, “It is looking down a new-made double grave” (mm. 207-11). After the soloists’ songs of war, death, and love, Part I ends with a choral plea for peace in death, “Dona eis requiem”; harp and winds descend two and a half octaves (mm. 158-164) in this “necessary spiritual descent into darkness” before the final “Amen” (mm. 164-7).

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26 Ibid.
Bells, similar to those at the beginning of the first (Ex. 6.1) and last songs of *Elegies*, introduce the Sanctus and Part II (Ex. 6.6). This is not a lovely, idyllic Sanctus with arpeggiated harp accompaniment as in Fauré’s *Requiem*. Danielpour has scored a terrifying Sanctus, the “Holy of Holies” that even the priests in the ancient temple were afraid to approach. The tenor line on “sanctus” ascends in an octave leap four times (Ex. 6.6, m. 7; also, mm. 9, 27, 29); after the first two declamations a tenor melisma begins with the jagged outline of a ninth chord (mm. 11-2, 31-2).

There are several similarities to Britten’s *War Requiem* in this section. In Britten’s Sanctus, which also begins with bells and octave leaps, the soprano soloist descends an octave (Ex. 6.11).

Ex. 6.11 Benjamin Britten, *War Requiem*, Sanctus, 6 mm. before No. 84. ©Copyright 1961 by Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd. Copyright Renewed. Reprinted by permission of Boosey & Hawkes, Inc.

After two brief statements of “sanctus” in *War Requiem*, there is also a long melisma on the word. Britten then divides each section of the chorus into two parts, staggering entrances of free chant on “Pleni sunt caeli” (Ex. 6.12). In *An American Requiem*, the tenor’s extended “sanctus” declarations alternate with choral phrases; then, following Britten’s model, all four voice parts chant “Pleni sunt coeli” on individual recitation tones (Ex. 6.13, mm. 62ff; on page 120). Only the sopranos and basses are *divisi* at several points, and Danielpour writes specific rhythms, unlike Britten. However, the sound effect in both works is similar—a crescendoing buzz of voices as “heaven and earth are filled with His glory.” Danielpour’s tenors imitate the
basses’ chanting at the interval of a tritone (mm. 62ff), and when the sopranos divide, the second sopranos and altos are separated by a tritone (mm. 65ff). The resultant vocal blur is accompanied by multiple instrumental ostinati: the trumpets repeat a resounding fanfare and the horns repeatedly leap a major ninth (mm. 65-9). The quick vocal reiteration, staggered entrances, intervallic relationships, and accompanying brass ostinati create a near sensory overload.

Ex. 6.12  Benjamin Britten, War Requiem, “Pleni sunt caeli,” 5 mm. before No. 86. ©Copyright 1961 by Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd. Copyright Renewed. Reprinted by permission of Boosey & Hawkes, Inc.
It is at this point that chorus and tutti orchestra converge on D major and erupt into ecstatic “Hosannas” (Ex. 6.14, m. 71). Punctuated, rhythmic rolls in the timpani after each of the first two “Hosanna” exclamation make this a distinctively climactic moment in An American Requiem. The music is simple: bass instruments ascend a five-note D major scale ostinato (D to A) as the voices repeat a four-note descending D major scale (basses and altos share pitches as do tenors and sopranos).
After the horror of the Dies Irae, the sadness of the baritone’s “Vigil,” and the intensity of the teeming voices in “Pleni sunt coeli,” the combined forces of chorus and orchestra in this unified, major tonality release all tension. Accented rhythms in the percussion section add to the celebration. With bells and chimes ringing joyously, fff choir and tutti orchestra repeat the Hosanna section after the Benedictus.
From the abundance of choral/orchestral sound and the spiritual rapture of Hosanna, Danielpour turns abruptly to a sparsely accompanied solo that addresses more earthly matters. Referring to what she insists is her last affair, the mezzo sings, “Can’t you see what love and heartache’s done to me.” On another level, “what love and heartache’s done to me” is suggestive of what love of country has done to the victims of war and their loved ones. Danielpour explains that the mezzo is the female witness to war, and that her role as mother figure is prominent at the beginning and near the end of the requiem. But there is more here than just woman-as-witness. The composer elaborates, “Women are the survivors of whatever is perpetrated to ‘make America free.’ They are the ones who have to hold everything together.” Danielpour’s comment on the importance of women’s role in the requiem and in society is particularly telling in light of his background and the strong female role model provided by his mother, especially after his father became ill.

Britten was a conscientious objector; Danielpour is decidedly anti-war. When initially questioned about the placement of “Can’t you see” in the requiem, the composer revealed, “you’re touching on the nerve of the piece.” Indeed, the subject of war touches a nerve in Danielpour. He succinctly describes war as “diabolical.” This strong stance suggests another dichotomy in the requiem between the Latin portions of the (godly) Mass and the American poems of (evil) war. As the composer moves from the Latin sacred text to the English vernacular in the mezzo’s solo, he exchanges the classical music realm for popular American music idioms.

Danielpour, like many other well-trained classical musicians at the turn of the century, was immersed in jazz, rock, and rhythm and blues as a teenager. The influence of jazz and pop in both his vocal and instrumental writing is evident in the earlier Sonnets, Sweet Talk, and Spirits in the Well. In Sonnets I, a languid, improvisatory clarinet solo accompanied by vibraphone and string glissandi introduces “Dance the Orange.” Danielpour indicates “scat-

\[27\] Ibid.

\[28\] Ibid.

\[29\] Ibid.

\[30\] Ibid.
singing” (“Perfect Ease,” m. 48; “Bliss,” m. 65) and “like jazz” or “quasi-jazz” (“Bliss,” mm. 11, 47) at several points in *Sweet Talk*. In the third song of *Spirits in the Well*, the soloist is instructed to sing in a “quasi-improvisando” and “bluesy” fashion (mm. 20ff, 52ff). And the last song in *Portraits* is marked “swinging (with a jazzy feel)” and employs a *pizzicato* “walking bass” in the cello and piano.

This multiplicity of styles continues in the requiem with blue notes and an improvisatory character in the mezzo’s song, “Can’t you see” (Ex. 6.7, m. 1). Despite its brevity—only three phrases long—the solo impacts the listener with its poignancy. The lines are excerpted from Michael Harper’s poem, “Last Affair: Bessie’s Blues Song.” In a pre-premiere literary symposium, Harper spoke of his own adolescent love affair with jazz, particularly with blues singer Bessie Smith.31 Danielpouri’s music captures the heaviness and heartache of Harper’s words; the blues style is reminiscent of torch songs sung by legendary figures such as Smith and Billie Holiday. The composer’s setting also reflects the poet’s interest in what he referred to as “lowdown music.”32

“Can’t you see” sets the tone for the baritone solo which follows, “Lay This Body Down.” As in the earlier *Portraits*, *pizzicato* scales in cellos and basses provide a walking bass (Ex. 6.8, mm. 92ff). Clarinet riffs, blues scales, and occasional commentary from a muted swing band accompany the baritone in a syncopated, New Orleans-style funeral procession, a distinctive touch in an American requiem. The bass ceases its steady quarter-note beat only briefly (mm. 80-91) as the baritone sings, “And my soul and your soul will meet in the day when we lay our bodies down”; the walking bass then resumes a *pizzicato* scale which ascends two octaves in a symbolic gesture of the ascending souls.

Danielpouri’s signature *crescendoed* descending half-step lends its own unique disquietude to the requiem. The figure occurs initially in the horns early in the Introit (mm. 23-6, not marked with a slur). As one might expect, the ominous gesture recurs numerous times in the *Dies Irae*: three times at the beginning (mm. 6-9), three more appearances in the horns in one

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32 Ibid.
interlude (mm. 30, 32, 34, the lower note marked with an accent), and twice by the trumpets with a subtle echo in the tuba in another orchestral episode (mm. 62, 67-8). In the middle of the choral Dies Irae, the tenor sings “I see a sad procession” from Whitman’s “Dirge for Two Veterans.” Multiple repetitions of the half-step descent appear at strategic moments: right before “I hear the great drums pounding” (mm. 168-72); following “And every blow of the great convulsive drums, Strikes me through and through” (mm. 188-91); and accompanying the words “Now nearer blow the bugles, And the drums strike more convulsive” (mm. 222-3, 227). Each of these examples emphasizes the gesture’s significance to the death theme.

The alternation of pitches at the interval of a minor third, another characteristic of several Danielpour works, also plays an important role. As a re-enactment of sirens in the composer’s tribute to victims and survivors of the Holocaust, Psalms of Sorrow, the sound is a discomfiting one. In An American Requiem, the oscillation heard briefly at the beginning of “Sea winds, blown” (mm. 80-1, 87-9) becomes more noticeable as the mezzo sings of perfuming the grave (Ex. 6.15, mm. 98-101).

The oscillation is heard again in the strings at the close of “Was there no star,” which addresses the death of a mother’s only child (mm. 158-161). It also creates a sinister atmosphere at the beginning of the Dies Irae. The gesture, in both the treble and bass registers, forms the basis of much of the accompaniment for the first fifty measures of Danielpour’s depiction of the day of wrath.

The precise moment when the languages alternate is also significant. Danielpour punctuates their opposition by setting American poems in the middle of several Latin requiem texts: the mezzo’s first two solos, “Sea winds, blown” and “Was there no star,” are inserted between Requiem aeternam and Kyrie eleison; the tenor’s “I see a sad procession” interrupts the Dies Irae; and “We visit bark” is embedded between two choral statements of Agnus Dei. The dual nature of the requiem is thus accentuated as the human agony caused by war is woven into the formal liturgical response to death.

“We visit bark” is an a cappella duet for mezzo and tenor which occurs about two-thirds of the way through the requiem (mm. 40ff, Agnus Dei). The composer considers this point “golden” in the architectural proportion of the composition. The voices begin and end a minor third apart. Time seems to be suspended as Harper’s text laments the existence of a suitable burial marker for the fallen loved one: “your face, no stone, your voice, we kiss the air.” Danielpour composed a similar a cappella passage in Elegies (“Litany,” mm. 89ff) at a critical juncture at the end of a duet denoting an imagined meeting between father and daughter. The

33 Danielpour, panel discussion, 13 November 2001. In the pre-premiere literary symposium, the composer explained that the ancient Greeks considered the two-to-three ratio as golden. “Golden number” refers to the ratio 1:1.618 and has been a common term since it was introduced by Meton the Athenian in 432 B.C. The concept involves an unequal division: the ratio of the smaller section to the larger one is equal to the ratio of the larger one to the whole. According to mathematician Roger Herz-Fischler, the Greeks were not interested in the ratio and did not incorporate it in their architecture. Ruth Tatlow, “Golden number,” New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 2d ed., ed. Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell (New York: Macmillan, 2001), 10:95. Some musicologists have suggested that Bartók and Debussy both composed works based on the underlying concept of a golden section, but since neither composer discussed this technique nor left sketches to prove or disprove the theory, others dismiss the idea. Paul Griffiths, “Numbers and music,” New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 2d ed., ed. Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell (New York: Macmillan, 2001), 18:234.
Elegies duet begins in unison with sparse accompaniment (mm. 74ff), and then proceeds almost entirely at the interval of a third (mm. 82ff). It is much lengthier than the requiem passage, but only the last part in Elegies is a cappella: “Ravenous winter—lost ache of light, hyacinth and haven” (mm. 123-31). With “hyacinth” and “haven” symbolic of death/new life and peace respectively, the Elegies duet possesses a significance similar to the corresponding one in the requiem.

After the interruption of “We visit bark,” a serene choral progression to a pianissimo A-flat major chord closes the Agnus Dei on the words “Dona nobis pacem” (mm. 78ff). Danielpour describes this passage of peace and resolution as “an angel choir in heaven.” The sense of suspended time created by the duet and subsequent choral conclusion is then shattered by a sudden fff B major/minor chord introducing Libera Me. For Danielpour, Libera Me is “a picture of hell.” The contrasts of heaven and hell, of triple pianissimo and triple fortissimo, and of major and minor modes, again emphasize the composer’s regard for duality.

In An American Requiem, as in many other Danielpour compositions, the composer incorporates the incipit of Brahms’s Wiegenlied. It is evident that this quotation holds special significance for the composer. In A Child’s Reliquary, he symbolically connects the lullaby, a prelude to physical sleep, with death–eternal sleep. The distinctive rhythm pattern (short, short, long) combined with the ascending minor third is usually clearly stated in the requiem but occasionally is embedded in the texture. It is first heard in the trumpets immediately preceding the mezzo’s solo that is based on Whitman’s “Memories of President Lincoln” (Ex. 6.16, mm. 74, 76).

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34 This symbolism is derived from ancient Greek mythology in which Hyacinthus was accidentally killed by Apollo, who then caused a flower to grow out of Hyacinthus’ blood.

35 Danielpour, 6 January 2004.

36 Ibid.

37 The trio, composed in memory of conductor Carl St. Clair’s young son, has several brief references to Brahms before a more extensive quotation late in the third movement.
In the preceding example, Danielpour uses the lullaby motto as an unusual military tribute to a fallen soldier/leader. The motive’s next appearance in the requiem is closer to the traditional concept of a children’s lullaby; the pattern occurs three times in the instrumental prelude to “Was there no star that could be sent,” from Emerson’s “Threnody” on the death of an only child (mm. 107-8, 126-8). Danielpour also quotes Brahms in the instrumental interlude of the tenor’s “I see a sad procession.” The most haunting instance occurs on “not a tear, not a word” in the baritone solo “Vigil strange” (Ex. 6.17, mm. 77-8), in which a father sings of passing the hours watching his son die.
The imagery of Whitman’s words and the musical reference to Brahms suggest a father singing lullabies by his young son’s bedside. Considering that a requiem consists of prayers pleading for the peace of the already deceased, the interpolation of the familiar nineteenth-century lullaby adds a wry twist to the prospect of sleeping in peace eternally.

Another borrowed tune appears in the requiem at the end of “Sea winds”; the rhythmic pattern and melodic rise of a phrase in “O Danny Boy” is subtly quoted at the mezzo’s words “Of him I love” (Ex. 6.15, mm. 100-1). Since the folk tune deals with longing for the return of Danny Boy, the reference in the requiem introduces a note of nostalgia at a point where the soloist is recognizing the finality of death, singing of perfuming her loved one’s grave. The composer elucidates, “My use of quotation is conscious . . . something I integrate into the fabric and DNA of a piece.” These examples demonstrate Danielpour’s standard method of borrowing—usually incorporating only a melodic kernel rather than a complete phrase.

A final quotation is so fleeting, it might pass unnoticed the first few times. The last two words of the phrase “Vigil wondrous and vigil sweet there in the fragrant silent night” are sung to the tune and rhythm of “Silent Night” (Ex. 6.18, mm. 65-6). Despite its brevity, the reference is noteworthy because it reveals Danielpour’s enjoyment of quotations and musical wordplay. Although not American tunes, these three melodies, Wiegenlied, “O Danny Boy,” and “Silent Night,” are an established part of American musical culture.


38Danielpour, 6 January 2004.
There are relatively few requiems by twentieth-century American composers. These works include Randall Thompson’s *Requiem* (1958), which is for unaccompanied double chorus, exclusively in English. His text is taken from the Old and New Testaments. Virgil Thomson’s *Missa Pro defunctis* (1960), for orchestra and mens’ and womens’ choruses, is sung in Latin. Igor Stravinsky composed a work requiring performing bodies similar to Danielpour’s; *Requiem Canticles* (1965-6) is scored for contralto and bass soloists, chorus, and orchestra, but it uses only Latin texts.

To cite a more recent work, British composer Andrew Lloyd Webber wrote *Requiem* (1984) for SATB chorus, orchestra, tenor, soprano, and boy soprano soloists with Latin throughout.39 Known for his musical theater pieces, Webber deliberately composed outside his usual mode of expression; just as deliberately, Danielpour utilized all the tools he had been sharpening since his student days to evince his mature compositional style. In *An American Requiem*, one hears unmistakable signs of Danielpour’s own voice: conflicted, simultaneous major and minor tonalities; driving, syncopated rhythms; colorful orchestration; haunting melodies that are essentially lyrical despite intervals of a seventh or ninth; vocal leaps which usually occur at the beginning of a phrase; and characteristic gestures such as descending scales and descending half-step crescendos, often found in the brass. Several of these qualities are present in Danielpour’s earlier vocal works in varying degrees, but, in *An American Requiem* they define the composer’s personal voice.

Danielpour imprints the requiem with numerous emblems of American originality: a traditional African-American spiritual, American poetry including that of a contemporary African-American, and the stylistic influences of jazz and blues. Danielpour, a product of the decades of the sixties and seventies with their proliferation of “popular” music, appropriates vernacular idioms that are as much a part of his vocabulary as “classical” expression. The heterogeneous styles, resources, texts, and languages produce a truly eclectic composition that says much about the state of music and society at the turn of the twentieth century. *An American*  

Requiem is tonally conservative, rhythmically exciting, orchestrally colorful, and vocally dramatic. Diversity, considered by many music historians to be the defining trait of contemporary American high art music,\textsuperscript{40} is the key element of An American Requiem.

\textsuperscript{40}Tawa, A Most Wondrous Babble, xii, 21. Also, Kyle Gann, 353: “The music of the 1990s cannot be generally characterized in terms of styles, for the era is too chaotically diverse.”
In addition to the piano quintet discussed in chapter five, Richard Danielpour’s chamber music includes two brass quintets, a work for bassoon and string quartet, and a piano trio. He has composed four string quartets since the student piece he wrote with the help of Persichetti, Talma, and Mennin. Danielpour also contributed a movement to the multi-composer project, *The New Goldberg Variations*, for cello and piano,\(^1\) and he wrote a piece for violin and piano for the 2002 International Violin Competition of Indianapolis.\(^2\) The compositions that include voice with chamber ensemble were discussed in chapter six.

A wide range in compositional styles from the earliest brass quintet (1988) to the most recent string quartet (2003) makes it difficult to designate one chamber work as an exemplar of Danielpour’s writing in this genre. In addition, the presence of similar mottos in the brass and string compositions invites a discussion of connections between them. Related social and

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psychological issues, such as loneliness, vulnerability, introspection, control, and surrender also unite these pieces. The most noteworthy commonality among the majority of these works is the pervasive theme of death. Many of the chamber compositions also exhibit the composer’s fondness for dance rhythms and his penchant for life in the city. Therefore, chapter seven discusses various chamber pieces as they demonstrate the death theme, the influence of dance, urban music, and Danielpour’s recurring mottos. The last part of the chapter focuses on the composer’s evolution to a simpler compositional style, as evidenced by the piano trio (1999) and the fourth string quartet (2000).

**Urban Dances**

Danielpour’s affection for New York City is evident in his attempts to re-create the ambience of urban life in his music. *Urban Dances* is the title given to two Danielpour brass quintets (1988, 1993) as well as a ballet (1996). The composer explains that the first quintet, which dates from the same year as *First Light*, was written “as a response to–and recollection of–my experience of various aspects of the city in which I live.”[^3] This is not urbanism as described by Luigi Russolo in “The Art of Noises: Futurist Manifesto” (1913) in which he discards the “paltry acoustical results” of the modern orchestra. Russolo explained that he and other futurists were tired of Beethoven and Wagner and would “delight much more in combining in our thoughts the noises of trams, of automobile engines, of carriages and brawling crowds, than in hearing again the *Eroica* or the *Pastorale.*”[^4] Since the time of that manifesto, various composers have incorporated machines and non-traditional “instruments” in their music; for example,


George Antheil included anvils, automobile horns, and airplane propellers in his *Ballet mécanique* (1927). Danielpour’s urban music is programmatic, not literal. He uses acoustic instruments to suggest busy crowds and frenzied activity, and he concentrates more on the psychological implications than the physical sounds of city life.

Danielpour considered choreographic possibilities as he composed *Urban Dances I*, but dance is not a necessary component of the work, although Debra Fernandez eventually choreographed the composition for a performance at Marymount Manhattan Theater in April 1990. Both *Urban Dances I* and *II* employ rhythmic vitality and syncopation to imitate life in the city. The first quintet’s movements are subtitled “Riddle Dance,” “Burlesque,” “Shadow Dance (Dirge),” and “Peripetia.” *Urban Dances II* references specific dances; its four movements are “Fanfare and Rumba,” “Uptown Tango,” “Tarantella,” and “The Night Rainbow.” After the second brass quintet’s 1993 New York premiere, Bernard Holland commented, “The composer acknowledges everything that is vital, flashy, and vulgar.” At times the music is “vulgar” in the sense of being reflective of the commonplace, of universal dance clubs and nightlife. Danielpour captures the raw elements of the dances and impresses these aspects of urbanism on the listener through motivic repetitions and rhythmic ostinati. One achieves insight from the composer’s description of the urban experience as an ongoing tightrope between “crisis and celebration”; these highly energized works capture both ends of the spectrum.

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5Danielpour, foreword, *Urban Dances*.

6Danielpour, liner notes, *Urban Dances*. Fernandez’s choreography of *Urban Dances I* should not be confused with the orchestral ballet music also titled *Urban Dances* (1996).


8Danielpour, program notes, *The Kennedy Center’s Family Terrace Theater Presents The*
There are several parallels between the movements of *Urban Dances I* and *II*. Danielpour describes the first movement of *Urban Dances I* as the confrontation of daily crises. “Riddle Dance” is energetic and agitated, and there is much musical dialogue and imitation. The peripatetic mood is underscored by incessant dynamic shadings—twenty-two indications in the horn’s first four measures and almost as many marks in the trumpets and trombone parts. Reflective of urbanism, both of “Riddle Dance’s” principal themes are mechanistic. The first involves chromatic movement as well as disconnected leaps in rapid, accented, sixteenth notes; the second motive (Ex. 7.1, m. 10) is simple but incisive—four notes of a descending scale labeled *marcato* and “wild!”

The trumpets are separated by a major seventh as are the horn and the trombone. Danielpour infuses his depiction of metropolitan bustle with dissension and intensity. “Riddle Dance” ends with a conflicting major seventh between the outer voices (E-natural in tuba, E-flat in trumpet I), suggesting ongoing urban crises.

The first movement of *Urban Dances II* also begins with a disjunct theme. It is immediately answered by a syncopated trumpet motive, G-sharp F-sharp A F, a

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*Saturday Brass Quintet* (27 February 1993), 1.

characteristic Danielpour motto. Both figures are prominent throughout the movement. The first three notes of the motto return as a dance theme in the trombone (m. 32, transposed, F-sharp E G). Danielpour reveals his fondness for pedal points with an unusual presentation in “Fanfare and Rumba”: horn and trombone alternate on the same pitch, generating an internal pedal point and a unique antiphonal effect (Ex. 7.2; the passage begins in m. 22; also, mm. 36ff; mm. 63ff between horn and trumpet). The composer punctuates this with minor third glissandi in the low brass (mm. 26, 31) and with his distinctive half-step slur (m. 27).


Danielpour also creates a pseudo Klangfarbenmelodie through the repetition of staggered entrances, each instrument sustaining and repeating a single pitch for several measures (Ex. 7.3, mm. 81-84). Because the tones overlap, the ear does not perceive the individual pitches as a connected melody, but the isolated notes draw attention to the layers of sound.

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10The piano quintet and the second string quartet employ the same intervallic motto; the mottos in the piano sonata and The Enchanted Garden are only slightly different, ending with a minor third instead of a major third.
It has been mentioned previously that Danielpour explains his music as a mirror of life: just when things are going smoothly, life erupts. As “Fanfare and Rumba” appears to conclude quietly, albeit ambiguously on a D major/minor ninth chord, the instruments suddenly explode in sound (Ex. 7.4, mm. 93-4). The trumpets are instructed to be “bold!” on the syncopated motto, and the horn is to “rip” the repeated glissandi ascending a major seventh.
As notated in the score, the effect is “wild!” In a *Washington Post* review of the quintet’s premiere, Joan Reinthaler wrote, “Richard Danielpour captured the steamy sensuality of an exciting but dangerous urban scene.”\(^{11}\) This fanfare and dance are a festival of city life, of the New York which Danielpour loves, and the atmosphere remains charged with energy even after the final *sff* chord.

“Riddle Dance” and “Fanfare and Rumba” portray daytime activity and the dynamism of many people in the city. “Burlesque” and “Uptown Tango,” the second movements of *Urban Dances I* and *II*, respectively, paint a portrait of the nighttime–of “speakeasy” bars and individuals finding their way home after an evening on the town. The dictionary defines “burlesque” as a type of vaudeville characterized by satirical imitation, low comedy, and perhaps exotic dance.\(^{12}\) Danielpour’s “Burlesque” begins with a trumpet solo that sounds indifferent, even lazy, in comparison to the insistent themes of the previous movement. A horn solo (mm. 59ff) is marked “with a hint of inebriation,” perhaps a common component of a burlesque. Danielpour uses syncopation and *glissandi* to imitate a lurching gait (Ex. 7.5, mm. 67-8). He prolongs the sense of drunkenness, or at least instability, with *glissandi* in contrary motion


between the trumpets, starting at the interval of a major seventh (Ex. 7.5, mm. 69-70; the instruments slide to a tritone, to another major seventh, and finally to a major third).

As in “Burlesque,” the mood of “Uptown Tango” appears to be one of apathy, each instrument like a self-absorbed urbanite who appears indifferent to others. This is reflected in the languid quality of the dance: the opening trumpet solo is characterized by *glissando* and *portamento* slides. Accompaniment is minimal, with intermittent tuba slurs. A second trumpet motive (G-sharp ♩ F-sharp ♩ A ♩ B, mm. 19-20) is derived from the first three notes of the preceding rumba; occasionally the third and fourth notes are interchanged, as if order really does not matter. In addition, Danielpour emphasizes the apathetic nature of the movement, and the desultory character of certain jazz styles, by marking two places “lazy” (mm. 29, 88). Jazz influence is also evident in the final cadences, as both “Burlesque” and “Uptown Tango” end
with ninth chords. The solos in both movements suggest that, even in the midst of a city teeming with people, one can experience lassitude and loneliness.

One reason for Danielpour’s popularity with many musicians is that he usually studies and writes for specific performers’ styles. Like an actor researching a part by interviewing or shadowing the person he is to represent, Danielpour spent an afternoon with the members of the Saturday Brass Quintet prior to composing the first quintet. While listening to the nuanced sounds they could produce on their instruments individually and collectively, he discovered that placing a cloth bag over the bells of brass instruments produces a veiled sound.\(^{13}\) The composer adopts this technique in “Shadow Dance,” the third movement of Urban Dances I, as well as in the last two movements of Urban Dances II and in the third piano concerto.

Reflecting the subtitle, muted trumpets spar in a literal “shadow dance,” moving in contrary motion and alternating pitches at the interval of a major ninth. According to the composer, “Shadow Dance (Dirge)” portrays the desolation and death witnessed on a daily basis in the city.\(^{14}\) Minor third oscillations in the horn and in the trombone evoke the sound of emergency vehicles (mm. 5-7, 14-6, 66-8, the latter written as an augmented second); with their markings of \textit{decrescendo} and/or \textit{quasi echo}, they create the effect of sirens receding in the distance. Danielpour associates this same gesture with death elsewhere, including “Sea winds, blown” and the Dies Irae in An American Requiem, as noted in the previous chapter.

The dirge-like atmosphere of “Shadow Dance” immediately disappears with the first notes of the fourth movement of Urban Dances I. “Peripetia” is a \textit{perpetuum mobile} defined by freneticism and syncopation. Ideas from the preceding movements make brief appearances, usually varied in some way. According to the composer, “Peripetia” is the most optimistic of the four dances.\(^{15}\) It provides the possibility of a future—of hope—following the agitation in the first

\(^{13}\) Danielpour, liner notes, Urban Dances. The Urban Dances score indication is “\textit{con sordino} (cloth mute over bell),” but a composer’s note clarifies, “In this instance a felt bag fitting loosely over the bell would be preferable.” The CD liner notes recommend felt whisky bags.

\(^{14}\) Ibid.

\(^{15}\) Ibid.
movement, the inebriated caricature in the second, and the prevalence of death in the third. Unlike the earlier movements that conclude with chords featuring sevenths and ninths, “Peripetia” cadences in agreement, all voices unified on C-sharp, providing a semblance of resolution to the urban crises. “Remembrance,” the second movement of Danielpour’s third string quartet, which also speaks of death and desolation, concludes on this same unison pitch in preparation for the final movement, “Benediction."

Cloth-muted brass play a simple four-part chorale with intermittent tuba pedals (mm. 62ff) in “Tarantella,” the third movement of Urban Dances II. Except for the final interval, a four-note trumpet motive in the chorale (m. 63, C B D G)16 is similar to the mottos in the first movement of String Quartet No. 2 (1992) and the later Concerto for Orchestra (1996). It is evident that this lively dance was originally intended as an energetic conclusion to Urban Dances II, similar to the position of “Peripetia” at the end of Urban Dances I; however, as Danielpour was completing the quintet, his friend and mentor, Stephen Albert, was tragically killed in an automobile accident. Danielpour decided to reverse the order of the last two movements and conclude with “The Night Rainbow,” a memorial to Albert.17

“The Night Rainbow” begins with a tuba solo (Ex. 7.6) that is reminiscent of a melody in Stravinsky’s The Firebird. Whether or not this was a conscious reference to the Russian legend, the beautiful plumage that remained after the Firebird’s death is analogous to a rainbow as well as to the music that Albert left behind. In the mid 1960s, Albert turned from writing serial and electronic compositions to more tonal, melodic, and orchestrally colorful works that evoked connections with music of the past, specifically the romanticism of the nineteenth century.18 Richard Danielpour has acknowledged his indebtedness to Albert on several occasions, and one can see the influence of Albert’s metamorphosis on Danielpour’s development as well.

16 The same pattern is originally heard briefly in the first movement (I., m. 75).

17 The dedication on the first page of this movement reads “In memoriam SJA.” Danielpour’s reversal of movements was confirmed by Norman Ryan, e-mail, 6 August 2003.

Composer William Kraft, in a response to Edward Siegel’s obituary for Albert, referred to the changes that took place in the last decades of the twentieth century regarding composers in general:

Siegel not only wrote a brilliant essay on Steve but, by explaining Steve’s aesthetics so well and revealing his innermost thoughts and opinions, clarified the aesthetic of an entire group of composers that are not heralded as a group because they don’t have names like minimalism or experimentalism or serialism. Rather, they (and I consider myself to be one of them) belong to what must be considered the mainstream composers allied to the long tradition of composition that was detoured by the many splits that occurred after World War II.¹⁹

Kraft recognized that, despite numerous divergences by various composers, the “mainstream” in twentieth-century art music remained associated with tradition; and many who rejected this at one time became more conservative later in their careers. Before his death, Albert turned away from serialism and towards a renewed romanticism. Danielpour’s music reflects this larger trend of the late twentieth- and early twenty-first centuries.

“The Night Rainbow” is the only subtitle in the second brass quintet that does not refer specifically to a dance. It seems peculiar to include a movement in “Urban Dances” that is not based on dance rhythms or, at least, on rhythmic activity, as in “Peripetia” in Urban Dances I. Perhaps “night rainbow” can be interpreted as a symbol of one’s silent dance with death. Danielpour borrowed the phrase from a children’s book, If You’re Afraid of the Dark Remember

¹⁹William Kraft, letter to the editor, Boston Globe (February 1993), quoted by Tawa, American Composers and Their Public, 244.
This theme of getting through darkness and suffering to experience transcendence and life’s fullness continues as one of Danielpour’s favorites. Instead of catchy dance rhythms and exciting syncopations, there are shifting planes of isolated musical tones in “The Night Rainbow.” Staggered piano entrances comprise much of the movement; as in “Fanfare and Rumba,” each instrument sustains and then usually repeats a pitch, creating undulating waves of music (mm. 35ff). The influence of minimalism, in which one is scarcely aware of subtle shifts of sound, is palpable. Although Danielpour’s pitches change, sometimes without repetition, the alteration is often barely perceptible in the sotto voce web of notes. “The Night Rainbow” evokes an atmosphere of timelessness and shimmering vibrations.

The first three movements of Urban Dances II are a celebration of dance and life; the last movement suggests man’s inescapable appointment with death. Although not initially marked with a slur, an ominous crescendoed half-step occurs in the tuba at the beginning of “The Night Rainbow” (Ex. 7.6, mm. 2-3; slurred in m. 9). Later in this musical memorial, the horn slurs the gesture (mm. 56-7), which is Danielpour’s symbol for “the sting of death.”

Judging by a comparison of the perusal score to a tape of the performance, numerous cuts were made by the composer prior to the premiere; yet, it remains a lengthy movement. This protraction of “The Night Rainbow” leaves its direction in doubt. Ambiguity extends to the final cadence as the quintet ends tentatively on a first inversion C major ninth chord. If Danielpour’s original order of movements were followed, the final impression on the audience would be much different: instead of ending inconclusively after a lengthy, slow-moving, contemplative movement, Urban Dances II would conclude with an animated dance that cadences on a root position C major chord.

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22 Because of the cuts, measure numbers are particularly unreliable in “The Night Rainbow.”
Both brass quintets illustrate Danielpour’s connection to dance music and to city life. Multiple works with the same title cause some confusion in Danielpour’s oeuvre, but his fondness for the phrase “urban dances” highlights the influence of rhythms, particularly dance rhythms, in his compositional voice. It also emphasizes the effect that the city has had on his artistic creativity. The introspective aspect of his music, discussed in previous chapters, manifests itself in these quintets through the probing of the psychological ramifications of urban life and mortality.

String Quartets

A glance at the subtitles reveals that death is a recurring theme in the string quartets as well. Each of Danielpour’s works in this medium is consistent with his programmatic tendencies: Requiem, Shadow Dances, Psalms of Sorrow, Apparitions, and In Search of “La Vita Nuova.” A string quartet was considered “absolute music” in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but in Danielpour’s hands the genre possesses decidedly extra-musical connotations.

The second string quartet shares its subtitle, Shadow Dances, with the third movement of Urban Dances I. Its movements are titled “Stomping Ground,” “The Little Dictator,” “My Father’s Song,” and “The Trickster.” The motto initially presented in “Stomping Ground” (m. 4, C B-flat D-flat A-flat) exists in some guise in each of the movements. The third movement begins with retrograde-inversions played by first violin and cello a major seventh apart (Ex. 7.7, mm. 1ff).\(^{23}\)

At the beginning of the last movement, “The Trickster,” Danielpour alters the final interval of the original from a perfect fourth to a diminished fourth (mm. 3-5, F E-flat G-flat D). Although spelled differently, this last motto sounds the same as the one in “Fanfare and Rumba” in Urban Dances II, composed the same year (“Fanfare,” m. 1, G-sharp F-sharp G-flat D).

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\(^{23}\)The violin begins on the original pitch: C G B-flat A-flat; the cello begins a major seventh lower: C-sharp G-sharp B A).
A F). In the latter work, Danielpour derives the rumba motive from the first three notes of the fanfare’s four-note motto. He also creates a three-note motive (m. 17-18, A G B-flat, second violin) from the original in “Stomping Ground,” producing identical (transposed) three-note mottos in *Shadow Dances* and *Urban Dances II*.

According to Danielpour, “The Trickster” refers to “its own inner nostalgia” through the transformation of ideas from the previous three movements. Thus, introspection in the last movement of String Quartet No. 2 occurs on two levels: looking within oneself in order to realize that relinquishment is necessary, and looking within the work itself to discover “The Trickster’s” compositional building blocks. The prominent appearance of the motto in the first violin at the conclusion of the movement—and the conclusion of *Shadow Dances*—confirms its importance (mm. 223-4, G F A-flat E).

Danielpour reveals that memories of his father’s funeral inspired not only *Requiem*, which dates from his Juilliard days, but also “My Father’s Song” in *Shadow Dances*. He again

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24 Danielpour, program note.

25 This same intervallic pattern is also found in “Apotheosis” in the piano quintet and *Metamorphosis* and in the last two preludes of *The Enchanted Garden*. In the piano quintet, as in the last movement of String Quartet No. 2, the final interval is spelled as a diminished fourth, which sounds like a major third. In “From the Underground” in *The Enchanted Garden*, the motto initially ends with a major third but later concludes with a perfect fourth.

26 It is possible that “My Father’s Song” references the last line of Charles Ives’s song,
exposes his vulnerability as well as our own when he points to “the surrender and acceptance that we must submit to in order to confront this great and awesome mystery [death].” In measure nine (Ex. 7.8), the viola begins a cantillation, a primarily stepwise melody whose improvisatory character evokes the sound of an Eastern chant and Sayid Danielpour’s Iranian heritage. Muted high pitches and, at one point, alternating ascending and descending *glissandi* (mm. 54-6) contribute to a haunting effect. With two characteristic gestures, Danielpour ends “My Father’s Song”: the outer voices are a major seventh apart and the first violin repeats a descending minor third.

![Ex. 7.8 Danielpour, String Quartet No. 2, “My Father’s Song,” mm. 9-12. Copyright © 1993 (Renewed) by Associated Music Publishers, Inc. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Used by permission.](image)

A similar manifestation of Danielpour’s Persian-Jewish heritage appears in “Swan Song,” the third movement of String Quartet No. 4. The serpentine melody reflects the Persian love songs that Danielpour’s grandmother reportedly sang on the night of her death. Later, a slow, “Remembrance”; “A sound of a distant horn, o’er shadowed lake is borne, my father’s song.” Danielpour also used “Remembrance” as the subtitle of the second movement in his third string quartet, *Psalms of Sorrow*, and he composed an orchestral work titled *Song of Remembrance*.

27 Danielpour, program note, String Quartet No. 2, *Shadow Dances* (New York: Associated Music Publishers, 1993), AMP 8097. String Quartet No. 2 was premiered on 16 March 1993 in Le Pollen, France, by the Muir String Quartet, which presented the American premiere at the Norton Gallery of Art in Palm Beach, Florida, on 21 March 1993. The Salt Lake City premiere on 10 July 1993 was part of the Muir’s residency with the Snowbird Institute, which co-commissioned the work. These details are included because of previously published errors regarding the premiere. Debbie Horne, Schirmer editor, e-mail, 16 October 2003.

28 “Swan Song” is dedicated to Danielpour’s mother and her sister; their mother had
sustained-note, high-pitched scalar descent evokes a keening lamentation (mm. 67ff). Near the end of “Swan Song,” Danielpour incorporates a drone in an unusual reversal of traditional roles: the first violin drones while the cello plays a cantillation in its upper register (mm. 85ff).

Descending scale passages underscore the death theme in all the quartets. As one might expect, “Swan Song” ends with this symbol of death: violins play dotted-quarter notes on two descending scales in hemiola with the insistent quarter-note cello pedals (mm. 102-13). Program notes for String Quartet No. 2 specifically describe the scale as a symbol of laying a loved one to rest.29 In the latter work, this occurs in the upper three voices near the end of “My Father’s Song” (mm. 122-4), and the movement concludes with repeated scale fragments in the violins (mm. 144-156). The dedication of the third string quartet indicates its close relationship to the death theme: “In memory of those who died and in tribute to those who survived the horror of Auschwitz.”30 Completed in January 1995, the work was composed to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the liberation of the concentration camp at Auschwitz. Subtitled Psalms of Sorrow, the quartet speaks to the horror of the Holocaust, and descending scales are featured at the end of both the first and second movements.

Intense, long-breathed atonal melodies contribute to the emotional anguish in Psalms of Sorrow. The first movement, “Elegy,” begins with the viola playing a series of seven pitches (F D E-flat B-flat D-flat C A) that is imitated by each of the other three instruments in turn. This pattern, heard throughout the first movement, again demonstrates Danielpour’s predilection for the minor third as well as for the repetition of a brief motto as a compositional device.

As in Urban Dances II, a brief instance of Klangfarbenmelodie occurs in “Elegy” when each instrument enters independently on a single, sustained pitch. The composer indicates that

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spoken very little in the final year of her life, but several days before her death, she told those keeping vigil that her deceased husband was in the room waiting for her. The night she died, she sang Persian love songs. Danielpour, program note included with perusal score, String Quartet No. 4, Apparitions (New York: Associated Music Publishers, 2001.)

29Danielpour, program notes, String Quartet No. 2.

every tone in this jagged eleven-note series should connect melodically to the previous one (mm. 36ff). Similar staggered entrances in the third movement, “Benediction” (mm. 7-10, 14-7, 20-1, 72, 85ff), link the outer two movements of *Psalms of Sorrow* as they do the outer movements of *Urban Dances II*; in both compositions, the technique perhaps indicates a sense of pain and detachment. In addition to the isolation of single pitches, Danielpour isolates individual instruments to express a song without words; e.g., in *Psalms of Sorrow*, a declamatory cello solo in the first movement, “Elegy” (mm. 75ff, *come recitativo*), and a similar passage for viola in “Benediction” (mm. 101-2).

In contrast to the solo *recitative* and *Klangfarbenmelodie*, all four instruments hammer double stops (mm. 70ff) in another section in “Elegy” that Danielpour identifies as “a march, a memory of the dark and ultimately overwhelming presence of the Third Reich.” Rapid repetitions of a pitch similar to those in the march also appear at the very beginning and at the end of the second movement, “Remembrance.” Danielpour describes this movement as an evocation of the nightmare of *Kristallnacht*. It is a relentless movement of frantic, fragmented figures that convey the anxiety, anguish, and despair of those trying to avoid deportation by the Nazi troops. Alternating ascending and descending *glissandi* that span a major seventh, a gesture which Danielpour first used in “My Father’s Song” in the second quartet, contribute to the emotional effect of this lament as well (Ex. 7.9, mm. 71-3, also, mm. 88-90, etc.).

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31Danielpour, program note accompanying perusal score, String Quartet No. 3. I find the rhythm and the “ever increasing intensity” reminiscent of Ravel’s *Bolero*, which dilutes the feeling of despair and doom.

32Ibid. *Kristallnacht*, a German government-sanctioned anti-Jewish raid, occurred after German diplomat Ernst vom Rath was assassinated by a Jew on 7 November 1938. Jews were beaten and arrested, and windows in synagogues and Jewish-owned shops were destroyed throughout the Reich. The name *Kristallnacht*, or Crystal Night, is derived from the broken glass that covered the streets and sidewalks. Robert Edwin Herzstein, *The Nazis* (Chicago: Time-Life Books, 1980), 138.
This example demonstrates Danielpour’s juxtaposition of dynamics and moods as he abruptly moves to accented, repeated chords, with the interval of a major seventh prominent in the cello (m. 74). Also similar to the close of “My Father’s Song” is the repetition of a descending minor third, usually played *portamento* or *glissando* (mm. 8-9, 46-7, 60-1, 131-3). After three measures of “wild, brutal” *fortissimo* double stops in all instruments, this depiction of *Kristallnacht* concludes with a final descending scale (mm. 167ff).

An unusual aspect of the third string quartet is the inclusion of a baritone solo in the last movement. With the very first notes of “Benediction,” one is aware that the nightmares of the preceding two movements have passed. The baritone enters (m. 28, *tranquillo*) with a text derived from Stephen Mitchell’s translations of Psalms Seventeen and Thirty-nine:

> And now, Lord, what do I wait for? My only trust is in you. 
> Help me to give up my desire and to let go of who I am. 
> You have granted me this brief existence which is almost nothing in your sight. 
> May I receive it gratefully and gratefully give it back. 
> Turn toward me, touch my spirit, stay beside me 
> Until the moment when I must step out into your final darkness. 
> Like the pupil of the eye protect me. Hide me in the shadow of your wings,
Cover me with your mercy, rock me to sleep in the dark.
And let me when I awaken see nothing but the light of your face.\(^{33}\)

The idea of relinquishment parallels the concept of surrender inherent in Rilke’s poetry. Surrender of control manifests itself in the melodic line as well as the text. With one exception, the voice begins each phrase on a weak beat, as if in deference to a greater power: only the phrase “Turn toward me” (m. 73), the middle point of the text and its central focus, begins on the downbeat.

Moving stepwise at times and leaping melodically at others (major seventh at mm. 104, 111; a major ninth at m. 75), the voice operates as if on a separate plane from the strings. Its line is frequently discordant to theirs. In addition to the dissonance between the two, the instruments generally share rhythmic patterns whereas the baritone’s rhythm is different. Through these distinctions, Danielpour suggests the distance between God and man. Voice and strings become more attuned to each other in their final pairing. The viola doubles the baritone’s pitch four times (mm. 135-8) on the singer’s last phrase.

The text moves *Psalms of Sorrow* away from the darkness of *Kristallnacht* and toward the light, causing one to anticipate the transcendence that has become characteristic at the end of Danielpour’s compositions; however, the prominence of a minor third throughout “Benediction” keeps the mood subdued. The interval, important melodically in the previous movement, is now featured harmonically in the opening violin duet; the lower two strings then imitate the upper two. After referencing the Holocaust and its victims in the first two movements, Danielpour addresses healing and reconciliation in the third. Four signature *crescendoed* half-step slurs (mm. 150-3) briefly awaken the foreboding of the earlier movements, but the gesture is not as noticeable or as ominous when played by a string instrument; the dynamics start at *piano* and return to *pianissimo* after the brief *crescendo*, so the combination of soft dynamics and the more subtle string timbre serves to diminish the slur’s effect.\(^{34}\) Hence, the theme of death is present in “Benediction,” but it is muted.

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\(^{34}\)Similar slurs also occur in String Quartet No. 2 at the beginning of the second
At the close of the third string quartet, as in the second movements of the piano quintet and *Metamorphosis*, Danielpour references the Judeo-Christian chorale tradition. The custom of a congregational response after the reading of a Psalm is implied here; however, the word “Amen” is not for the voice but is written over the instrumental chords three times in the last four measures (mm. 155-8). The string quartet acts as a four-voice choir. Despite the text’s emphasis on light, affirmation, and blessing, resolution is elusive. The last twenty measures, for strings only, contain multiple repetitions of simultaneous major and minor thirds, creating an ambiguous finale.

**Toward a simpler expressive style**

Studying the first four quartets, one observes the evolution of Danielpour’s writing in the genre. Subsequent to his first student endeavor, the second and third quartets share certain elements such as more complicated rhythms and considerable dissonance. *Requiem* contains excessive metronome markings and instructions to performers as well as constantly changing meters; these are all absent in *Apparitions* (2000). A glance at this fourth quartet reveals a new simplicity in Danielpour’s compositional style. Except for the solo cantillation in “Swan Song,” the rhythm in *Apparitions* is simple and straightforward. The score is uncluttered and can be easily sightread.

movement, “The Little Dictator” (mm. 2-3, viola), and near the end of “My Father’s Song” (mm. 155-7, second violin).

In Jewish psalmody and in some Christian traditions, the congregation occasionally sings “Hallelujah” or “Amen” in response to each verse of a hymn.

The scores studied are all perusal scores loaned by Schirmer because, with the exception of String Quartet No. 2, the quartets are not yet published. I have not yet seen the recently completed fifth quartet which premiered 1 May 2004, but, according to the composer’s program note, this work is “the most European and the most neo-classical of all my quartets, in the sense of going back to models and structures from the European past.” Debbie Horne, Schirmer editor, e-mail 26 April 2004.
Danielpour explains that the subtitle, *Apparitions*, refers to dreams, fantasies, and supernatural stories. In tandem with the theme of death, the composer’s interest in dreams and dreaming, discussed in conjunction with *The Enchanted Garden* in chapter five, is illustrated throughout this composition. The five movements of String Quartet No. 4 are “Rodolfo’s Dream,” “Katrina and the Children,” “Swan Song,” “Last Tango at Teatro Colón,” and “Johnnie Brown.” As in *Urban Dances II* and String Quartet No. 3, Danielpour staggers entrances of quiet, sustained pitches at the beginning of the first movement, “Rodolfo’s Dream” (mm. 1ff, C ♯ A-flat ♯ G ♯ B-flat). The four-note motto is characterized by two minor thirds separated by a half step. Played molto vibrato starting at measure fifty-seven, the pitches create a shimmering, dream-like state that corresponds to Danielpour’s program notes: Rodolfo imagines that his beloved is beckoning to him from the grave. A quotation of “Mi chiamano Mimi” from Puccini’s *La Bohème* appears in the cello’s upper register (Ex. 7.10, m. 36ff).

![Ex. 7.10 Danielpour, String Quartet No. 4, “Rodolfo’s Dream,” mm. 36-8. Copyright © 2001 (Renewed) by Associated Music Publishers, Inc. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Used by permission.](image)

One realizes that the initial four-note motive (m. 1), which is similar to other Danielpour mottos, also closely resembles Puccini’s theme with its descending and ascending thirds. When

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37 Danielpour, program note, String Quartet No. 4. Danielpour subsequently re-scored the fourth quartet for orchestra, and it premiered in May 2003 with the New Jersey Symphony. Works list from Debbie Horne, e-mail 26 April 2004.

38 Danielpour, program note, String Quartet No. 4.
dispersed among the instruments and played in harmonics (mm. 71ff), the motto acquires an eerie, other-worldly quality.

Psychological tensions, anti-Semitism, and dance rhythms surface again in the fourth movement of *Apparitions*. In “Last Tango at Teatro Colón,” the tango motive involves a repeated, accented minor third, the outer voices beginning a tritone apart (Ex. 7.11). Danielpour’s choice of the “forbidden” tritone seems an appropriate one for this dance of seduction. The composer describes the setting as an opera theater in Buenos Aires. Many World War II refugees, both Holocaust survivors and Nazis in self-imposed exile, settled in Argentina, creating an often tense atmosphere of expatriates at the opera: “Jews on the left and Nazis on the right – all gathered for a common love of the music, and all compelled to behave politely. . . . ‘When the Teatro is dark and closed, then seething passions of these long-ago audiences continue their own sort of dance – endlessly.’”

Insistent repetitions of the first measure’s syncopated pattern (Ex. 7.11, mm. 1-2) comprise the bulk of the movement’s melodic and rhythmic material. The tango ends inconclusively with a bass movement found in several Danielpour cadences: the cello ascends a tritone from a diminished seventh chord to a B-flat seventh chord in third inversion (mm. 121-

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39Ibid. This movement is dedicated to Stefan Lano, opera conductor, who will be conducting the premiere of Danielpour’s first opera in 2005.
2). Not only does this harmony lack resolution, but the final chord is sustained while fragments of the tango continue for two more measures. As suggested in the program notes, one can almost imagine that the ghostly dance continues in another dimension.

Quotation also occurs in the final movement of *Apparitions*, “Johnnie Brown.” In what is perhaps an “apparition” of an organ grinder’s monkey, the second violin plays the folk song “The More We Get Together” (mm. 35ff). The first violin overlaps with “Pop! Goes the Weasel!” (mm. 36ff). The two children’s tunes recur several times, ultimately in two different keys simultaneously (Ex. 7.12, mm. 102ff). Danielpour also incorporates hints of “The More We Get Together” in the first movement of *A Child’s Reliquary* (mm. 33, 43).

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40 Danielpour uses a similar cadential pattern at the end of the first movement of the Concerto for Orchestra and in two places in *The Awakened Heart*, as will be discussed in chapter eight.

41 The story behind the fifth movement, “Johnnie Brown,” is a strange one, although not a dream or tale of the supernatural. In this case, the “apparition” is a monkey who was rumored to be the favorite companion of architect Addison Mizner. Mizner designed many of the landmark homes in Palm Beach where Danielpour grew up and the town in which he composed this work. The architect buried his pet with a grave marker that reads “Johnnie Brown – The Human Monkey.” Danielpour, program note.
The simpler style evident in the fourth quartet also characterizes *A Child’s Reliquary*. Joseph Kalichstein, whose trio premiered and recorded the composition, expects it to become part of the canon. He acknowledges that the music lacks complexity: “Newness is not necessarily good. And complexity is not necessarily good. Music is not science.” Kalichstein’s comment reflects the larger trend away from novelty and towards increased accessibility and expressiveness established by the end of the twentieth century. The more complex writing styles of many composers in the first three quarters of the twentieth century influenced Danielpour in his early years; but, as he has developed his own voice, he has become more confident in his individual manner of expression and has simplified his writing.

*A Child’s Reliquary* (1999) is defined by death. The piano trio was designed as a memorial following the tragic death of the eighteen-month-old son of Susan and Carl St. Clair. Webster defines a reliquary as a small casket or shrine containing relics. In this composition, the keepsake appears to be the memory of little Cole Carsan St. Clair. Danielpour’s description of the trio as “a kind of *Kindertotenlieder* without words” references Mahler’s setting of five Friedrich Rückert poems about the deaths of two of his children; it also reinforces the observation made in the string quartets that Danielpour’s instrumental music is often vocally conceived.

Unlike other Danielpour works, *A Child’s Reliquary* does not have a detailed program. It is distinguished in the composer’s oeuvre by the absence of subtitles; Italian tempo markings and

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44Danielpour, program note, *Chamber Music at the Y – 26th Season: The Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio* (12 & 13 September 2000). Commissioned by the Tisch Center for the Arts of the 92nd Street Y and the Hancher Auditorium/University of Iowa, *A Child’s Reliquary* was premiered at Hancher Auditorium in Iowa City on 13 April 2000. The trio also performed the work at the Aspen Festival that summer and gave the New York premiere on 12 September 2000 at the 92nd Street Y. In a personal conversation, 25 October 2001, Joseph Kalichstein commented that he and his colleagues continue to program the trio. They have also commissioned Danielpour to write a piano quartet to be premiered with violinist Michael Tree on 12 December 2006. Richard Danielpour, phone conversation, 6 October 2003.
a metronome indication at the beginning of each movement suffice. It appears that the composer recognized that the trio’s title and dedication required no further elaboration, and, contrary to his usual verbosity, he allowed the music to speak for itself. 45

A simple, pentatonic duet introduces *A Child’s Reliquary*. The violin doubles the plaintive cello melody with an artificial harmonic a fourth above, adding an ethereal quality. The long, lyrical line extends for eight measures and is sweet and childlike. In measure nine, it begins a whole step lower, but the two voices no longer move together; the violin is an octave above and a measure ahead of the cello’s imitation. This shadowing of voices, similar to that in Danielpour’s earlier works titled “shadow dances,” references death. The third movement begins with this same melody, but, significantly, it is not completed: the descending scale pattern of the first five notes is simply repeated over the span of three octaves. This symbol of death is reinforced, as in the first movement, by Danielpour’s separation of the voices by a measure and an octave.

A distinctive and disturbing gesture appears in the piano’s opening measure in the first movement (Ex. 7.13, m. 6): a minor third oscillation ends with a superimposed major chord. Major/minor simultaneity expresses dichotomy and perhaps bittersweet retrospection throughout the first movement (I., mm. 15-7, 78-81, 89). Characteristically, there is no resolution to this uneasy ambiguity. With the return of the piano’s opening motive near the end of the movement, the key shifts abruptly to a D-sharp minor seventh chord with an added sixth (m. 93). This creates a suspension that does not resolve—a suspension in music and a suspension in time in this composition about the death of a child.

Major/minor duality recurs throughout the last movement, also, as does the oscillating piano figure (III., mm. 15, 17, 27, 35, etc.). Most of the latter’s reappearances, up to the final measures, involve variations of the first movement’s pattern; instead of capping a minor third

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45Much of Danielpour’s music has a haunting quality, a trait that Kalichstein noted particularly. He reported there were tears in response to the trio in Aspen, Detroit, and elsewhere. When asked how much of this was due to the tragedy referred to in the program, the pianist replied, “Even without the story—the story is in the music. I mean, if *Kindertotenlieder* was not called *Kindertotenlieder* you would still sense this tremendous loss. It is part of the program without the words.” Kalichstein, personal conversation, 25 October 2001.
with the parallel major chord, Danielpour sometimes moves to a different chord. For example, the ear anticipates a B-flat major chord at the end of a B-flat/D-flat oscillation, but it is an A-flat major chord over D-flat that concludes this gesture (m. 15); at another point, one expects an A major chord following the alternation of A and C, but the piano ends on a second-inversion G major chord (m. 27). An extended series of alternating octave E’s acts as a stagnant pedal point amidst attempts to cadence, in order, on A minor, A major, G minor, G major, A major, E minor, A major, E major, and C major (mm. 35-45). This futile search for a suitable chord of conclusion reflects the confusion one might experience following the death of a child.

The trio is another Danielpour composition which quotes Brahms’s *Wiegenlied*. In the first movement, the violin and cello twice play the ascending minor third with its distinctive rhythm; initially it is harmonized A major to C-sharp minor, and then A major to C major (mm. 53-4). As the chord progression is extended, it builds from a *pianissimo*, four-voice harmonization in the piano’s middle register to *fortissimo*, six-voice octave chords in the treble (mm. 55ff). The piano further thickens the texture by repeatedly leaping from the bass to the treble, playing double trills and simultaneous B major/B minor chords. At the same time, the two string instruments play double stops in a *vigoroso* ostinato of Scotch snaps. This frantic activity cadences in B minor, and the piano plays bell-like chords in descending, parallel motion. In the space of ten measures, Danielpour moves from a simple harmonization of Brahms’s
Lullaby, through increasingly full and agitated chords, to the sound of chimes in a symbolic, descending scale of death (mm. 53-63).

Another brief hint of Brahms in the first movement (m. 73) and one in the third (mm. 67-8) foreshadow a longer quotation of Wiegenlied in the third movement. A series of ascending minor thirds, the opening interval of the lullaby and also an important melodic interval in Danielpour scores, appears in the violin and cello (III., mm. 123-7), the two instruments separated by the interval of a major seventh. This leads to a full statement of the lullaby just twenty measures before the composition ends (Ex. 7.14, mm. 131ff). The quotation is chilling in light of the trio’s title and dedication. A descending minor third, doubled in octaves in the piano’s bass register, becomes an insistent repetition (mm. 138-9). The gesture becomes increasingly ominous as it alternates with three instances of the distinctive minor third oscillation, which is completed each time by the parallel major (mm. 141-147). A Child’s Reliquary concludes with a somber B major/minor ambiguity.\(^{46}\)

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\(^{46}\) Danielpour has not specifically commented on ambiguities in his music in relation to those in Ives’s; however, as noted previously, he acknowledges the earlier composer’s influence in his music and expresses gratitude to John C. Heiss for his emphasis on Ives’s music at The New England Conservatory.
The piano trio’s poignant outer movements frame a central Vivace that is marked “playfully.” Its principal theme sounds like a children’s song. The A-flat major tonality and the rhythm in six-eight, played with staccato and pizzicato articulations, evoke an image of a child skipping merrily through life. The key of A-flat major seems to symbolize serenity and peace, at times heavenly peace, to Danielpour. In String Quartet No. 3, Psalms of Sorrow, the dissonances and long-breathed independent lines of “Elegy” are silenced with a concluding A-flat major chord. “Katrina and the Children” in String Quartet No. 4 portrays the imagined reunion of Katrina and Spencer Trask with their children, all of whom died in a diphtheria epidemic. Danielpour’s depiction of a ghostly ball at their mansion, Yaddo, concludes with an unexpected A-flat major chord, perhaps another suggestion of heavenly rest. Danielpour uses this same tonality in An American Requiem to end the Agnus Dei with a section he terms “an angel choir in heaven.”

The second movement of A Child’s Reliquary does not remain in A-flat major, however. It is in a loose rondo form with five sections that begin, respectively, on the keys of A-flat major, C-sharp minor, F major, F-sharp minor, and B-flat major. Along with shifting tonal centers, Danielpour shifts the meter. In three-quarter time, the second and fourth sections include a sparse waltz in the piano (mm. 65ff, mm. 266ff) that is reminiscent of the bass-to-chord figurations of Erik Satie’s Gymnopedies. The neo-classicism of Satie is well-suited to A Child’s Requieary; Danielpour’s slow, triple-meter dance evinces a child-like simplicity.

As is Danielpour’s custom in a three-movement composition, the middle movement is the lengthiest: 455 measures as compared to 95 in the first movement and 152 in the last. This places the emphasis of A Child’s Reliquary on the scampering child and the celebration of life itself; however, the second movement is not idyllic. In its middle section, a repeated cluster chord in the piano’s bass generates a relentless march (mm. 121-150), an element frequently

\footnote{This is not a tune I recognize; it is just reminiscent of a children’s song.}

\footnote{Danielpour, 6 January 2004.}

\footnote{As Danielpour explains, his music may embrace various tonalities, but it is seldom in a key. Danielpour, program notes, The Awakened Heart premiere, Baltimore Symphony (25 October 1990).}
found in Danielpour compositions and one that generally has negative connotations, such as the anti-Semitic march in *The Enchanted Garden*. Also, Danielpour’s signature slur lends disquietude at the conclusion of the second Satiesque episode: violin and cello alternately end four fragments of the principal theme with a *crescendoed* descending half-step (mm. 295-302).

Duality is expressed through hemiola, which characterizes much of the second movement, particularly the third and fifth sections of the rondo. Occasionally one instrument plays the original six-eight melody in triple meter while another continues in duple (mm. 116-20. 199ff). The lilting effect of the tune in its original duple meter becomes more sluggish as the notes are lengthened to fit the triple meter. At another point, the piano continues the theme in duple while each string instrument repeats a two-note chord, the violin in duple time, the cello in triple (II., mm. 153ff), creating a unique pulsating effect.

At its conclusion, the second movement becomes truly conflicted, with hemiola and three simultaneous tonalities in the last four measures: the violin is in triple meter, cello and piano in duple; the piano continuously outlines G to C; the cello alternates between D-flat and E-flat; and the violin keeps repeating an F-sharp (mm. 452-5). It is not until the last measure that, as the piano continues to outline G-C-G, the cello and violin rest for one beat before each strums a final pizzicato chord, confirming a cadence on C.

Danielpour himself points out the importance of the Judeo-Christian chorale in several of his works, including *A Child’s Reliquary*. He explains these chorales as “fundamental alleluias” and “an affirmation of life.”

About halfway through the first movement, Danielpour writes a four-measure chordal section that begins on A minor and cadences on A major. Because the second chord is prolonged, the ear isolates the first two chords, A minor to G major; for a moment, one does not anticipate a continued chord progression. There are two similar instances in the last movement where the composer suspends activity after only two chords: at measures eight to nine, the strings *crescendo* from E-flat major to F major. The whole-step movement in the bass is duplicated in the treble as well. This same voicing occurs again in measures thirty-three to thirty-four as the strings *crescendo* from F major to G major. There are also lengthier

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50 Danielpour, 6 January 2004.
chorale sections, but these two-chord fragments that appear several times in the trio, as well as in several orchestral compositions that are discussed in the next chapter, are particularly distinctive.

The composer exhibits his preference for a romantic aesthetic throughout his chamber compositions: all of these works except the piano trio are programmatic. This is noteworthy in a genre that originated primarily as absolute music. Instruments are treated vocally and often spin long, lyrical lines; there are frequent vocal indications such as *cantando* and *recitativo*. Danielpour’s predilection for the death theme is another indication of his romantic style tendencies. Likewise, the exploration of social and psychological issues, evident in the urban music of the early chamber compositions and continuing through the ghostly “apparitions” of the 2000 string quartet, points to the composer’s often moody, introspective nature. These same characteristics are present in the orchestral compositions, but on a much larger, grander scale.
Danielpour’s musical romanticism, dramatic flair, and gift for instrumentation are best displayed in his orchestral music. It was *First Light* (1988)\(^1\) that initially attracted attention to the composer and prompted Schirmer Publications to offer him a contract. Danielpour’s 1998 Grammy nomination in the category of “classical contemporary composition” was for the Concerto for Orchestra. His compositions in this genre began with the early symphonies that he completed while studying at Juilliard: Symphony No. 1, *Dona Nobis Pacem* (1984-5), and Symphony No. 2, *Visions* (1986). A third symphony, *Journey Without Distance*, followed in 1989. In addition to these works, the piano concerti, and the vocal compositions with instrumental accompaniment that have been discussed previously, the composer has completed two full-length ballets, a violin concerto, a double concerto for violin and cello, a concerto for orchestra and string quartet, and two cello concerti. Other works for orchestra alone include *The Awakened Heart* (1990), *Song of Remembrance* (1991), *Toward the Splendid City* (1992), *Celestial Night* (1997), *Vox Populi* (1998), *The Night Rainbow* (1999), and *Nocturne* for string orchestra (2000), as well as an orchestrated version of the fourth string quartet, *Apparitions* (2003). Danielpour has written at least one piece involving full orchestra every year for the last fourteen years—more than for any other medium.

Most of this music includes a standard string section, three flutes (the third doubling on piccolo), two oboes and an English horn, three clarinets (the third chair generally doubling on bass clarinet), two bassoons and a contrabassoon. Danielpour’s brass sections have four French horns, two trombones, two euphoniums, and two tubas.

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\(^1\)The original composition was for chamber orchestra and premiered in March 1988; the full orchestra version premiered in July 1989.
horns, three trumpets, three trombones, and usually a tuba. He always includes harp, piano and/or celeste (except in the piano concerti), as well as a large percussion battery involving three-to-six performers. Congas, bongos, guiros, castanets, water gongs, tom-toms, tam-tams, crotales, slapsticks, cowbells, and other types of drums and noisemakers lend distinctive touches to Danielpour’s scores. Also, he frequently combines vibraphone, glockenspiel, and chimes with celeste (and/or occasionally marimba or tubular bells) to create an Indonesian gamelan-like sound. Danielpour reveals that he often writes with specific instrumentalists in mind, such as the passages in An American Requiem written for Pacific Symphony Orchestra principal clarinetist James Kanter.2 In Cello Concerto No. 2, Through the Ancient Valley, the composer acknowledges his Iranian heritage with the inclusion of a dombak (Persian drum), santours (Persian dulcimers), and kamancha (spike fiddle).

Danielpour is not hesitant about utilizing all the resources at his disposal, and tutti orchestral sections often reverberate loudly. As one critic writes, “His orchestral works take joy in being orchestral.”3 This brings to mind Hector Berlioz’s comment that one should vibrate with the music: “One hears, but one does not vibrate. However, it is necessary for the listener to vibrate with the instruments and voices, and through them, to perceive genuine musical feelings.”4 Danielpour suggests that “all of the great orchestral composers were resonance junkies.”5 But the composer always provides a respite through careful placement of quiet interludes and solos. He has not embraced his rock roots to the extent that Philip Glass has in some of his music; the Philip Glass Ensemble includes multiple electric keyboards and amplified


winds.\(^6\) Except for the rare amplified piano, which blends with the rest of the orchestra in several compositions (*First Light*, Symphony No. 3, and *Song of Remembrance*), Danielpour incorporates only those instruments found in the traditional early twentieth-century orchestra.

As in the chamber works, one recognizes spiritual and psychological issues, the death theme, and the influences of dance and urban life. Conversations with the composer generally center around these considerations; although he is extremely loquacious, Danielpour speaks sparingly about his compositional style or about the music itself unless specific questions are posed. The diversity of literary sources that have informed his non-vocal music says much about his personal philosophy and provides insight into his music. Following a discussion of these influences as they relate to various orchestral compositions, the remainder of the chapter will focus on the Concerto for Orchestra.

A three-volume spiritual psychotherapy book, *A Course in Miracles*, inspired the third symphony, *Journey Without Distance* (1989). At various points throughout the symphony, a soprano sings excerpts from this text by Helen Schucman, a professor of medical psychology at Columbia University Medical School. Schucman claims the book was “channeled” to her by a spirit she believed to be Jesus. A combination of psychology and New Age spirituality, *A Course* teaches that there is no evil, no sin, and that separation from God is only an illusion. This philosophy was attractive to many in the late twentieth century, Danielpour included.

The composer explains that Part One of *Journey Without Distance* suggests an awakening from dreams of death and fear to a belief in hope.\(^7\) The symphony begins abruptly with a *sforzando*, polytonal chord (D seventh/ B-flat minor) played by full orchestra. The composer’s signature *crescendoed* descending half-step occurs numerous times in Part One, primarily in the horns; in this work it is usually marked with a *glissando* instead of a slur. Danielpour combines this symbol of death and his sensitivity to recent Jewish history with the words “In the manner of a Gestapo march!” written in the score near the end of the movement (m. 406).

\(^6\)Schwarz, *Minimalists*, 127. The music was so loud during Glass’s performance at the Spoleto Festival in 1972, someone attempted to shut off the electricity. Schwarz, 125.

Neither the music nor the text wallows in recriminations. The literary emphasis is on surrender and the healing of relationships through forgiveness: “Forgive the past and let it go for it is gone.”8 The music reflects this with a progression from a fast-paced, rhythmically intense, thickly orchestrated conflict to a more moderate tempo and reduced instrumental texture. Four strokes on the chimes and harp conclude Part One; they symbolize the religious significance of the journey that the soprano elucidates at the beginning of Part Two:

The journey to God is merely the reawakening
Of the knowledge of where you are always and what you are forever.
It is a journey without distance
To a goal that has never changed.

Danielpour sets this part of the text as a chant (mm. 437ff). The four lines revolve around an E-flat recitation tone that changes only when it extends to neighboring notes in cadential formulas. In addition to the reference to traditional Roman Catholic chant, the static melody mirrors Schucman’s virtual journey to an inner place of awakening; just as the vocal line goes nowhere, the protagonist has gone nowhere physically. In the coda, a chorus responds to the soloist with an affirmation of transcendence:

What was a place of death
Has now become a living temple
In a world of light.9

A similar transformation occurs in The Awakened Heart, which Danielpour composed the following year. He calls this three-movement composition “a symphonic triptych” and likens it to a medieval art triptych, a three-panel painting frequently used as an alterpiece. The composer notes that “the central inspiration [for The Awakened Heart] was a journey into freedom from bondage—a

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9Richard Danielpour, quoting Helen Schucman, A Course in Miracles, in Journey Without Distance (New York: Associated Music Publishers, 1990). Danielpour now regrets the incorporation of the text in this symphony, which he considers “a big failure.” Phone conversation, 10 July 2000.
path to inner freedom.” The subtitles of the movements convey this program: “Into the World’s Night,” “Epiphany,” and “My Hero Bares His Nerves.” The last is the title of a Dylan Thomas poem that scholars have interpreted in extremely disparate ways. On at least one level it speaks to a favorite Danielpour subject: fully embracing life as a means of developing courage and experiencing personal growth. In the middle of the movement, caution is discarded as marimbas, cowbells, tambourines, and guïro combine in a syncopated, Latin salsa-like celebration (m. 130ff).

Danielpour notes that “Into the World’s Night” is a phrase used by metaphysicist Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) to describe the decline of civilization. The composer interprets Heidegger’s philosophy as a commentary on our culture’s emphasis on “controlling and manipulating” all facets of life. Control is an issue that has surfaced many times in Danielpour’s compositions. In addition to Heidegger’s existentialism, “In a Dark Time” by Theodore Roethke (1908-63) also influenced the first movement. This text portrays a person on the brink of despair or at the edge of insanity: “What’s madness but nobility of soul at odds with circumstance? The day’s on fire! I know the purity of pure despair.” It is a bleak, four-stanza poem of introspection and self-doubt: “Which I is I?” Danielpour’s opening chord, with cellos and violins separated by a characteristic major seventh, is marked “darkly.” The sparse texture and the improvisatory solos that alternate among various woodwinds promote a dream-like state. Surrender of self, a Rilkian concept present in other Danielpour programs, is expressed in the third stanza: “And in broad day the midnight come again! . . . Death of the self


11One interpretation is that the young Thomas was simply writing about internal growth and confidence; engaged in self-contemplation, Thomas was concerned with the mysteries of “womb and tomb.” Alexander M. Witherspoon, ed., College Survey of English Literature (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & Co., 1951), 1335-6. Another interpretation is that the theme is masturbation. John Ackerman, Dylan Thomas: His Life and Work (London, New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 50-1.

12Danielpour, liner notes, 7. Also, Danielpour, conversations with David Lewis Crosby for program notes included with The Awakened Heart score.

13Ibid.
in a long, tearless night.” The composer provides several instructions to performers: “obsessive, nightmarish” (m. 22); “with alarm” (m. 38); “with foreboding” (m. 105); “rude, sardonic” (m. 161); and “obsessive, maniacal” (m. 238). In the latter section, a gremlin-like, thirty-second note gesture (Ex. 8.1, m. 238, doubled in piccolo, oboe, clarinet, and piano) is the same one that Danielpour later employed in *The Enchanted Garden* in “Mardi Gras” and “Night” (Ex. 5.11, 5.12). The figure’s symbolism in the piano preludes parallels that of “Into the World’s Night.”


Rilke’s poetry, Robert Bly’s *Iron John*, and Arthur Egendorf’s *Healing from the War* (about Vietnam) are the diverse sources that influenced *Song of Remembrance*. The composition was completed in 1991 during the Persian Gulf War, which Danielpour refers to as “a war in the cradle of civilization.”

Considering the composer’s ethnic and family ties to the Gulf region as well as his anti-war sentiments, previously discussed in conjunction with *An American Requiem*, one can speculate a program from the title. At the top of the manuscript, Danielpour inscribed “In memory of . . . .” Although there is no narrative describing the *Song of Remembrance*, the premiere program quotes Danielpour’s thoughts about its composition: “The writing of this piece was for me somewhat akin to writing an essay about the experience of ‘letting go’—about the need to make peace with life’s fleeting quality and the inevitability of death. . . . One can only be

14Danielpour, program notes, San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra, 31 May 1992, 29.
brought to a healing place by going fully into the dark spaces of our lives, to confront and experience the sadness, fear, rage, and grief that we have hidden from ourselves.”\textsuperscript{15} This calls to mind a similar remark that Danielpour made about the therapeutic benefit he derived from \textit{Sonnets to Orpheus I}, also written in 1991. Composing is clearly propitious for Danielpour in a number of different ways.

At one point in \textit{Song of Remembrance}, all sound ceases except for a solo trumpet that is accompanied by a barely perceptible timpani tremolo (mm. 294ff). The stark texture and the simple, mostly stepwise \textit{cantando} melody are a sharp contrast to the accented rhythms and constantly changing meters of the preceding \textit{tutti} section. The trumpet, traditionally a military instrument, is a significant choice for a solo in a memorial work, particularly one with ties to war. In a symbolic gesture at the very end of \textit{Song of Remembrance}, a solo trumpet plays offstage. Its last notes are a \textit{crescendoed} descending half-step slur (mm. 697-8), Danielpour’s “sting of death” and a pronounced example of his own distinctive voice.

\textit{Toward the Splendid City} also involves personal awakening. Danielpour derived the title from Pablo Neruda’s 1971 Nobel Prize address which is quoted on the score’s title page: “We must pass through solitude and difficulty, isolation and silence, to find that enchanted place where we can dance our clumsy dance and sing our sorrowful song. But in that dance, and in that song, the most ancient rites of our conscience fulfill themselves in the awareness of being human.”\textsuperscript{16} Neruda’s theme parallels Rilke’s and Danielpour’s emphasis on enduring the struggles of life and emerging from the darkness to experience transformation.

Composed in 1992 for the New York Philharmonic’s 150\textsuperscript{th} anniversary, \textit{Toward the Splendid City} is one of the few compositions Danielpour has written completely away from New York City. Yet, like several chamber compositions, it is an example of his urban music. He considers it a “sonic postcard” of New York as well as an expression of his nostalgia for the town during his year-long residency with the Seattle Symphony. Danielpour reveals that, as much as

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid.

he enjoys living in the city, he temporarily had second thoughts about returning to his generally
more complicated life in New York. His “love-hate relationship” with the city at that time
presents another dichotomy, besides public/private and dark/light, that informs Toward the
Splendid City. Near the end, a section for celeste, harp, vibraphone, glockenspiel, and strings
playing harmonics (mm. 299ff) is an aural re-enactment of the composer’s memory of seeing the
lights of New York through the mist as he traveled by airplane “toward the splendid city.”

These instruments, punctuated by flutter-tongued flute tremolos, create a blurry, surreal sound
that is distinctly memorable.

In addition to choosing literature whose themes address inner awakening, Danielpour
devises his own narratives on the subject. He explains that the ballet Anima Mundi (Spirit of the
World) follows the four seasons of the year, which he intimates in the subtitles of the individual
movements: “Musica Verna” (Spring Music), “Lacrimae Rerum” (“Tears in the nature of things,”
a phrase from The Aeneid), “Nox Tenebroso” (Dark, Gloomy Night), and “Lux Hiberna” (Winter
Light). Psychological states that often parallel the seasons are more obvious than the physical
conditions that one associates with seasons of the year: spring suggests renewal, and fall—dark
depression. Danielpour indicates that the second movement relates to summer and the pain that
often results from love’s passion. Several gestures in this movement are indicative of death,
whether death of a loved one, death of a love affair, or death of a personality: prolonged
oscillations of a minor third (mm. 38-44, 50-72); two series of overlapping, descending scales
(mm. 64-7, 81-85); twelve tolls of chimes (mm. 77-85); and the death knell of the bass drum
(mm. 99-119).

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17 James M. Keller, quoting Danielpour, program notes, New York Philharmonic (4-9

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19 Danielpour, liner notes, First Light/The Awakened Heart/Symphony No. 3, 11.
According to Danielpour, the final movement of *Anima Mundi* concerns “the awakening that sometimes occurs in the darkest and coldest times in life.”\textsuperscript{20} Personal struggles accede to light and transformation. Conflict and death, in this case probably either death of self or a Rilkian relinquishment, inform most of the movement. Death gestures continue their prominence: an extended descending scale (mm. 10-13); the ominous beating of the bass drum (mm. 20-24); and four crescendoes on descending half steps (mm. 66-7, 98-101). Darkness is the primary feature of “Lux Hiberna” until the end. Repeated minor thirds continue melodically in the principal violin through the final measures, and simultaneous major and minor chords create ambiguity until the last two chords.

Danielpour’s second ballet, *Urban Dances* (1996), was commissioned by the New York City Ballet and written a year after his first. Danielpour suggests a twenty-four hour cycle for the five movements; a similar cycle is explicit in the early *Psalms for Piano* and is implied in *The Enchanted Garden*.\textsuperscript{21} *Urban Dances* is propelled by syncopation, *perpetuum mobile*, and Latin dance rhythms, including several sections reminiscent of “Dance the Orange” from the 1991 *Sonnets*. Multiple ostinati appear frequently in Danielpour’s oeuvre and are generally loud, accented, and intrusive. The ostinati in two of the ballet’s movements, however, unlike the syncopated ostinati in the *Urban Dances* brass quintets, receive a gentle treatment: the third movement, described as evening in New York, combines flute flutterings and quiet ostinati in strings, celeste, glockenspiel, and harp, the latter playing harmonics. This instrumentation is similar to the one Danielpour uses for the misty lights of New York in *Toward the Splendid City*. In the dark fourth movement, slow-moving ostinati in harp, celeste, and occasionally winds, create a sense of timelessness and another-worldly sound, consistent with Danielpour’s indication “ethereal, trancelike.”

A different approach to urban music occurs in *Celestial Night*, which contrasts Danielpour’s beloved New York City with the quieter existence of the MacDowell Colony. The

\textsuperscript{20}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{21}Ibid., 6-7. The first movement begins at noon; the second takes place in late afternoon; the third, a *pas de trois*, is evening in New York; the fourth is a *pas de deux* in the wee hours; and the final movement depicts a bustling morning in the city.
composer notes that *Celestial Night* was partially inspired by his star-gazing at the New Hampshire colony in August 1996. The composition also possesses a personal relevance: “*Celestial Night* deals with a private narrative, written when my publisher, and my friends, were saying, ‘slow down.’”

The piece opens with conflict and frenetic activity—a dissonant chord repeatedly hammered in winds, brass, and strings. As the movement progresses, the *crescendoed* slur is repeated more often than in perhaps any other Danielpour composition. It appears in various brass instruments as well as flute, piccolo, oboe, and English horn (mm. 142, 148-150), an uncommon instrumentation for the composer’s signature gesture. The pervasiveness of this “sting of death” may be indicative of the composer’s personal crisis, a time when he was feeling particularly stressed and anxious. He himself compares a section at the end of the frantic first movement to a Morse code SOS: syncopated, unison A’s throughout the orchestra (mm. 230-5; unison C’s, mm. 241-52).

A memorable coda involves the unique sound of a water gong alternately lifted and submerged (mm. 266ff). Although Danielpour has not addressed this issue, the instrumentation continues the metaphor of the SOS on a symbolic level; the inferred victim is, like the gong, occasionally submerged and overwhelmed.

The distress signal issued in the first movement is heeded in the second. According to the composer, the protagonist (Danielpour?) reduces his hectic pace and discovers an inner serenity: “[He] starts to acknowledge the immensity of all that is outside the very confined, limited, narrowminded circle of his own concerns. He sees that this peace and expansiveness is also a part of him and mirrors an inner spaciousness.”

The composition reflects Danielpour’s personal recognition that even in the middle of frantic activity, one can deliberately stop to listen to his inner voice. Peace reigns as a chorale in the strings begins in measure fifty-four and remains an intermittent presence until the end of *Celestial Night*. Again there is the influence of Ives’s *The Unanswered Question*, as placid string harmonies continue despite rhythmic

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22 Danielpour, liner notes, *Celestial Night*, 4-5.

23 Ibid., 5. Danielpour’s rhythm, however, does not follow the international distress pattern of three short, three long, three short.

24 Ibid., 4-5.
interjections from other instruments. Danielpour writes a brass chorale with similar interruptions in “Epiphany,” the second movement of The Awakened Heart. In both works, Danielpour’s musical progression mirrors a psychological pilgrimage that leads to awareness, surrender, and transformation.

Danielpour does not provide a detailed program nor descriptive subtitles for the individual movements of the Concerto for Orchestra, Zoroastrian Riddles, which makes this piece somewhat atypical. There is no explanatory preface to the perusal score, but CD liner notes provide a clue to the composition: the phrase “Zoroastrian Riddles” refers to an episode when Mozart dressed in disguise during Vienna’s carnival season and read complex, entertaining riddles to the crowd. Danielpour reveals that he has always been intrigued by Mozart’s love for puzzles and mistaken identities, so the concerto contains “contrapuntal puzzles and games and mistaken identities between various themes in the music.”

Although Danielpour does not cite Zoroastrianism as an influence on the concerto, this ancient Persian faith was Iran’s state religion prior to the destruction of the Persian Empire and the subsequent rise of Islam. Zoroastrian scriptures, written in an early form of the Persian language, proclaim a single god. Unlike the New Age A Course in Miracles, Zoroastrianism espouses an ongoing struggle between good and evil and the eventual triumph of good. Certainly the latter two concepts find their way into Danielpour’s scores in the contrast between, and the progression from, darkness to light.

This passage to enlightenment occurs in Danielpour’s Concerto for Orchestra, a work that invites comparison with Bartók’s composition of the same title. The two concerti have parallel

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He also uses the same technique in several compositions discussed in the next chapter.

Richard Danielpour, liner notes, Concerto for Orchestra, 7-8.


Although Bartók’s is not the only twentieth century composition with this title, it is the most well-known, and the older composer’s influence on Danielpour has already been noted. The title “Concerto for Orchestra” was also used by Paul Hindemith (1925), Walter Piston (1933), Zoltán Kodály (1939), Witold Lutoslawski (1950-54), Michael Tippett (1962-3), Roberto Gerhard (1965), Elliott Carter (1969), and Roger Sessions (1979-81). Sessions’s Concerto for
philosophical approaches. Bartók explained his Concerto for Orchestra as “a gradual transition from the sternness of the first movement and the lugubrious death-song of the third to the life-assertion of the last.” In characteristic Danielpour fashion, Zoroastrian Riddles also progresses from the intensity of the first movement to the transcendence of the last. The composer claims, “in order for life to continue and flourish, there must be a death or surrender.” Bartók’s concerto has five movements to Danielpour’s four, but both contain scherzando second movements, slow, elegiac third movements, and final movements that include perpetuum mobile sections.

The interval of a fourth introduces both composers’ concerti. Harp, piano, and string tremolos present Danielpour’s primary motto (Ex. 8.2, mm. 1-2; “P1” = C-sharp G-sharp A-sharp G), which appears in all four movements. Bartók based his entire composition on themes constructed of fourths. Although initially Bartók’s concerto opens with ascending fourths, at one point in the introduction there is a sequence of descending fourths, each connected by a major second (Ex. 8.3, mm. 26-8). This pattern is particularly noticeable in the string basses at the beginning of the third movement, “Elegia.” The first three notes of Bartók’s sequence are also the first three notes of Danielpour’s primary motto (Ex. 8.2, transposed), which is clearly presented at the beginning of the third movement as well. In the latter reference, a polyphonic duet of muted strings is also reminiscent of Bartók’s “night music.” Danielpour again nods to Bartók in the last movement with his own sequence involving descending fourths (mm. 208- 223, based on the first three notes of “P1” and Bartók’s sequence). Orchestra won the 1982 Pulitzer Prize in Music.


Danielpour, liner notes, Concerto for Orchestra, 8.

For the three movements mentioned, Bartók’s markings are “Allegretto scherzando,” “Elegia: Andante non troppo,” and “Finale: Pesante–Presto.” Danielpour’s are “Scherzando,” “Adagio non troppo,” and “Con moto, ben misurato.” This is one of Bartók’s most accessible compositions; it was well-received at its Boston premiere 1 December 1944 and enjoyed subsequent success with the public.
Possibly the hints of Bartók’s themes are examples of the “mistaken identities” to which Danielpour has referred; i.e., Danielpour deliberately composes his motto so that it might be associated with Bartok’s theme, just as the theme in “Rodolfo’s Dream” in the fourth string quartet is actually a Puccini theme in disguise.

Rhythm is one tool that Danielpour uses to develop as well as disguise his themes. Initially in six-four meter, each pitch in “P1” is separated by the space of a dotted-half note.
(Ex. 8.2). Danielpour repeats the motto seven times in the next ten measures (mm. 3-12), altering it by progressive rhythmic diminution:

Throughout the concerto, the motto undergoes various rhythmic transformations: at measure twenty-five, the horns repeatedly intone the first pitch before the motive continues (Ex. 8.4).

Ex. 8.4  Danielpour, Concerto for Orchestra, first movement, mm. 25-33. Copyright © 1997 (Renewed) by Associated Music Publishers, Inc. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Used by permission.

Danielpour creates rhythmic displacement by starting the pattern on a different beat, changing the meter, and diminishing the duration of pitches (mm. 27-8). The motto is then fragmented among the instruments, the first pitch repeated in trumpets and the rest of the motto placed in the horn. In successive appearances, Danielpour repeats the second and third notes of the motto in different rhythms (mm. 29, 31). One almost does not recognize “P1” in its next rhythmic guise of syncopated sixteenth notes and changing meters (mm. 32ff, spelled enharmonically). In the course of nine measures (Ex. 8.4, mm. 25-33), there are seven motto presentations with no two appearances alike. The composer uses simple techniques like repetitions of individual pitches and slight changes in rhythm to dramatically modify his mottos.
Perhaps the allusion to Mozart’s costumed disguises also refers to the use of inversion, retrograde, and retrograde inversion. Although well-schooled in serialistic methods, Danielpour acknowledges that the first movement of *Psalms for Piano* is the only “quasi-serialistic” piece he has ever written.\(^{32}\) However, in order to develop various compositions, he does adopt some of serialism’s techniques. For example, in the first movement of the Concerto for Orchestra, a rhythmically altered, mutated\(^{33}\) retrograde of “P1” appears in the horns (mm. 174ff). The piece continues with various instruments repeating and extending transposed inversions (mm. 189-202): while strings, harp, and clarinets play an arpeggiated figure that begins with the four-note inversion, horns “boldly” play a transposed, rhythmic variation of “P1” (Ex. 8.5, mm. 201-2), and trombone and tuba answer with a transposed inversion. The casual contemporary listener is aware of the contrasts of instrumentation, texture, dynamics, and rhythmic vitality, even though he may not be cognizant of the pitch manipulations. Knowledge of retrogrades, inversions, and rhythmic displacement is not a prerequisite for enjoying the Concerto for Orchestra.

*Zoroastrian Riddles* is a paradigm for studying Danielpour’s method of composing with mottos, both within a single work and in the sharing of mottos among compositions. He derives a full-length composition from the repetition, mutation, variation, and extension of one or two simple patterns. Although his vocal works involve longer, occasionally disjunct themes, the main compositional building blocks for most of the chamber and orchestral music are short mottos of three or four notes. Danielpour then culls two- and three-note cells from the motto to develop the work; he creates much out of little. The melodic range is generally narrow, with intervals of seconds, thirds, and fourths. Danielpour’s mottos are almost always the pattern of intervals, not the pitch class. In the second measure of *Zoroastrian Riddles*, the leap of an augmented ninth as part of a motto is uncharacteristic; it subsequently appears as an augmented second or minor third. This latter interval, important throughout Danielpour’s *oeuvre*, becomes a nagging oscillation in pairs of flutes, oboes, and trumpets (mm. 14ff). In characteristic fashion,

\(^{32}\)Danielpour, phone conversation, 16 March 2002.

\(^{33}\)The last interval in this transposed appearance is a tritone instead of a perfect fourth.
Danielpour separates each paired instrument by a major seventh; i.e., the second flute plays an E against the first flute’s E-flat. Again there is a connection to Bartók, who separates both bassoons and clarinets by a seventh in his second movement, “Game of Pairs,” which alternates pairs of instruments. Minor third oscillations recur later in Danielpour’s first movement and in the last, creating a foreboding that is reminiscent of other compositions, such as *Anima Mundi* and *Psalms of Sorrow*.

At measure sixteen, a mutated inversion of “P1” (Ex. 8.6, violin I) appears as a triplet in the strings; each time it is repeated, it is extended by one or two notes. This extension results in a pattern with the same intervals as “P1” but in a different order—a disguised identity (m. 17, F ♭ E-flat ♭ G-flat ♭ D-flat; a descending major second, ascending minor third, and descending perfect fourth). These intervals also form the initial motto in the second string quartet and may represent another example of the composer’s game of mistaken identity with a different composition. A similar pattern interrupts at measure twenty (Ex. 8.6, E-flat ♭ D-flat ♭ E ♭)

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34Bassoons are separated by a major seventh, clarinets a minor seventh.
This motive is also borrowed from earlier Danielpour works—*Urban Dances II* and the last movements of the second quartet and piano quintet. Polytonal, syncopated, and accentuated by multiple percussion instruments, this one-measure interruption is also evidence that the more mature (1996) Danielpour continues to interpolate chaos at unexpected moments, although there is generally a clearer internal logic in its appearances in the later works.

Ex. 8.6 Danielpour, Concerto for Orchestra, first movement, mm. 16-20. Copyright © 1997 (Renewed) by Associated Music Publishers, Inc. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Used by permission.

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Most of these four-note mottos are very similar; the first three notes of the mottos in *Urban Dances II* and the second string quartet are the same. Originally the quartet’s motto ends with a perfect fourth; in the last movement, it ends with a diminished fourth. Enharmonically, this last interval is a major third, which makes this appearance of the motto the same as that in the brass quintet as well as in measure twenty of the concerto.
Program notes for Danielpour’s Concerto for Orchestra prompt us to look for disguised themes, and both of these motives (mm. 17, 20) are related to “P1.” But since they are also mottos that form the foundation of earlier works, it appears that the composer could be playing a double game of mistaken identity. He disguises the primary motto within the concerto, but he also varies the original in such a way that it can be mistaken for the motto of a previous work. Although this corresponds to Danielpour’s program notes, Zoroastrian Riddles is not the only Danielpour work with numerous interrelated mottos; the discussion of the last movement of the piano quintet suggested that his treatment of mottos was similar to a theme and variations. Perhaps the composer enjoys the game in other compositions as well.

Contrasting various solo instruments with the full orchestra is, as the titles suggest, the most obvious similarity between Bartók’s and Danielpour’s compositions. There are only a few differences in the two orchestrations: Bartók’s has three oboes, the third doubling on English horn; Danielpour’s has two oboes and English horn; Bartók writes for two harps; Danielpour’s orchestra has one harp but adds xylophone, vibraphone, bongos, and an assortment of percussion instruments. Danielpour’s use of string tremolos in the introduction imitates Bartók. The two composers differ, however, in their approaches to the virtuoso treatment given to single instruments and soloistic groups of instruments. In Bartók’s fourth movement, after a theme first appears in the oboe (mm. 4ff), it is imitated by the flute, then horn, and it reappears in the oboe before the violas present a contrasting theme (mm. 42ff). The latter motive becomes the subject of a fugato between strings and English horn. In all these presentations expressed by different instruments, Bartók does not vary the rhythm, dynamics, or basic features of the themes.  

Danielpour, by comparison, takes advantage of the varying timbres to change his motto’s character. Early in the first movement, grace notes in the piccolo add a whimsical nature to “P1” (mm. 41ff). A few measures later, horns produce a completely different effect as they twice crescendo ominously to a fortissimo on the first three notes of the motto (mm. 52, 54).

Danielpour does not restrict concertante style to the Concerto for Orchestra, however; most of his orchestral compositions pit forces against each other–either a solo against other

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36Bartók does alter the melodic pattern slightly in the horn, mm. 27-31.
instruments, or a group in contrast with another group. Hence, other Danielpour orchestral compositions could be considered concerti for orchestra, although not so titled. One example is \textit{The Awakened Heart}. In the second movement, mesmerizing, unchanging string chords provide the background for an extended duet by the clarinets, occasionally doubled by vibraphone and harp (m. 2ff). Later in the same movement, Danielpour introduces a long, \textit{come recitativo} passage for solo flute that becomes an expressive, \textit{cantando} melody (mm. 83-87); this passage again demonstrates the composer’s tendency to conceive of instrumental lines vocally. Danielpour nods to Messiaen as the flute segues to an oboe solo that is marked “The song of the Baltimore Oriole” (mm. 83ff); the two instruments then continue with a duet based on the oriole’s pattern, accompanied by quiet strings, harp, and a cello solo. Besides exhibiting a \textit{concertante} texture, this passage displays the composer’s sense of humor: \textit{The Awakened Heart} was commissioned by the Baltimore Symphony, which premiered the composition with conductor David Zinman. Zinman, along with Danielpour, is an avid baseball fan.\footnote{David Lewis Crosby, notes on \textit{The Awakened Heart}, Baltimore Symphony premiere (25 October 1990). Danielpour’s favorite baseball team, however, is the New York Yankees, not the Baltimore Orioles.}

Dispersing the pitches among multiple instruments is another method used to vary or disguise themes. In the third movement of the Concerto for Orchestra, “P1” appears as a \textit{Klangfarbenmelodie} (Ex. 8.7, mm. 44-8): first and second horns sustain F while third and fourth horns enter on C; this is sustained until first and second trombones play D, then the tuba enters on B, and then the pattern is repeated. Ostinati punctuate these layers of individual notes: three flutes and three solo violins share a repeated chord (comprised of a tritone and a perfect fourth, mm. 48-52). The rest of the string section provides a muted tremolo accompaniment, each instrument restricted to repeating a single pitch, although both violas and basses alternate pitches a minor third apart.
Ex. 8.7 Danielpour, Concerto for Orchestra, third movement, mm. 44–48. Copyright © 1997 (Renewed) by Associated Music Publishers, Inc. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Used by permission.
Layering of ostinati is one of Danielpour’s most oft-used techniques. Elsewhere in the third movement (mm. 76ff), a six-note ascending scale pattern begins quietly in bass clarinet, contrabassoon, and harp. It is joined by a two-measure horn/English horn ostinato that includes a disguised “P1” (G ♭ D ♭ F-sharp ♭ D-sharp; the latter has an ascending major third instead of a major second in the middle; Ex. 8.8, m. 86).

Ex. 8.8 Danielpour, Concerto for Orchestra, third movement, mm. 85-6. Copyright © 1997 (Renewed) by Associated Music Publishers, Inc. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Used by permission.
Danielpour thickens the multi-level texture with an insistent, repeated chord in the trumpets (Ex. 8.8, m. 85) and an ostinato flourish in flute and piccolos. These intersecting ostinati increase in volume, instrumentation, and drama, becoming particularly foreboding with the reinforcement of the scale ostinato by trombone, tuba, and string basses (Ex. 8.8) and the addition of pounding timpani (mm. 86ff). In a section similar to the scale passages and rolling timpani in “Hosanna” of An American Requiem, the ominous climb to the climax is accentuated with tamtam and bass drum playing a crescendoed roll to the downbeat (mm. 85-90). These distinctive ostinati define the third movement.

In classical sonata form, composers traditionally write a contrasting second theme. Since many of Danielpour’s themes are so similar, he employs an alternative method for creating variety. Originally the individual pitches of “P1” are accented and separated by rests. The composer transforms this punctuated motto into a lyrical, legato motive in the first movement (Ex. 8.9, mm. 57ff): successive cantando solos by oboe, clarinet, flute, violin, and finally French horn (mm. 67-9) create the illusion of a new theme.

Ex. 8.9  Danielpour, Concerto for Orchestra, first movement, mm. 57-60. Copyright © 1997 (Renewed) by Associated Music Publishers, Inc. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Used by permission.

The percussion is noticeably silent during this peaceful episode. Then a frenzy of notes in piano and xylophone at measures seventy and seventy-one provides additional contrast and the recurring dichotomy of introspection and extroversion. These two unexpected measures are
immediately silenced themselves by another cantando horn rendering of the motto. Sudden changes in instrumentation often coincide with a juxtaposition of dynamic extremes. Frequently the composer uses the unique timbres of pitched percussion instruments to emphasize these peremptory shifts. In one episode in the middle of the concerto’s first movement, “P1” appears first in the clarinets, marked cantando (m. 148), followed by espressivo horns, violas, and cellos (mm. 150-1); this is subsequently blasted by an accented, fortissimo motto in horns and winds reinforced by hard mallets on vibraphone and two xylophones (mm. 154ff). Thus, one sees Danielpour’s compositional method of introducing colorful instrumental solos and ensembles within a larger context as well as his manner of expressing duality. His orchestration develops motivic material and provides contrast at the same time that it allows instrumentalists to demonstrate their virtuosity. The unanticipated outbursts are quite startling, but they generally seem less arbitrary than the composer’s early attempts at “imitating life” by introducing unexpected elements.

The bass line also contributes to the undercurrent of unrest. Danielpour does not typically focus attention on harmonies or root progressions; in fact, prolonged sections of static harmony are typical of his musical language. For long periods of time one may not even be aware of the bass. When it is noticeable, this is frequently due to the drone of pedal points. In the Concerto for Orchestra, the string basses enter quietly with six measures of repeated D’s; then repeated G’s take over (mm. 9-16). Throughout the concerto, motivic fragments interspersed among the instruments direct attention to the timbre and the rhythm, e.g., the syncopated ostinato that alternates between the horns and trumpets in the first movement (Ex. 8.10, mm. 88ff). In this latter example, the tuba (and string basses) stagnate on a repeated pitch for three or four measures before they progress to another pitch for several measures.

A pedal is protracted throughout the orchestra as all play a repeated B in an accented rhythm (mm. 115ff), a gesture also seen in Celestial Night and Through the Ancient Valley. This insistent syncopation continues as trumpets add their own ostinato (m. 118), and the full orchestra builds to a crushing intensity before the music literally disintegrates: any semblance of melody and harmony completely disappear as primitivistic rhythms prevail (mm. 127ff). The
percussionists are unleashed in a pseudo tribal frenzy of brake drums, tamtams, and roto-toms, accompanied by the timpanist beating his drums with wood sticks.

Danielpour does focus on harmony in the chorale sections that he frequently includes in his compositions, but the chord progressions are usually not traditional. As he himself explains, his music revolves around a key; it is seldom in a key, at least not for long. In the second movement chorale of The Awakened Heart, the bass line moves in a narrow range similar to the intervallic movement of the composer’s mottos. One section of this chorale, which is interspersed throughout “Epiphany,” progresses through the keys of: D, F, E, G, and D-flat (mm. 33-5). Uncharacteristically, Danielpour sets all these chords in root position, thus producing a tritone between the last two. The composer’s fondness for this interval is also evident at the conclusion of The Awakened Heart: root position chords, A major to E-flat major, create a final tritone progression—a small gesture in the face of convention. Likewise, the first movement of the Concerto for Orchestra ends with the same last two chords and an ascending tritone in the bass. This harmonic progression avoids the sense of finality offered by plagal and authentic cadences and is another demonstration of Danielpour’s predilection for open endings.

In summary, as in the chamber works, psychological and spiritual issues are prominent in Danielpour’s orchestral compositions. Unexpected juxtapositions of the private versus public

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38Danielpour, program notes, Awakened Heart premiere (25 October 1990).
natures, found in the composer’s very first works, still manifest themselves in the later works for orchestra. Most of these works are explicitly programmatic, and there is usually a progression from dark to light. In addition to his characteristic outbursts, Danielpour’s signature slurs occur in compositions where the death theme is an important factor. The composer’s high energy levels are particularly noticeable in this genre due to the excitement generated by the greater number and variety of instruments, particularly in the percussion section. The two ballets naturally exude this visceral appeal, but the non-choreographed works also illustrate the composer’s penchant for colorful orchestration and dance rhythms. Even stagnant harmonies cannot diminish the driving intensity of Danielpour’s compositions. Although it seems incongruous, pedal points contribute to a work’s momentum because they shift attention to the inner rhythm. The elements that make Danielpour’s music exhilarating are multiplied in the orchestral compositions: syncopated rhythms and ostinati occur on many levels; the lyricism evident throughout his oeuvre is emphasized when solo woodwinds or violins play a cantando passage as a respite from accented brass ostinati; and the sheer volume of the full orchestra magnifies the contrasts between quiet, peaceful sections and loud, bombastic ones. A sophisticated listener may appreciate some of Danielpour’s compositional methods, but even the uneducated musical public relates to the sound effects produced by Danielpour’s gift for orchestration.
Chapter nine investigates how the past, particularly Danielpour’s Persian Jewish heritage, has influenced his composition. Through the Ancient Valley (Cello Concerto No. 2) serves as an exemplar for this study, although other pieces are mentioned as they relate to various issues. “My Father’s Song” (String Quartet No. 2) and “Swan Song” (String Quartet No. 4) are two examples whose Eastern melodic character was discussed in previous chapters. Persian music is intimately connected to Persian poetry. Danielpour refers to this poetry, which follows the natural stress accents of the words, as “musical” and “intoxicating.” In his opinion, the most important element in traditional verse, such as that by Rumi or Omar Khayyám, is rhythm. Much classical Persian music is in free rhythm, although metric divisions in the poetry can provide a recurring rhythm for compositions that are otherwise unmeasured. Danielpour recognizes his own subconscious incorporation of various poetic influences: “There are also rhythms [in my music] that correspond to certain standard Sufi rhythms; again, they worked their way in through a generally subliminal route.” In Through the Ancient Valley, Danielpour’s intention is to reflect the rhythms of Persian poetry in his music. He includes occasional


3Zonis, 273.

4Danielpour, in James M. Keller, Stagebill, New York Philharmonic (March 2001), 34. Danielpour is referring to Sufism, or Islamic mysticism. The most influential Sufi poets lived during the fifth to the fifteenth centuries A.D. J. T. P. De Bruijn, Persian Sufi Poetry: An Introduction to the Mystical Use of Classical Poems (Surrey, Great Britain: Curzon Press, 1997), 2.
measures of asymmetrical meters, five or seven beats (Ex. 9.1); however, he contrasts these Persian-influenced meters with typical American syncopations in duple or triple meter.


Serpentine solo lines in the first cello concerto (1994) indicate the subtle influence of Danielpour’s ancestry. If not consciously inspired by Eastern traditions, the cello melodies were certainly influenced by the composer’s religious ethnic roots: the hovering around one pitch, with excursions to neighboring tones above and below, suggests the recitations of Jewish cantors. The composer acknowledges this indebtedness: “I had no intention of writing a Jewish piece, but it insisted.”

The cantillations associated with Jewish religious ceremonies have much in common with the melodic style of Eastern music, regardless of the latter’s affiliation with other religions or with secular tradition. Danielpour reveals that it was these hints of his heritage in the first cello concerto that prompted him to deliberately pursue his musical roots in Cello Concerto No. 2.

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6Keller, 33. Soon after composing *Through the Ancient Valley*, Danielpour wrote his fourth string quartet (2001). “Swan Song,” the movement that depicts the death of his
Both cello concerti also embrace dualities. In Through the Ancient Valley (2000), several of these are specific to the work and are suggested by the title. There was a literal valley through which ancient travelers passed from East to West. This trade route, in use for about 1500 years beginning in the second century B.C., is part of ancient history; thus one dichotomy that Danielpour examines is that of ancient versus modern eras. In addition, the valley represents the physical distance between East and West. It is also a figurative symbol of the cultural differences that separate the two. Although there was certainly an exchange of information as well as commerce through this valley over the years, a vast gulf between the two cultures still exists. In a further extension of the title’s symbolism, program notes mention the biblical “Valley of the Shadow of Death.” Danielpour goes on to suggest, “Perhaps a work such as this may also be about bridging that gap, of crossing over that valley.” Therefore, Through the Ancient Valley confronts man’s separation from God and, once again, the recurring theme of death and rebirth. The composer also reveals that the piece is ultimately about fathers and sons, a relationship that is characterized at times by a rift or valley. Accordingly, the concerto delves into father/son, old/new, and East/West issues that encompass knowledge and communication—communication between family members, between man and God, between historical periods, and between diverse cultures.

grandmother, also reflects the cantillation of his religious heritage as well as the improvisatory feel of Eastern folk music.


8“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.” Psalm 23: 4a.

9Danielpour, in Keller, (March 2001), 35.

10Ibid., 34.
The genesis of this particular exploration of dualities was a 1998 conversation in which Yo-Yo Ma shared his Silk Road Project with Danielpour. The cellist’s plan was to promote education and awareness of the venerable trade route and its artistic and intellectual significance. Ma, of Chinese heritage, hoped to reconnect our contemporary world with a bygone era and its culture. The ancient Chinese Silk Road, the pathway to the West, traveled through Persia, Danielpour’s ancestral homeland. Silk from China and spices from India and Southeast Asia were major exports from the East. Some of the Roman gold which paid for these items found its way to Persia, since entrepreneurs from that country became the middlemen along the trade route. Although alternate passages were explored, the most direct way from China to the Mediterranean was through territory controlled by the Persians.

Ma incorporated exhibitions, art festivals, teaching programs, and concerts in Salzburg, New York, Brussels, and Tokyo from Summer 2001 through 2002 to promote his venture. New works that were commissioned as part of the Silk Road Project include *The Map: Concerto for Cello, Video, and Orchestra* by the conceptual composer Tan Dun, who conducted *The Map* in his native China. Another contributor is Peter Lieberson, a native New Yorker who is associated with the Tibetan Buddhist Chögyam Trungpa. Danielpour was so intrigued by Ma’s endeavor that he did something he claims he had never done previously: he initiated a commission by calling the cellist and then the New York Philharmonic to express his interest.

Danielpour’s pursuit of this project validates Jessica Lustig’s comment (fn. 72, chapter three) that one of the reasons Danielpour gets so many commissions is because he knows

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12Lewis, 37-8.

13Wright.


16Keller, 34.
everyone. It has already been established that he is not hesitant about making contacts, and this is certainly one of the factors in his “popularity”; composers need performers and conductors to get their music in front of the public. Andrés Cárdenes has been the concertmaster of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra since 1989. It is the PSO’s recording of Concerto for Orchestra and Anima Mundi that was nominated for a Grammy in 1998. In Cárdenes’s estimation, Danielpour’s music is difficult at times but is always playable. He goes on, “I love his mastery of orchestration. . . . His string writing is colorful and well balanced. He knows the craft of composition as well as anyone around.” Cárdenes confirms his high regard for Danielpour by commenting that he is looking forward to someday playing the composer’s violin concerto. Musicians appreciate that Danielpour’s music is well-crafted, generally accessible, and usually well-received by audiences who enjoy the drama inherent in his works.

As Danielpour explores his ancestral roots in Through the Ancient Valley, Persian elements meet Western musical traditions. In a post-premiere talk, the composer acknowledged the influence of the music he experienced during the time he spent in Iran as a child. He explained that the second cello concerto was inspired by early memories of his grandmother playing Persian music. One of the ways he creates a non-Western character in the concerto is through the use of traditional Persian instruments, the kamancheh, santūr, and dombak. Also known as a zarb, the tombak (dombak) is a goblet-shaped drum that is open at one end. The santūr is a Persian hammered dulcimer. A kamancheh, the secondary solo instrument featured in Through the Ancient Valley, is a spike fiddle with two to four strings. It is about the same size

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17 Andrés Cárdenes, e-mail, 6 May 2003.

18 Danielpour, post-premiere talk.

19 Debbie Danielpour Chapel specifically mentioned the last instrument in her recollections of the sensuous and exotic nature of the native music. E-mail, 15 May 2002.

20 Zonis, 282-3. Danielpour’s score spells “dombak,” but Zonis includes only tombak or zarb. Danielpour also uses the Americanized spelling “santour.” He scores the concerto for two santūrs (santours) but notes that if only one is available, it is possible for one santūr to play both parts.
as a viola and rests on the performer’s lap. Recognizing the scarcity of qualified kamancheh players in the West, the composer specifies that a viola may be substituted for the ancient fiddle. The rest of the orchestration is Danielpour’s standard, except that he includes an alto flute because its timbre is similar to the nay, a Persian vertical flute.

The santūr appears near the end of the concerto in an offstage ensemble of flute, oboe, santūr(s), and string quartet (mm. 482ff). Danielpour also explores the spatial effects of separating different groups of instruments in the first cello concerto and in the later Voices of Remembrance. In all three instances, he writes for separate ensembles for both philosophical and acoustical reasons. Stage placement results in the audience’s perception of physical distance. In the case of the kamancheh, the distance also exists in the realm of time. The composer specifically sets the kamancheh in a balcony in Through the Ancient Valley because of its symbolic presence as something from the past. Consequently, the dichotomy of ancient and modern is further emphasized by physical separation on the stage. Danielpour describes the composition as “looking for harmony between the new and the old cultures.” This recurring theme, which began in 1988 with First Light (“a search for harmony, in the literal musical sense as well as in the spiritual/philosophical sense”), now extends to seeking connections between historical periods and geographical areas.

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21 Ibid. Also, Jean During, Robert At’Ayan, Johanna Spector, Scheherazade Qassim Hassan, R. Conway Morris, “Kamancheh,” New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 2d ed., ed. Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell (New York: Macmillan, 2001), 13:339. For the sake of continuity, I will use the spelling “kamancheh” which is found in Stagebill (March 2001) and in New Grove Dictionary. Alternate spellings listed in New Grove include: kamanchay (in Zonis) and kemancheh (in Danielpour’s score).


23 Keller, 35. Zonis, 282.

24 Keller, 34.

25 Ibid.

26 Danielpour, in Rodda, liner notes, First Light, 5.
Like many of his contemporaries, Danielpour credits rock music with exerting a strong influence on his style. One result is an emphasis on rhythm. In addition to the *dombak*,

*Through the Ancient Valley* includes Danielpour’s usual battery of percussion. The West intrudes on the East, and the present on the past, with frequent instances of the composer’s signature loud, syncopated outbursts. Danielpour’s multiple layers of rhythmic ostinati contrast sharply with ancient music as well as Persian music, past and present, all of which is monophonic, the focus on a single melodic line.

The influence of ancient and Persian music in the cello concerto is evidenced by the repetition and development of longer phrases rather than Danielpour’s customary mottos. Lyricism is a primary component of *Through the Ancient Valley*. This melodic preeminence is particularly noticeable in the cello solos that imitate Eastern tunes. Although Danielpour tunes his instruments to equal temperament, he attempts to emulate Persian microtonal tuning through the use of *glissandi, portamento* techniques, and grace notes (Ex. 9.1, mm. 387-90).

*Through the Ancient Valley* opens with a sense of anticipation. With the slow alternation of two notes a minor third apart, the breathy voice of the alto flute contributes to the air of expectancy. Vibraphone, harp, and celeste also play oscillating minor thirds. The composer usually employs this gesture to create foreboding, but here the quiet, shimmering instrumentation effects a mysterious dawning. This nascent characterization of the concerto’s introduction is supported by Danielpour’s reference to the valley region as “the cradle of civilization.”

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27 A *tabla* was used instead of a *dombak* at the premiere. Danielpour, post-premiere talk, 15 March 2001.

28 Zonis, 270. Persian music is comprised of twelve systems or frameworks called *dastgah*, each of which contains smaller units called *gusheh*. The scalar pattern in the Persian *gusheh* of *Shur* is similar to the Phrygian mode, but because Persian intervals are different from Western intervals, it is difficult to describe one melodic style in terms of the other. In Persian music, a whole tone can be divided into three tones. Accordingly, the western tuning system of two half steps in a whole tone, and twelve equal half steps in an octave, is not applicable. Zonis, 271, 274.

29 Keller, 35.
When the cello first enters (Ex. 9.2, mm. 4-8), the narrow range of the melody and, more significantly, the cadences on weak beats suggest the non-Western tendency in the concerto. With few exceptions, the cello concludes on a note that is then tied over to the next measure. Most of the soloist’s initial phrases are brief, and they also generally begin on a weak beat that is tied over to the downbeat. As they weave around a single pitch, their almost tentative manner parallels classical Iranian music, which introduces a melody in an experimental fashion; depending upon the audience’s response, a soloist then decides whether to more fully improvise and develop a particular pattern.\(^{30}\)

Ex. 9.2  Danielpour, *Through the Ancient Valley*, mm. 4-8. Copyright © 2001 (Renewed) by Associated Music Publishers, Inc.  International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Used by permission.

The cello phrases soon expand further, not only to more distant pitches, but also to include more modern disjunct leaps. By measures twenty-two and twenty-three, the cellist spans three octaves in the space of five beats. The long-breathed phrase from measures twenty-two to

\(^{30}\)Zonis, 271.
thirty follows the long, lyrical lines of Persian poetry. The section is marked “freely,” and at first the motion is sinuous and suggestive. Danielpour then reinforces the improvisatory style with figures such as the repetition of a single pitch in progressively faster rhythmic groupings as well as a long descending passage that becomes increasingly declamatory. As the solo develops, there are occasional suggestions of vocal melismas (e. g., mm. 91, 95, 98), which are again reminiscent of the lengthy rhapsodizing and extended melismatic sections of Persian music.31

Woodwinds respond antiphonally to the cello soloist at the beginning of the concerto (Ex. 9.2). In the recapitulation of the first section (mm. 137ff), it is the kamancheh that imitates the cello with slight alterations and embellishments (Ex. 9.3, mm.140-44).

Danielpour’s program notes indicate a deliberate “call-and-response”32 technique that is typical in music of other cultures as well as in early Western music. The kamancheh’s additional

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31Ibid., 273.

32Keller, 34.
ornamentation of the cello melody also reproduces the oral tradition of repeating and expanding a 
melody (Ex. 9.3). The two instruments, representative of East and West, ancient and modern, 
father and son, continue their antiphonal conversation until they finally meet in a duet that moves 
in parallel thirds (mm. 152ff). At least temporarily, the two string instruments are in accord; the 
valley of time, distance, and communication has been bridged.

Danielpour appropriates certain Eastern gestures without using specific quotations. The 
only exception occurs in the kamancheh solo right before the cello cadenza. At this point (Ex. 
9.4, mm. 499ff), the kamancheh, no longer a mere imitator of the cello, plays a tune that 
Danielpour describes as “a song that I remember hearing in Iran when I was a child.”³³ The 
melody’s range, winding motion, rhythm, grace notes, and improvisatory character announce its 
Persian sentiment. Despite these Eastern elements, a repeated outline of an A-flat major chord 
(Ex. 9.4, mm. 500, 503) introduces a Western influence.

³³Ibid. The composer does not specify the name of the tune.
One questions whether this is the original version of the Persian melody that Danielpour heard in the 1960s, or whether he has subconsciously absorbed and modified it. Aside from this one reference to an actual Persian song, the composer explains, “The concerto is not in any sense a piece of Persian music, or meant to parrot traditional Persian music. Instead, it is my music, though it exhibits a decidedly non-Western sensibility in certain aspects. . . . [the] source is a generalized sort of Middle Eastern music – not strictly Persian (though including that), but also alluding to the musics of Israel, India, and places in between.”

Danielpour’s signature slurs infuse *Through the Ancient Valley* with his own distinctive voice. Early in the concerto, the horns play two *crescendoed* half-step *glissandi* (mm. 30, 32), and there is a subsequent appearance in the clarinet (m. 81). These occurrences inject a sense of foreboding in an otherwise placid setting. The first of five successive *crescendoed* half-step slurs in the string basses introduces the *kamancheh* solo (Ex. 9.4). This five-fold repetition within the span of four measures confirms the slur’s importance. Its placement just prior to the *kamancheh*’s Persian melody suggests the symbolic death of the father figure or the demise of the ancient culture. Eventually, the cello overtakes and then usurps the *kamancheh*’s solo, confirming that the paternal voice, the voice from the past, has been silenced—at least momentarily. The ensuing cello cadenza speaks eloquently, combining and overlapping traits from East and West, ancient and modern cultures: grace notes; lyricism; sinuous melody; disjunct motion; chromaticism; loud, agitated double stops; and calm, oscillating minor thirds. As Danielpour states, the music includes identifiable Eastern elements but is not intended as an imitation of Persian music. The composer not only limits this influence, he also modifies a Western concerto convention; instead of a trill signifying the end of the cadenza, Danielpour writes one of his own favorite gestures—an oscillating minor third.

The *kamancheh* does return after the cadenza. Instead of responding to the cello, however, it now leads the way (mm. 596ff), which is consistent with Danielpour’s fondness for the idea of rebirth. Again, after several imitative phrases, the two instruments momentarily coincide in harmony (m. 604). Then, in a role reversal, the *kamancheh* states the theme simply.

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34Ibid.
and the modern cello elaborates on it (mm. 607-12). There has been an acculturation; East has influenced West, and the ancients have taught the moderns. At the end of the dialogue, both instruments alternate repetitions of a simple, ascending major second (Ex. 9.5, mm. 616-20). Cello and kamancheh weave back and forth with increasingly smaller note values, as though each is trying to catch up with the other, but they are always separated by a fraction of a beat—or perhaps by distance in time and geography.

Ex. 9.5  Danielpour, *Through the Ancient Valley*, mm. 616-20. Copyright © 2001 (Renewed) by Associated Music Publishers, Inc. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Used by permission.

The art of Persia and the culture of the ancients both inform *Through the Ancient Valley*, which the composer explains was inspired by the old Persian myth of Sorab and Rustam. In this narrative, a father and son who are unaware of their kinship are on a battlefield fighting for separate tribes. The father mortally wounds the son he has never known. Disclosure of their familial ties finally occurs just before the younger man’s death. Although the concerto does not directly follow the program, Danielpour draws a parallel by revealing that the concerto is “a
public version of something more private: the relationship of fathers and sons. 

One thinks of the composer as a seven-year-old boy, acutely ill with nephritis, who had to flee Iran under the cover of darkness, leaving his father behind. That same boy later became fascinated with American baseball, but his father had trouble walking, much less playing catch with his son. In Danielpour’s references to his father, one sees the love and admiration he possesses for the man he lost to disease long before he lost him to death. His affection for Persichetti, his Juilliard professor whose gentleness reminded him of his own father, is also evident.

The revelation of the father/son association in *Through the Ancient Valley* prompts awareness of the subject as an intermittent thread in Danielpour’s music. Although not as obvious as other spiritual and psychological issues, the filial relationship informs several works and Danielpour’s choice of programs and texts. One wonders what effect the composition of *Elegies* (1997) had on Danielpour as he contemplated von Stade’s search for the father she never knew. In the cycle’s final song, “In Paradisum,” the soprano sings, “And I will sing to you in paradise.” The last two words are sung three times, each concluding with an ascending major third (Ex. 9.6, mm. 70-3).


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35 Ibid.

36 Danielpour, phone conversation, 16 March 2002. Sayid Danielpour died in 1977; his son began studying with Persichetti in 1980. Danielpour’s respect for fatherhood is evident from his almost sorrowful acknowledgment that his lifestyle of writing, traveling, and retreating for weeks at a time is not conducive to raising a family.
Although the rhythm changes slightly in the last appearance, the pitches remain the same for all three. The final pitch is a major seventh above the E-flat that persists in the cellos for the last twenty measures. Strings play a pianissimo E-flat major chord in measure seventy, and except for two fleeting moments of C minor (mm. 75, 79), the song cycle ends with a static, extended pedal point. Each repetition of the soprano’s phrase is softer than the previous one, the last marked pianissimo and da lontano. The composer’s dynamic markings suggest that the singing emanates from an increasingly distant place—indeed, from paradise; however, the inconclusive final pitch always ends on a weak part of the beat. There is no pitch of resolution to complete the text with a definitive statement. Therefore, the repetitive, ascending melody, the stagnant harmony, the leading-tone final pitch, and its rhythmic placement all contribute to a sense of optimism and yet uncertainty of a future meeting of father and daughter.

Another example of a work that incorporates a parent/child relationship is An American Requiem (2001). The father/son bond is glorified in Danielpour’s setting of Walt Whitman’s “Vigil Strange I Kept on the Field One Night,” a poem about a father who maintains a vigil by his dying son. It is a particularly poignant and memorable solo in Danielpour’s oeuvre as the father sings, “not a tear, not a word.” Like “In Paradisum,” the music is the same for both clauses. In addition, the passage ends with an ascending major third on the weak part of a beat.

In a more personal application, as mentioned in chapter seven, “My Father’s Song” is Danielpour’s musical memory of his father’s funeral. It includes a pseudo-improvised viola cantillation that evokes their Jewish-Iranian heritage (Ex. 7.8). Long-breathed phrases of primarily conjunct motion include much written-out ornamentation. Midway through the movement, a brief cello solo exhibits similar characteristics, such as notated turns and rhythmic winding around a single pitch; but the cello line has a greater range and more disjunct movement than the viola solo, which returns in abbreviated fashion at the end of “My Father’s Song.” The composer’s choice of solo instruments is meaningful. He paired a viola and cello in a polyphonic

37 This passage in An American Requiem also uses the same rhythm as Brahms’s Wiegenlied, as discussed in chapter six.

38 “My Father’s Song” is the third movement of the second string quartet, Shadow Dances (1993).
duet in the first string quartet, *Requiem* (1983), whose subtitle also refers to the composer’s memory of his father.\(^{39}\) When asked whether the instrumental dialogue in this latter piece parallels the father/son symbolism that is specifically noted in the second cello concerto, Danielpour allowed that there was probably a subconscious association.\(^{40}\) Therefore, it is plausible to consider the opening duet between cello and viola in *Requiem* as an imagined conversation between father and son, a foreshadowing of the cello and *kamancheh* dialogue in *Through the Ancient Valley*. The instrumentation is the same (since Danielpour allowed the substitution of a viola for the *kamancheh*), and the programs are similar.

Danielpour’s ancestry, string dialogues, and Persian poetry figure prominently in a more recent work, *In the Arms of the Beloved* (2001). This double concerto for violin and cello was commissioned for the twenty-fifth wedding anniversary of Jaime Laredo and Sharon Robinson. Danielpour borrows the title from a work by Mowlana Jalaluddin Rumi in which the thirteenth-century poet speculates that one can see the face of God by looking into the face of a loved one: “If you want to know God, Then turn your face toward your friend, And don’t look away.”\(^{41}\) The meaning of Rumi’s verses, as with many Persian poets, is often ambiguous; the text may refer to earthly yearning and human love or to heavenly yearning and divine love.\(^{42}\) The nonexistence of gender-specific pronouns in the Persian language sometimes obscures a poem’s meaning. In addition, after the twelfth century, Sufism, or Islamic mysticism, increased the possibility of multiple levels of interpretation.\(^{43}\) Thus, one sees in Persian poetry the duality as well as the ambiguity that are important aspects of Danielpour’s music.

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\(^{39}\) Danielpour, phone conversation, 2 October 2001.

\(^{40}\) Danielpour, phone conversation, 20 October 2003.

\(^{41}\) Program notes, *In the Arms of the Beloved* (20 April 2002), program insert, GPAC 2001-2002 (Germantown Performing Arts Centre).


Persian poetry also inspired the overall form of *Through the Ancient Valley*. Danielpour writes that the uninterrupted, single-movement concerto suggests the long, uninterrupted lines of Persian poetry. Although that may have been his intention, the significance of this one-movement gesture in the cello concerto is diminished somewhat by the composer’s similarly constructed compositions that are not connected to Persian poetry, such as the piano sonata and *First Light*. All three of these may be divided into several sections. Danielpour likens these divisions in *Through the Ancient Valley* to the small tableaux that exist in the larger, sustained whole of the *Rubáiyát* of Omar Khayyám.\(^44\)

In the second section of the concerto, Danielpour conjures up the Iranian evenings of music and dance that his sister described in “Land Where My Fathers Died.” A rhythmic tune, first heard in the cello (Ex. 9.7), reappears several times as it undergoes an East-to-West transformation. Marked “clear and simple,” it is initially distinguished by its repetitiveness, its limited range of a diminished fourth, and by its stepwise motion; a half step or a whole step separate each note from the next.\(^45\) Grace notes and low string drones on an open fifth complement the ingenuousness of the melody. A sparse texture contributes to the folk quality. With the addition of the *dombak*, and with flutes and oboes in parallel sixths responding antiphonally to the cello (m. 190), Danielpour further enhances the provincial nature of the passage. The simplicity of the instrumentation, particularly with the winds moving in parallel motion, reflects the centuries-old custom of accompanying peasant dances in such a manner. Alternation between duple and triple meters generates a lively, rhythmic character.

\(^{44}\) Keller, 35.

\(^{45}\) The only exception, a minor third, E-flat to G-flat, occurs in measures 187 to 188 and cannot be seen in the given example. In measures 187 and 189, the spelling is a diminished third, but to the ear it is a whole step.
Danielpour subsequently diminishes the Eastern characteristics of the melody by placing it in the trumpets and eliminating the grace notes (mm. 206ff). This appearance of the theme cadences with trumpets and trombones playing a repetitious, syncopated chord pattern that sounds like a passage for stage band (mm. 210-11). An ascending walking bass in the low strings and the addition of bongos and congas contribute to a jazzier, more international temperament.

Eventually the full orchestra parodies the original folk melody, with repeated pitches within the pattern and a sense of instability created by tambourine and cymbals on the offbeats (mm. 350ff). The simple tune has metamorphized into Turkish Janissary music. In a 1996 interview with producer Steve Epstein concerning the Concerto for Orchestra, Danielpour revealed that the Janissary episode in the last movement of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony is one of his favorites in the literature: “After this supreme moment of beatific vision in F major, on the

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46Epstein suggested that the orchestration provides glimpses of Beethoven’s Turkish band in the second movement of the Concerto for Orchestra.
words “vor Gott,” you hear the tentative and comical beginnings of a march. Juxtaposing that baseness and exaltedness is for me a profoundly honest witness to life.” As Danielpour has demonstrated previously, he is fond of contrasts, such as this one between the original peasant dance and its parody, the Turkish march.

The tune appears in one more guise, a westernized version for solo cello. The only half step occurs between the first two notes, thereby eliminating the original chromatic motion that allowed the suggestion of Eastern microtonal pitches. In the same manner that Danielpour claims he has absorbed elements of Persian music in his own individual style, the folk tune has become acculturated; the soloist presents a “playful” version (mm. 361ff), complete with Eastern-influenced grace notes and Western-influenced intervals.

Danielpour explores not only his ethnic, geographical, and familial roots in Through the Ancient Valley but also his spiritual roots. The similarity between Persian melodies and Jewish cantillations has been mentioned. Previous works have demonstrated the composer’s identification with Jewish history—the anguish of Canticle of Peace and the depiction of Kristallnacht in Psalms of Sorrow. One might anticipate the death march in the latter work; however, the anti-Semitic march during “Mardi Gras,” in an otherwise innocuous composition, The Enchanted Garden, is a surprising intrusion. Danielpour’s revelation that this programmatic element is the result of one of his dreams is telling. In an interview with Ann McCutchan, the composer talked about his grandfather crossing the Iranian desert with his family to escape the Nazis: “It was all I heard about as a child, and I finally had to come to terms with it.” He also includes a “Gestapo march” (mm. 406ff) in Journey Without Distance, a work about healing and forgiveness.

Although there is no such march specified in Through the Ancient Valley, either in the score or in a program, there is a rhythmic undercurrent similar to that of “re-qui-em” in An American Requiem. A short-short-long pattern appears frequently in Through the Ancient Valley. Danielpour incorporates this into a 3 + 3 + 2 grouping as early as measure thirty-one. This

47Danielpour, liner notes, Concerto for Orchestra, 9.

48Danielpour, in McCutchan, 211.
insistent background rhythm continues with only a few interruptions from measure fifty-two until it becomes an “agitated” outburst for full orchestra at measure 103 (Ex. 9.8). Up to this point, it is primarily in the strings, although twice reinforced by the brass (mm. 72ff, mm. 99ff). When all the instruments explode on accented E’s (mm. 103ff), although the rhythm is different, the effect is similar to the SOS passage in *Celestial Night*.

This type of rhythmic ostinato,\(^\text{49}\) which frequently occurs on a unison pitch, appears in other Danielpour compositions as well. In the second cello concerto, the composer underscores the physicality of the passage by syncopating the percussion section from the rest of the

\(^{49}\)The rhythmic pattern continues through measure 124.
orchestra: winds, brass, and strings begin their pattern on the downbeat, but the percussion instruments begin on the second beat. Accordingly, there is no respite from the relentless hammering, and the syncopation between instrumental sections makes the episode particularly unsettling.

The composer himself points out the importance of the chorale in both cello concerti. These “fundamental alleluias” are further evidence of Danielpour’s generally optimistic belief that light eventually overtakes struggles and darkness. The descriptive program of the first cello concerto is based on another of the composer’s dreams: an oracle carries news to an assembly that responds angrily by sentencing the messenger to death. In the final movement, “Prayer and Lamentation,” an offstage quartet of cellos attempts to complete a chorale; the soloist also tries to finish the hymn without success. It is only at the end of the first concerto, after the “death” of the protagonist, that the solo cello finishes the chorale in its extreme treble register. Consequently, the composition ends with transcendence.

Another composition with an incomplete chorale and influences from the past is Voices of Remembrance (1998), a “concerto for string quartet and orchestra.” According to Danielpour’s program notes, this composition speaks to the era of the sixties and the assassinations of John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, and Martin Luther King, Jr. The composer was deeply affected by these deaths, and by what he considers the death of innocence in the United States. The Danielpour family was in Iran at the time of JFK’s assassination. Debbie Danielpour Chapel writes of the taunting she and her brother received from the Iranian school children the day they learned of Kennedy’s death:

We are surrounded by an oval of children holding hands. Skipping, ring around the rosy, they chant in Farsi: ‘Ha, ha, your president’s dead! Ha, ha, your president’s dead!’ . . . We are brought home, I don’t know how. I walk down the rectangle of a hallway and turn to see my mother. She is perfectly still. . . . Her face looks as though she has been crying. I can’t hear the broadcast because the picture of her sad body is so loud. For days, all we do is sit on the Persian carpet, watch President Kennedy events on the television, and solemnly welcome guests. . . . Adults

50Danielpour, 6 January 2004.
loved President Kennedy, everybody but Iranian children loved Kennedy. On the television, Caroline Kennedy is exactly my age. . . I know my father is sick. I watch little Caroline and worry that now my father will die, too.\(^51\)

The death of the American President deeply impacted this Iranian-American family, including seven-year-old Richard. As an adult, Danielpour’s readings, including the Warren Report, have convinced him that the truth about JFK’s assassination has never been completely revealed. It is the composer’s desire that “in remembering what was lost we may awaken a new sense of responsibility to ourselves and to one another—a sense of responsibility that involves (and requires) ‘full disclosure,’ even about the dark periods in our national past.”\(^52\) In his opinion, the optimism and idealism that the country experienced during the Kennedy White House years died along with the President. *Voices of Remembrance* is his personal creative statement about this loss.\(^53\)

Once again, the composer’s anti-war sentiments inform his work. Danielpour’s program notes mention that JFK shared a common philosophy with his brother and with the civil rights leader, including disenchantment with the United States’ involvement in the Vietnam War. In *Voices of Remembrance*, the string quartet speaks collectively and individually as witnesses to the events of this period: “They ‘testify,’ sometimes with sadness, sometimes with rage, to the truth as they see it.”\(^54\) Brief phrases from “Hail to the Chief” fade in and out of the second movement, often interrupted by accented chords (Ex. 9.9, mm. 129-131).

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\(^52\) Danielpour, program notes, *John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts*, “National Symphony Orchestra” (13, 14, 15 January 2000), 19E.

\(^53\) Ibid., 19D.

\(^54\) Ibid., 20A.
The fragmentation of this melody symbolizes the death of JFK. At one point, piano and winds mock the tune in parallel tritones (Ex. 9.10, m. 423). Similar to the offstage ensemble in the first cello concerto, the string quartet never manages to complete this tune. The interweaving of melodies in this work is the closest Danielpour has ever come to imitating Ives’s use of quotation.\(^{55}\)

There is excitement and drama in *Voices of Remembrance*, as in most Danielpour compositions. One can never anticipate the occasional outbursts, therefore one’s ears cannot “lie back,” a practice deplored by Charles Ives. The lyrical moments in the music and the historical elements in the programs spark listeners’ memories—sometimes with fond nostalgia, other times with discomfiture. Much of Danielpour’s music elicits thoughtfulness and active response on the part of the audience.

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\(^{55}\)Ives was also a political activist opposed to war.
In the last movement of *Voices of Remembrance*, two offstage ensembles again effect music that emanates from different spheres. A second string quartet plays in the wings, and an ensemble consisting of field drum, tenor drum, bass drum, and pairs of horns and trombones sits in the rear balcony. In the latter ensemble, the brass play two crescendoed half step slurs, symbolizing death, while the percussionists reenact a rhythmic cadence that accompanied JFK’s funeral procession to Arlington Cemetery (mm. 401ff):

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56 There are three tempo indications listed in the premiere program and headings of I, II, and III, at the beginning of each section in the score; but Danielpour writes “attaca” at the end of I and II, and the tape recording of the premiere sounds like one large movement.

57 According to the chief librarian of the United States Marine Band, an additional two measures, of four quarter notes each, precede Danielpour’s repeated rhythm in a four-measure cadence. There is no specific name for this cadence, which involves a drum roll on the last quarter note in each of the first three measures. It most recently accompanied the state funeral of former President Ronald Reagan (9 June 2004). MGySgt David M. Ressler, e-mail to author, 8 October 2004.
Voices of Remembrance concludes with variations on “I’ll Overcome Some Day.” This old hymn became a well-known civil rights anthem after being modified to “We Shall Overcome.” Initially, all four members of the featured string quartet play the tune (mm. 433ff). With each successive verse, a member of the quartet ceases playing, symbolizing the loss of the three public figures. The composer explains that interruptions during the hymn relate to the conflicts and violence of that war era (Ex. 9.11).

Ex. 9.11  Danielpour, Voices of Remembrance, mm. 440-42. Copyright © 2000 (Renewed) by Associated Music Publishers, Inc. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Used by permission.

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58Charles Tindley is credited with writing the lyrics and possibly the music, although perhaps he adapted an existing spiritual, around 1900-03. In 1947, Pete Seeger included it as “We Shall Overcome” in the “People’s Songs” bulletin. <www.cyberhymnal.org/htm>. Accessed 29 July 2004.

59Danielpour, program notes, 19E.
Consistent with the sentiment of the freedom song, “I’ll Overcome Some Day,” the tune persists despite opposition. And consistent with Danielpour’s belief that the government is guilty of duplicity in divulging the details of these assassinations, the composition ends with the ambiguity of a simultaneous major/minor tonality.

The chorale in the second cello concerto is also fragmented. Low strings play a quiet, abbreviated chord progression (mm. 47-51: D-flat ♭ F minor ♭ E ♭ G-sharp minor ♭ F-sharp ♭ B-flat minor). The first two chords move from major to minor with an ascending major third in the bass, creating an interrogatory effect. After a rest, Danielpour duplicates this one-and-a-half steps higher. Later chordal fragments are marked pianissimo and include instructions such as “play into stand” and “cloth bag over bell” (mm. 595, 606, 612). This muting suggests that the sound is on a different plane, again creating a layered effect. Although muted, these pianissimo chords capture attention because of their stillness amidst the subdued, oscillating minor thirds in other instruments.

Low brass play these last three chord progressions in *Through the Ancient Valley* (mm. 595, 606, 612). As in the first appearance in the strings (mm. 47-51), these final examples all return to their respective initial harmony after passing through a related minor chord; e.g., m. 595, D-flat ♭ F minor ♭ D-flat; m. 606, G-flat ♭ C-flat ♭ B-flat minor seventh ♭ G-flat; m. 612, B ♭ E ♭ D-sharp minor ♭ B. Perhaps this is the point; the end is the beginning, like the symbolic twenty-four hour cycle in *The Enchanted Garden*. The chorale never develops and never succeeds in moving beyond its starting position. It begins and ends with itself. As in *Journey Without Distance*, there has been no advancement. *Through the Ancient Valley* contains programmatic elements, but no detailed program, and the passage through the valley has been a virtual journey.

Danielpour’s Silk Road pilgrimage is similar to the literal ones experienced by composers such as Franz Liszt and Felix Mendelssohn, who absorbed artistic inspiration from travels to Italy and Switzerland in the nineteenth century. Danielpour’s search for spiritual roots has taken him all over the spiritual globe, even to Islamic Sufi mysticism. Considering his outrage over his uncle’s assassination by an ayatollah, this particular influence indicates the extensiveness of his quest. His music explores many different religions and religious philosophies: there are the
Roman Catholic early works (Prologue and Prayer, *Dona Nobis Pacem*, and the “alleluias” in *First Light*); his brief dalliance with New Age philosophies (*Journey Without Distance*); a return to his Jewish heritage (*Psalms of Sorrow, Canticle of Peace*); and references to such diverse figures as the metaphysicist Martin Heidegger and the Buddhist writer Chögyam Trungpa (*The Awakened Heart*). It would appear that the composer is hoping to find personal truth.

“Public versus private” utterances reveal Danielpour’s vulnerability, a vulnerability that most of us share but do not divulge to the world. In his music, he has encountered barriers of: time (the separation of soprano and baritone by fifty years in *Elegies*); distance (both geographical and chronological in *Through the Ancient Valley*); religious oppression (the references to the Holocaust in *Psalms of Sorrow* and the anti-Semitism exhibited in several “Gestapo marches”); racial prejudice (*Voices of Remembrance*); and death (“My Father’s Song,” “Swan Song,” and *An American Requiem*). Danielpour’s desire for spiritual awakening is evidenced not only in the many sources cited in the previous paragraph, but also in his titles, such as *First Light, The Awakened Heart, Anima Mundi*, and *Canticle of Peace*. Danielpour looks for hope, for restoration. And he searches for personal validation, earnestly desiring purpose in his life and in his music. The recurring theme of death and rebirth in his compositions speaks to his need for growth and renewal.

There is a general Persian belief that the arts, especially music, affect the soul. This Eastern culture identifies with the ancient Greeks who believed that earthly music reflects the music of the spheres: “It is said (by the sage, Ilkhan-al-safa) that the musical system revealed to Pythagoras was meant to allow the recreation of the music of the heavenly orbs by mankind. Thus, the soul, creation, and music are intertwined.”

Danielpour has compared composing to praying: “Writing music is itself a profoundly spiritual act. It is a testament to life itself. When I am composing, that’s when I feel completely in the present and alive. And that, to me, is the same thing as praying.”

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61 Danielpour, quoted in Kozinn, “Composers Separated by their Similarities.”
transcendence with which he frequently concludes his works. Like J. S. Bach, Haydn, and other composers, he often writes “Thanks be to God” at the end of his manuscripts.

Danielpour’s art is a search for God. This is also consistent with his ethnic heritage. As one Persian studies’ scholar writes, “In many ways all Persian art work springs from and works toward the reunification of man with God.”62 Each of Danielpour’s compositions strives toward God in some manner. His music is also a search for himself. With each act of creating, the composer examines his own voice. Two mornings after the premiere of *Voices of Remembrance*, Danielpour tentatively asked his former mentor, Philippe Drevet, “Did you hear my voice?” The response was, “Yes,” thus temporarily ending the composer’s search. Having absorbed and incorporated compositional techniques from many diverse sources, Richard Danielpour has established a personal, distinctive style.

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62 Zomorodi. See also De Bruijn, 69-70.
Popularity in high art music is a variable commodity. Much has transpired since the 1920s when Copland was concerned that one of his compositions was too popular to be a valid work of art. Classical music survived the period when some composers insisted that they did not care if anyone liked or even listened to their music. Today Danielpour is one of many who are embracing lyricism as well as popularity. As K. Robert Schwarz notes, even Philip Glass has gradually abandoned “his once austere minimalism”; he now incorporates a melodic and harmonic vocabulary that he previously avoided.¹ Romantically expressive language in music had become anathema to many in the twentieth century, but Danielpour is part of a large number of late twentieth- and early twenty-first century composers who have renewed its importance in their writing style.

Not only did the concert-going and record-buying public find much of the high art music composed between 1920 and 1970 unappealing, many also felt alienated from contemporary classical music. Steve Reich observes that, “Most of the music we know and love has always stayed in touch with popular, folk, and dance sources, whether it’s Bach, Bartók, and Stravinsky, or Ives, Gershwin, and Copland.”² Composers that tap into this wellspring share a common language with their public. The importance of dance, rock, and popular rhythms, and the

¹Schwarz, Minimalists, 144.

inclusion of jazz techniques such as walking bass, scat singing, and blues pitches in Danielpour’s compositions have been documented in the preceding chapters.

In an interview in the late 1980s, Glass looked back at the major compositions of the twentieth century and concluded: “It now seems to me that the mainstream was tonal music, if you think about Shostakovich, Sibelius, Strauss, and Copland. . . . Twentieth-century music is tonal music.”3 Certainly there are composers such as Stravinsky and Bartók who Glass should have mentioned; but even though all their compositions did not embrace “common practice” harmony, Glass’s observation about tonal music is a pithy one. It may be argued that Glass is biased in his assessment of the twentieth century, considering his current association with tonal music, but similar opinions were voiced by David Del Tredici, Gunther Schuller, and John Harbison as well. The movement of these composers and others, such as Stephen Albert, away from serialism and toward a more tonal, romantic, accessible style has also been documented. Although there may be future ventures similar to dodecaphony and serialism, it is probable that a vast number of future composers will also return to tonality to some degree. This is not because they lose their audience when they wander too far from tonal music, but because the majority of western composers themselves are steeped in this tradition. One reason Danielpour’s compositions have received more recognition than the music of some of his contemporaries is that he writes emotionally evocative works that primarily stay within the boundaries of tonality.

Cultural values have changed as we have become a society accustomed to the luxury of entertainment brought directly into our homes. There was a time when many New Yorkers faithfully attended the Philharmonic concerts as a matter of course. Twenty years ago, eighty-five percent of the orchestra’s ticket sales were season subscriptions. Today only sixty-three percent of the sales are subscriptions.4 Orchestra concerts are simply not as well attended as in the past. In the uncertain world of the twenty-first century, even those who really enjoy going to the symphony are much less likely to commit to a concert series a year in advance. Elaborating

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3 Glass, in Duckworth, 325.

4 Lubow, 39.
on these changes, Zarin Mehta, president and executive director of the New York Philharmonic, says, “People subscribed year after year... Everybody had a record player, and they bought classical records. Everybody had a piano in their living room. That’s not going to come back.”

Owning and learning to play one’s own piano and possessing season tickets to the Philharmonic no longer hold the same social and economic significance. Electronic keyboards and guitars have replaced the acoustic piano in many homes, and live concerts and record sales of rock and popular music far surpass those of classical music.

Attendance at the New York Philharmonic’s concerts this past season was one of the worst in many years; only seventy-five percent of the seats were sold. For a recent program of compositions by Berlioz, Avery Fisher Hall was only two-thirds full; yet four productions of the more popularly-oriented Candide by Leonard Bernstein were completely sold out. Besides sporadic attendance, devotees of the standard classical music repertoire seem to be dwindling in number. A recent New York Times Magazine article by Arthur Lubow notes that orchestras in large cities across the country are facing larger deficits and smaller audiences. Organizations like the Florida Philharmonic, San Jose Symphony, and San Antonio Symphony have recently folded. For myriad reasons, a member of the younger generation is generally less likely to become a classical aficionado. From the perspective of a symphony lover, Lubow writes, “More alarming is the long-range fear that a generation that is visually hyperstimulated, musically undereducated and technologically tempted may avoid the concert hall.” Indeed, according to the A. C. Nielsen Company, the average American watches more than four hours of television daily; and the television is on six hours and forty-seven minutes a day in the average American household.

5 Ibid.
6 Ibid., 38.
7 Ibid., 39.
8 Ibid.
9 Statistics compiled by A. C. Nielsen Company and TV-Free America.
Many contemporary audience members are more familiar with orchestral music as a film soundtrack or as a background for television viewing; because of the ubiquity of television, many relate primarily to music as an accompaniment to the action on a screen. Even commercials have incidental music, some of which gives the public a glimpse of the concert hall: Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue* has encouraged airline travel, and Copland’s *Rodeo* has been used to tempt people to eat beef. This is ironic when one considers that critics in the 1920s and 1940s denounced both composers for being too “popular” and doubted that their music would stand the test of time.¹⁰ The continued programming of this music in concert venues, as well as its use in the medium of television, confirms that it is still appealing to audiences sixty and eighty years later.

Danipour’s custom of creating compositions with detailed programs helps to make him more accessible to the average listener. Although his music is primary and the storyline is incidental, a technological generation may relate more to his compositions because they are programmatic: the composer’s extramusical references are a point of departure for members of the audience who need something concrete to listen for in the world of absolute music. Even people who do not generally understand classical music can relate to the programmatic allusions in Danipour’s compositions.

In *The New Grove Dictionary of American Music*, Gregory Sandow refers to Philip Glass as America’s “most popular serious composer”: someone who can fill Carnegie Hall as well as appeal to a crossover audience.¹¹ One explanation for his name recognition is that Glass writes for films. A far greater percentage of the population attends films than attends classical concerts.¹² In addition, Glass’s biggest successes have been in the field of opera. Glass reveals,

⁰See footnotes 11 and 12 in chapter one, page 4.


¹²According to the United States National Endowment for the Arts, 2003, twelve percent of the population over eighteen attended a classical music performance at least once in 2002;
“I would rather write an opera than a string quartet . . . In the end, it happens that more people will hear the opera . . . I’m attracted to large-scale pieces, which is fortunate.”

Sandow’s pairing of “popular” and “classical music” is somewhat misleading. Glass notes that his best-selling record sold about 200,000 copies. If Glass were in any field other than classical music, he would have lost his recording contract because of dismal sales. A classical composer or composition that is considered popular has, proportionately, only a small following; the numbers at well-attended classical concerts cannot compare to the sell-out crowds at performances by contemporary recording artists. Glass suggests that he is considered popular in some classical circles because the Philip Glass Ensemble frequently performs in large cities for audiences of two or three thousand people. In comparison, folk- and pop-artist Paul Simon plays in huge stadiums filled with 20,000 or more.

Danielpour’s first opera will be premiered in Detroit in May 2005. The reception of this work, Margaret Garner, with libretto by Toni Morrison, may have a significant impact on Danielpour’s future. As with Glass’s experience, it is likely that more people will be exposed to Danielpour’s single opera than to his earlier compositions. Although opera is often considered a more elite genre, in some respects the drama, costumes, and set designs of opera parallel the aspects of films and television that appeal to a visually-oriented society. It is probable that the stage production of Candide, as opposed to a less spectacular, more formal concert, was part of the attraction for the New York Philharmonic audiences this past season.

In March 2001, Through the Ancient Valley premiered to three sold-out performances at Avery Fisher Hall in Lincoln Center. Danielpour acknowledged, however, that it was Yo-Yo

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13 Duckworth, 339.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid., 339-40.

16 The other works on the program were Rimsky-Korsakov’s Scheherazade and Blue as the Turquoise Night of Neyshabur, a composition by Kayhan Kalhor, the kamancheh player.
Ma’s popularity with audiences, not his own, that accounted for brisk ticket sales. Despite Danielpour’s many commissions and multiple performances of his music, it would be inaccurate to say he is well known. One may be popular in a certain milieu and yet be totally unknown outside its confines. Danielpour does not have the name recognition that Glass has, even among those knowledgeable in classical music. But Danielpour is well-liked by many of today’s conductors and performers because they respect his understanding of the craft of composition and appreciate that his works are well-received by most audience members. Again, that does not translate into being popular in the mainstream of the music business in the same sense that rock singers are popular; Danielpour’s CDs will never compete against those of Bruce Springsteen or Madonna for total number of units sold. However, by today’s standards for judging success in the classical music world, Danielpour is doing well. There are ten CDs in his discography, and seven of these contain compositions exclusively by Danielpour.

Over the course of Danielpour’s career, many critics have noted the presence of other composers in his music. It is natural for a reviewer, whether professional or amateur, to relate a new listening experience to a previous one with which they are familiar; the earlier work provides a point of reference. For centuries, however, composers have been borrowing from each other, to greater and lesser degrees, both consciously and unconsciously. When asked about the critics who say that Danielpour has yet to find his voice, violinist Andrés Cárdenes dismissed the issue: “Who, at his [Danielpour’s] age, has ‘found his voice’? Composition is an extremely transitional and evolutionary process of a lifetime. Schoenberg went through tonal and atonal periods. Beethoven through a Haydn early phase, an experimental, hit or miss middle period and a revolutionary late period. Which of these periods is his ‘Voice’? RD is still searching, a very good sign of someone who spiritually and musically is alive and inspired.”

Throughout the genre chapters, important elements of Danielpour’s individual style have been profiled—crescendoed slurs, incomplete chorales, sudden contrasts in dynamics, dark compositions ending in transcendence, rhythmic vitality, multiple ostinati, extended pedal points, lyricism, and the

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17 Cárdenes, 6 May 2003.
ambiguity of simultaneous major and minor chords. Yet, originality and influence have remained concerns for Danielpour and the critics.

Harold Bloom’s book, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, addresses the issue of artistic anxiety regarding influence and originality. Bloom’s premise is that all poets are influenced by those who preceded them, and their recognition of this appropriation, or the fear that others will see their work as derivative, causes them anxiety in varying degrees. Composers share this fear. In an audience reception following the premiere of *An American Requiem*, Danielpour was asked if he was familiar with a particular composition by Ralph Vaughan Williams. The composer’s response was, “Why, did I borrow from it?”

In addition to the internal quest for originality, composers have to deal with the external pursuit of an audience. Music is art, but it is also business. Glass, having grown up with a father who owned a record store, states pragmatically, “The first thing I knew about music was that you sold it; in other words, people paid for it.” Patronage, both public and private, personal and institutional, has been an important aspect of music for centuries. Although many composers still struggle for recognition, Danielpour was fortunate to have his early works published by Peters, and his association with Schirmer Music Publications since 1988 has been fruitful. Along with his ties to Schirmer, his five-year exclusive Sony recording contract guaranteed that his compositions were available to the public. Even after parting company with Sony, Danielpour has had several recordings produced by other labels. And this is in an age when, as the *Times Magazine* article notes, “If [the New York Philharmonic] wants to record an important new work that it has commissioned from a famous contemporary composer, it must pass the hat.” Danielpour’s outgoing personality has helped him make important contacts and has established

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18 Bloom, xix, 7, 14.


20 Duckworth, 338.

21 Lubow, 38.
his presence both on and off stage. He is a savvy businessman, and, as discussed in chapter four, he has been generous in sharing his expertise with younger composers.

According to Lubow, recent surveys indicate that audiences want symphonic concerts to be more “intimate” and “emotional.” Listeners usually appreciate Danielpour’s music because they can relate to it in some way. It expresses something that they perhaps feel or understand intuitively but are unable to express themselves. Art has the capability of prompting recognition of man’s worth, his occasional moments of nobility, and transcendence. In a confused and hostile world, one can find solace in the visual arts, dance, and music; they can take us beyond the mundane, beyond the inevitable. Following the abrupt juxtapositions of dynamics and the struggles between good and evil, the majority of Danielpour’s works end with transformation. In a sense, the composer often leaves his audience with a happy ending, or at least a dénouement. Art allows for resolution and rebirth, among Danielpour’s favorite themes.

In 2004, Danielpour’s age and continuing growth preclude assigning him a place among American art composers. The perspective that is provided by the passage of time is missing. Yet, it is certain that Danielpour’s compositions not only have an immediate effect, but they also reward repeated listening. They are memorable—at times pleasurable and at other times almost painful. Beautiful moments alternate with dissonance and conflicts. Danielpour’s music can be thought-provoking: upon studying his scores, one discovers many subtleties that are not immediately apparent. And, yes, one hears the composer’s own voice.

As noted previously, Danielpour is a member of an elite group: only Copland, Stravinsky, and Glass had garnered exclusive Sony recording contracts prior to Danielpour’s signing in 1996. This must provide significant satisfaction to the composer when he recollects a conversation from his college days: “I’d been told that playing concerts was the only practical way to earn a living as a musician. Who makes money writing music? I remember a fellow student at Oberlin asked me what I wanted to do with my life, and I said, ‘I want to write music and have my music

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22Ibid., 40.
recorded.’ And he said, ‘You can’t do that. No composer makes records.’”

Richard Danielpour has already proven him wrong.

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23 McCutchan, 212.
APPENDIX A

TABLE 2. Danielpour Compositions in Alphabetical Order
TABLE 2. Danielpour Compositions in Alphabetical Order

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composition</th>
<th>Commission</th>
<th>Completion date; dedication</th>
<th>Premiere</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>An American Requiem</em> (SATB choir, orchestra, tenor, mezzo-soprano, baritone)</td>
<td>Pacific Symphony Orchestra</td>
<td>2001; In memory of those who died in the wake of the tragic events of September 11, 2001; and in tribute to the American soldier–past, present, and future</td>
<td>14 November 2001, Santa Ana, CA; Carl St. Clair, Pacific Symphony Orchestra, Pacific Chorale; Hugh Smith, Stephanie Blythe, Mark Oswald</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Anima Mundi</em></td>
<td>Pacific Northwest Ballet</td>
<td>1995; To Marsha Morrison</td>
<td>2 April 1996, Seattle, WA; Pacific Northwest Ballet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Apparitions</em> (for orchestra)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>14 May 2003, Newark, NJ; Zdenek Macal; New Jersey Symphony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>As Night Falls on Barjeantane</em> (violin, piano)</td>
<td>For the 2002 International Violin Competition of Indianapolis</td>
<td>2002; To Madame Anne Postel-Vinay</td>
<td>13 September 2003, Indianapolis, IN; Liza Ferschtman, Rohan De Silva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Awakened Heart</em></td>
<td>Baltimore Symphony</td>
<td>1990; To David Zinman</td>
<td>25 October 1990, Baltimore, MD; David Zinman, Baltimore Symphony</td>
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<tr>
<td>Composition</td>
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<td>Completion date; dedication</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Canticle of Peace</strong> (SATB chorus, orchestra, baritone or mezzo-soprano)</td>
<td>Ohef Sholom Temple, Norfolk, Virginia (150th anniversary)</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>4 October 1995; Temple Choir, Apollo chamber ensemble, JoAnn Falletta, James Weaver</td>
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<td>11 September 1996, Avery Fisher Hall, Lincoln Center, New York City; William Sharp, Gerard Schwarz, New York Chamber Symphony</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Celestial Night</strong></td>
<td>New Jersey Symphony with support of AT&amp;T Foundation</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>23 October 1997, New Brunswick, New Jersey; Zdenek Macal, New Jersey Symphony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A Child’s Reliquary</strong> (violin, cello, piano)</td>
<td>Hancher Auditorium/University of Iowa and Tisch Center for the Arts of the 92nd Street Y (New York City)</td>
<td>17 September 1999; To the memory of Cole Carson St. Clair</td>
<td>13 April 2000, Iowa City, IA; Kalichstein/Laredo/Robinson Trio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Concerto for Cello and Orchestra</strong></td>
<td>San Francisco Symphony</td>
<td>1994; To Yo-Yo Ma</td>
<td>14 September 1994, San Francisco; Yo-Yo Ma, Herbert Blomstedt, San Francisco Symphony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Concerto for Orchestra, Zoroastrian Riddles</strong></td>
<td>Pittsburgh Symphony (centennial season)</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>15 May 1997, Pittsburgh, PA; David Zinman, Pittsburgh Symphony</td>
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<td>Composition</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Concerto for Violin and Orchestra, <em>A Fool’s Paradise</em></strong></td>
<td>Saratoga Performing Arts Center (100th anniversary of Yaddo) and the Philadelphia Orchestra</td>
<td>1999; To B. J.</td>
<td>5 August 2000, Saratoga Springs, NY; Chantal Juillet, Charles Dutoit, Philadelphia Orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elegies</strong> (soprano, orchestra)</td>
<td>Jacksonville Symphony Association</td>
<td>1997; To Frederica von Stade</td>
<td>15 January 1998, Jacksonville, FL; Frederica von Stade, Thomas Hampson, Roger Nierenberg, Jacksonville Symphony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elegy</strong> (piano)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1996; to Philippe Drevet</td>
<td>11 February 2003, Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall, New York City; Soheil Nasseri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Enchanted Garden</strong> (Preludes, Book I); piano</td>
<td>The Louisiana School (annual piano festival)</td>
<td>1992; I to Annete Covatta; II to Christopher O’Riley; III to Rebecca Cross; IV to Lorin Hollander; V to Emanuel Ax</td>
<td>4 July 1992, Aspen, CO; Christopher O’Riley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fantasy Variation</strong> (cello, piano)</td>
<td>Judy Goldberg</td>
<td>1996; To Judy Goldberg</td>
<td>24 August 1997, Boston, MA; Yo-Yo Ma, Emanuel Ax</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feast of Fools</strong> (Concertino for Bassoon and String Quartet)</td>
<td>Williamstown Chamber Concerts</td>
<td>1998; To Stephen Walt and the Muir Quartet</td>
<td>4 August 1998, Williamstown, MA; Stephen Walt, Muir String Quartet</td>
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<tr>
<td>Composition</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>First Light</em> (chamber version)</td>
<td>Hebrew Arts School through grant from Jerome Foundation</td>
<td>1988; To Gerard Schwarz and Stephen Albert</td>
<td>2 March 1988, New York City; Gerard Schwarz, Music Today Ensemble 2 July 1989, Lubeck, Germany; Mark Stringer, Academia di Santa Cecilia</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(orchestral version)</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>I Am Not Prey</em> (from <em>Spirits in the Well</em>; soprano, piano four hands)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1996</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>In the Arms of the Beloved</em> (Double Concerto for Violin, Cello, Orchestra)</td>
<td>Germantown Performing Arts Center for Laredo/Robinson and IRIS Chamber Orchestra</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>20 April 2002, Germantown, TN; Jaime Laredo, Sharon Robinson, Michael Stern, IRIS Chamber Orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Metamorphosis</em> (Piano Concerto No. 1)</td>
<td>New York Chamber Symphony with support from Barlow Endowment</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>21 April 1990, New York City; David Buechner, Gerard Schwarz, New York Chamber Symphony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Night Rainbow</em></td>
<td>Pacific Symphony Orchestra</td>
<td>1999; To Carl St. Clair</td>
<td>7 January 2000, Santa Ana, CA; Carl St. Clair, Pacific Symphony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Nocturne</em> (string orchestra)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>28 December 2000, Carnegie Hall, New York City; Jaime Laredo, New York String Orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composition</td>
<td>Commission</td>
<td>Completion date; dedication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Piano Concerto No. 2</td>
<td>Absolut Vodka (annual concert)</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>30 March 1994, Avery Fisher Hall, Lincoln Center, New York City; Christopher O’Riley, Leighton Smith, New Jersey Symphony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piano Fantasy (piano)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>30 January 1980, New England Conservatory, Boston, MA; Richard Danielpour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prologue and Prayer (chorus, ensemble)</td>
<td>Paul Ilecki commissioned 1982 Oratio Pauli; Musica Sacra commissioned 1988 In Principio; the two were combined</td>
<td>1982, 1988</td>
<td>20 April 1988, New York City; Richard Westenburg, Musica Sacra (Oratio Pauli premiered in 1982, New York City; Ilecki, Paulist Choristers)</td>
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<th>Composition</th>
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<th>Completion date; dedication</th>
<th>Premiere</th>
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<tr>
<td>Quintet for Piano and Strings</td>
<td>Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>6 January 1989, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, New York City; Ken Noda, Emerson String Quartet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Song of Remembrance</strong></td>
<td>San Francisco Symphony for the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra</td>
<td>1991; In memory of . . .</td>
<td>31 May 1992, San Francisco, CA; Alasdair Neale, San Francisco Youth Symphony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Songs of the Night</em> (tenor, violin, cello, piano)</td>
<td>Seattle Chamber Music Festival and John Aler</td>
<td>1993; I. For Grayce and Saro Murabito; II. n.d.; III. To Marsha Morrison; IV. To John Aler</td>
<td>2 July 1993, Seattle; John Aler, Ida Levin, Steven Doane, Craig Sheppard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sonnets to Orpheus, I</strong> (soprano, ensemble)</td>
<td>Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>6 November 1992; Alice Tully Hall, Lincoln Center, New York City; Dawn Upshaw, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sonnets to Orpheus, II</strong> (baritone, ensemble)</td>
<td>Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival</td>
<td>1994; I. To Arthur Egendorf; II. To James and Barbara Cross; III. To Jennifer Arnold; (IV. n.d.)</td>
<td>7 August 1994, Sante Fe, NM; Kurt Ollman, Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival Musicians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Spirits in the Well</em> (soprano, piano)</td>
<td>Lincoln Center with support from A.B. and Flavia McEachern Foundation</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>10 May 1998, Avery Fisher Hall, Lincoln Center, New York City; Jessye Norman, Ken Noda</td>
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<th>Composition</th>
<th>Commission</th>
<th>Completion date; dedication</th>
<th>Premiere</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>String Quartet No. 2, <em>Shadow Dances</em></strong></td>
<td>Co-commissioned by the Barlow Endowment of Brigham Young University and by the Snowbird Institute for the Muir Quartet</td>
<td>1993; To Hal and Debbie Chapel</td>
<td>16 March 1993, Pollen, France; Muir String Quartet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>String Quartet No. 3, <em>Psalms of Sorrow</em></strong> (baritone, string quartet)</td>
<td>The Snowbird Institute (with support from the Albert and Elaine Borchard Foundation)</td>
<td>1994; In memory of those who died and in tribute to those who survived the horror of Auschwitz</td>
<td>13 October 1995, Salt Lake City, UT; William Sharp, Muir String Quartet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>String Quartet No. 4, <em>Apparitions</em></strong></td>
<td>The Friends of Chamber Music, Kansas City</td>
<td>2000; I. To the American String Quartet; II. To Daniel Brewbaker; III. To Mehri and Homa; IV. To Stefan Lano; V. To B. J.</td>
<td>20 April 2001, Kansas City, MO; American String Quartet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>String Quartet, No. 5, <em>In Search of “La Vita Nuova”</em></strong></td>
<td>Co-commissioned by Friends of Music Concerts (50th anniversary) for the Guarneri String Quartet (40th anniversary) and by DePauw (Indiana) University</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>1 May 2004; Sleepy Hollow, New York; Guarneri String Quartet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sweet Talk</strong> (mezzo-soprano, cello, doublebass, piano)</td>
<td>Princeton University</td>
<td>1996; To Jessye Norman</td>
<td>20 April 1997, Carnegie Hall, New York City; Jessye Norman, Peter Wiley, Edgar Meyer, Mark Markham</td>
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<tr>
<td>Composition</td>
<td>Commission</td>
<td>Completion date; dedication</td>
<td>Premiere</td>
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<tr>
<td>Symphony No. 1, <em>Dona Nobis Pacem</em></td>
<td>Paulist Fathers, St. Paul the Apostle Church, New York City (100th anniversary)</td>
<td>1984-5</td>
<td>23 March 1985, St. Paul the Apostle Church, New York City; Paul Ilecki, Juilliard Orchestra; rev. version: 7 October 1986, Seattle, WA; Christopher Kendall, Seattle Symphony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symphony No. 3, <em>Journey Without Distance</em></td>
<td>Akron (Ohio), Jacksonville (Florida), and Stamford (Connecticut) Symphony Orchestras</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>24 February 1990, Akron, Ohio; Faith Esham, Alan Balter, Akron Symphony Orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three Preludes (piano)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2003; I to Hannah Chapel; II to Kathleen; III to Ned Rorem on his 80th birthday</td>
<td>30 September 2003, Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall, New York City; Soheil Nasseri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Urban Dances I</em> (brass quintet)</td>
<td>Chamber Music America</td>
<td>1988; To the Saturday Brass Quintet. “For Leonard Bernstein” is also written above the title on the first page.</td>
<td>15 January 1989, New York City; Saturday Brass Quintet</td>
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<tr>
<td>Composition</td>
<td>Commission</td>
<td>Completion date; dedication</td>
<td>Premiere</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Urban Dances II</em> (brass quintet)</td>
<td>Saturday Brass Quintet</td>
<td>1993; To the Saturday Brass Quintet. Also, “In memoriam SJA” appears at the top of “The Night Rainbow”</td>
<td>27 February 1993, Kennedy Center, Washington, D.C.; Saturday Brass Quintet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Urban Dances</em> (Ballet Suite in five movements)</td>
<td>New York City Ballet (for Miriam Mahdaviani)</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>4 June 1997, New York State Theater, Lincoln Center, New York City; Miriam Mahdaviani, choreography; Maurice Kaplow, New York City Ballet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Vox Populi</em></td>
<td>Mr. and Mrs. G. Richard Eykamp for Evansville Philharmonic Orchestra</td>
<td>1998; To B. J.</td>
<td>26 September 1998, Evansville, IN; Alfred Savia, Evansville Philharmonic</td>
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APPENDIX B

COMPLETE DANIELPOUR DISCOGRAPHY


APPENDIX C

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October 13, 2004

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Print Licensing Manager
September 28, 2004

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C.F. PETERS CORPORATION

Hector Colon
Assistant- Rights Clearance Division
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October 6, 2004

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Tallahassee, FL 32312

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13 October 2004

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APPENDIX D

HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE APPROVAL LETTER
REAPPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 5/4/2004

To:
Ruth R. Akers
3899 W. Millers Bridge
Tallahassee, FL 32312

Dept.: Music

From: John Tomkowiak, Chair

Re: Reapproval of Use of Human subjects in Research: Richard Danelpour: His Life and Works

Your request to continue the research project listed above involving human subjects has been approved by the Human Subjects Committee. If your project has not been completed by 5/9/2005 please request renewed approval.

You are reminded that a change in protocol in this project must be approved by resubmission of the project to the Committee for approval. Also, the principal investigator must report to the Chair promptly, and in writing, any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the Chairman of your department and/or your major professor are reminded of their responsibility for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in their department. They are advised to review the protocols of such investigations as often as necessary to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

Cc: D. Von Glahn
HSC No. 2004.279-R
APPENDIX E

INFORMED CONSENT FORM
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I voluntarily agree to participate in a research project entitled "Richard Danielpour: His Life and Works."

This research is being conducted by Ruth Ruggles Akers as part of her Doctorate of Philosophy degree in historical musicology at Florida State University.

I understand that I will have the opportunity to answer questions by mail, email, FAX, and through telephone conversations and live interviews. Biographical information and my musical compositions will be discussed, and, in order to preserve the utmost accuracy, audiotapes will be made of both telephone conversations and live interviews. Even after the initial biographical project is completed, these tapes will be kept in Mrs. Akers' home office as part of her personal archives. It is possible that they would be consulted again in the future for perhaps a periodical article, musical dictionary entry, or another volume on Danielpour.

I also realize that my participation, being totally voluntary, may be terminated at any time I choose. My consent may be withdrawn without prejudice or penalty.

There is no physical risk involved in this project.

There are no remunerative benefits.

Questions, if any, have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I may contact Mrs. Akers at any time at 850-893-0212 for answers to questions concerning this research or my rights. I may also contact Professor Denise Von Glahn at 850-644-3721.

I have read this consent form. I understand it and realize that I will be tape recorded by the researcher who will be keeping these tapes.

(Subject) (Date)

Florida State University Institutional Review Board

Approved: 5/10/01

DO. 153

5/10/01


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Ruth Ruggles Akers attended Florida Atlantic University where she was a University Scholar, a Faculty Scholar, and was listed in Who’s Who Among American Universities and Colleges. After earning her Bachelor of Arts degree in three years, she was an associate instructor in piano at Indiana University, where she pursued a graduate degree. While in Bloomington, she was inducted into Pi Kappa Lambda, national music honor society.

After receiving a Master of Music degree in Piano Performance with High Distinction from Indiana, Ruth joined the music faculty at Palm Beach Community College in 1974. That same year she was honored as an “Outstanding Young Woman of America.”

In 1981, she began teaching music history at Florida Atlantic University. She also served as Artist-in-Residence at the Palm Beach County School of the Arts in 1991. A move to Tallahassee, Florida, provided the opportunity for Ruth to pursue her doctorate as well as the chance to teach a class in music history at Florida State University. In 1997, she was inducted into the scholastic honor fraternity, Phi Kappa Phi.

Ruth has performed as a piano soloist and as an accompanist in many venues. She has collaborated with such artists as contralto Maureen Forrester and the Metropolitan Madrigal Singers. In addition, she has given many lecture recitals, including presentations at state conventions of the Florida State Music Teachers Association: “Two Tell-Tale Hearts: The Poetic Genius of Edgar Allan Poe and Frédéric François Chopin (Tampa, 1992) and “The Magic’s in the Music, and the Music’s in the Poetry” (Orlando, 1994).