A Performer’s Guide to John Musto’s Song Cycle, *Quiet Songs*

**D.M.A. DOCUMENT**

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Musical Arts in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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Abstract

This document is a performer’s guide to the American composer John Musto’s song cycle, *Quiet Songs*. The cycle consists of six songs composed for soprano and piano. The world premiere took place on May 20, 1990 at the New York Festival of Song (NYFOS) with soprano Amy Burton, and pianist Steven Blier. The document is intended to provide pertinent information that will help singers and pianists prepare the song cycle for performance.
Dedication

This document is dedicated to my family.
Acknowledgments

I would like to thank all of the professors and colleagues with whom I worked during my stay at The Ohio State University. I thank Dr. Robin Rice, my advisor, for his outstanding teaching and support. I am grateful to Dr. Patrick Woliver, who cultivated my musical thought deeply during my studies and shared his vast academic knowledge with me. Special thanks go to Prof. Alan Green for his generosity with his time and for helping me process this document.

I appreciate the privilege of getting to know the composer, John Musto and soprano, Amy Burton. I thank them both for their insightful comments and invaluable knowledge which they shared with me. My thanks also go to Peer Music Classical for granting me permission to reprint the musical examples from "Quiet Songs" in this document.

I am especially appreciative of my dearest friend and vocal coach, Prof. Edward Bak, for his patience and thoughtfulness that have been the greatest gifts to me. In the process of completing this document, I would like to thank my editor, Dr. Müge Galin, who assisted me with my writing and contributed insightful comments. Finally, I would like to thank my loving family, my parents and my brother, for their understanding and support through all these years while I was living in the United States.
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2007 ....................................................Helen Swank Voice Scholarship

2008 ....................................................Honorable Mention, Bel Canto Division

Chinese International Vocal Competition,

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Field of Study

Major Field: Music

Studies in Voice Performance
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*Quiet Songs* for high voice and piano by John Musto
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*Collected Songs: Quiet Songs* by John Musto
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All of the songs have something to do with seeking something and finding something or not finding it. If there's a theme that goes through the poetry, that's what it is and it starts out with maggie, milly, molly and may and the things that they find on the beach.

John Musto

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This document provides information on Quiet Songs, a song cycle by American composer John Musto. It is intended to help singers understand and prepare the cycle for performance. Musto is regarded as one of the most gifted living composers and pianists in the United States. Musto chose to set music for six poems by different poets. These include “maggie and milly and molly and may” by e. e. Cummings, “Intermezzo” by Amy Elizabeth Burton, Musto’s wife, “Quiet Song” by Eugene O’Neill, “Christmas Carol” (“To Jesus on His Birthday”) by Edna St. Vincent Millay, “Palm Sunday: Naples” by Arthur Symons, and “Lullaby” by Léonie Adams.

The world premiere of Musto’s song cycle was performed on May 20, 1990 at the New York Festival Of Song (NYFOS) by soprano Amy Burton and pianist Steven Blier. In November 2009, Burton gave the first orchestral performance of Quiet Songs with the Oregon Mozart Players (OMP). The score has two versions: the first one was published

The first chapter introduces the document. Chapter two is a brief biography of Musto. Chapters three through eight are devoted to the six songs in the cycle. Each of these chapters consists of two parts: (1) the poet’s biography, (2) characterization of each poem, and interpretation of the musical composition. The last chapter concludes this song cycle.

### 1.2 Related Literature

Chapter 2
Biography of John Musto

2.1 The Early Years

John Musto was born on March 21, 1954 in Brooklyn, New York. He was raised in a middle class musical family. His father, Vincent Musto, was a famous jazz guitarist. Musto did not learn guitar directly from his father, though he inherited his musical talent and was subconsciously influenced by his father since he was a child. Growing up around his father and other musicians who came over to their house to rehearse, he developed a natural talent to improvise music. Musto’s training in traditional classical music began with private piano lessons at the age of four with Albert Gusstefeste. Gusstefeste had graduated from Julliard Music School and was a jazz pianist who frequently performed with Musto’s father. At the age of eight, Musto began to play the organ regularly at the church services of the Bensonhurst Parish Catholic Church in Brooklyn.

2.2 Education

John Musto attended the Jesuit High School in Brooklyn and enrolled in the Manhattan School of Music where he majored in piano performance under Seymour Lipkin. He did not receive any composition training there. After obtaining his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in piano performance from the Manhattan School of Music, Musto
worked as a concert pianist and a full-time piano technician. He met Paul Jacobs, the best known pianist in the United States playing twentieth-century music at the time. Jacobs was on the staff of the New York Philharmonic, and renowned for his mastery of Debussy’s *Preludes and etudes*. ¹ Jacobs became Musto’s piano teacher and mentor and they developed a close relationship until Jacobs’s death in 1983. In fact, Jacobs bequeathed to Musto his grand piano, which today is sitting in Musto’s living room. As Musto shared with me during his interview,

> This is actually his piano that he left me when he died. He had bought it from Samuel Barber. That's Samuel Barber's piano and Paul bought it. We'll see where it goes next. I got to be friends with Paul the last three years of his life. I would go when I was doing recitals on a play for him and he was very helpful. (Musto, personal communication, February. 3, 2012)

### 2.3 Musto’s Compositions

Musto began to compose in his mid-twenties. His first compositions were short piano rags and a piano concerto with orchestra. Because Musto never received composition training in school, he describes himself as a self-taught composer.

> I am a self-taught composer, assuming the definition is merely that one has had no formal lessons with a teacher of composition. I’m certainly not a self-taught musician. . . I really learn to write music by playing it, Lots of it.²

Musto composes in a variety of genres such as opera, orchestral and chamber music, solo piano works, songs, and vocal ensemble. He has been composing operas since 2004. He wrote four operas in collaboration with librettist Mark Campbell. He composed *Volpone*, his first comic opera in 2004, and it was premiered by the Wolf Trap

---

² John Musto, "What are the Pros and Woes of Being a Self-Taught Composer?" *NewMusicBox*, http://www.newmusicbox.org/page.nmbx?id=37hf06.
Opera Company. His second opera, *Later the Same Evening*, a one-act opera inspired by Five Paintings of Edward Hopper, was premiered at the University of Maryland and the National Gallery of Art in 2006. In 2008, he wrote his third opera, *Bastianello*, a one-act chamber opera for five singers and two pianos. His latest opera, *The Inspector*, is a comic opera in two acts, which premiered on April 27, 2011 by the Wolf Trap Opera Company.

2.4 Major Achievements and Honors

In 1997, Musto was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for his song cycle, *Dove Sta Amore*, a work for soprano and orchestra. He also is a two time Emmy Award winner for his documentary film scores, the first for *Into the Light* in 1995, and the second time for *Brick City Lessons* in 1999. In 2000, he was awarded a Rockefeller Fellowship to Bellagio, Italy.

In addition to his busy composition and performing career, Musto is currently a visiting professor at Brooklyn College where he teaches composition and contemporary music ensemble. He is also often a guest lecturer at the Julliard School and the Manhattan School of Music.
Chapter 3

“maggie and milly and molly and may”

3.1 e. e. Cummings

Edward Estlin Cummings was a great American poet, novelist, playwright, and painter. He was born on October 14, 1894 and raised in a quiet neighborhood in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Cummings grew up in a scholarly family. His father, Edward Cummings, held a teaching position in political science and sociology at Harvard and also served as a clergyman. When Cummings was a young boy, his mother encouraged him to keep a daily diary. Through doing so, he developed skills in writing verses.

In addition to writing, Cummings began painting in 1916. After World War I, he went to Paris to study art. In 1919, he returned to New York, where he held his first art exhibition. In 1920, he published his first book, the dail, in which he combined his poetry and paintings. Cummings specialized in the use of uppercase and lowercase letters, punctuation marks, and played with formatting, such as changing the arrangement of the letters on the page to enter the reader’s imagination. In his poems, he used the lowercase “i” very often instead of uppercase “I” when referring to the first person pronoun, because he respected nature and did not want to highlight his own individualism above other natural phenomena in his works.
Cummings was briefly married twice and had a daughter. He later lived with a fashion model and photographer, Marion Morehouse, until his death in 1962. He died at the age of 68 in New Hampshire.

3.2 Characterization and Interpretation

Range: D♭ 4- A♭ 5
Meter: 3/8, 9/8, 4/8, 6/8

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<th>Section/ Character</th>
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<tr>
<td>I/ Narrator</td>
<td>Breezily (♩.=66)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II/ maggie</td>
<td>Poco meno mosso (♩.= 46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III/ milly</td>
<td>Tempo I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV/ molly</td>
<td>Presto subito (♩.= 76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V/ may</td>
<td>Meno mosso (♩.= 46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI/ Narrator</td>
<td>Tempo I</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The entire text of the poem, “maggie and milly and molly and may,” is written in lower case, which is one of the unique writing styles that Cummings uses. It tells a clear story, which is easy to understand, unlike Cummings’s other poems, which have unusual syntax and untraditional format.

“maggie and milly and molly and may” is divided into six stanzas. The first two and last two stanzas rhyme at the end of each line, such as may/day, sang/and,
stone/alone and me/sea. The names of the girls Cummings chose read like a tongue twister. He uses alliteration to present how the girls are alike but eventually, we learn that they have different personalities and different experiences at the beach. As Cummings explains in the last stanza, people are different and they deal with loss in their own way. He concludes the poem by saying how we find ourselves at the sea, no matter what we may lose.

Musto depicts the background and context of the poem by using the piano accompaniment. He distinguishes the narrator and characters from each other by presenting a different vocal line musically, rhythmically, and in terms of tempo as well as piano accompaniment. He is very creative and careful in the way he sets the narrator and each character in the poem to melody by using different tempos in each section, which he indicates clearly with different markings.

The first section begins with the narrator telling about Maggie, Milly, Molly and May, four little girls, who went down to the beach to play one day. e. e. Cummings does not stop with the phrase “went down to the beach,” but writes, “(to play one day)” in parentheses, to give more information about what the four girls are going to do at the beach. In both the first and last stanzas, Musto leaves out the piano accompaniment on the parenthetical side comment. This emphasizes the information we receive from the vocalist without any embellishment from the piano. The piano re-enters on the last note of the vocal line sung to the words in parentheses (see example 3.1, p. 9).
Example 3.1 – Musto, *Quiet Songs*, “maggie and milly and molly and may,” mm. 1-8

In the second section, we learn that Maggie finds a seashell and when she holds it to her ear, she can hear the sound of the ocean. Cummings tells us that hearing the shell singing makes Maggie forget all of the troubles she has. This shows that Maggie has an
easygoing personality. Musto uses fermata on the word “so,” which requires the singer to stretch the note when singing that word. This communicates to the audience the emotion of sweetness that Maggie feels when she hears the seashell – the shell truly sings “sooooooooo sweetly” to her! In contrast, Musto uses a sixteenth rest following the word “couldn’t” and another sixteenth rest after the word “remember,” so that they are sung more speech-like, which distinguishes Maggie’s feelings of sweetness from the fact that she forgets her troubles.

Example 3.2 – Musto, Quiet Songs, “maggie and milly and molly and may,” mm. 9-13

In the third section, Milly befriends a starfish which has five fingers or rays. Even though this stanza does not say more about what Milly does at the beach, the phrase is
simple enough to communicate information about how she is and what she wants. The key word here is “befriend.” Milly has a friendly personality; she likes to become friends with anything, even a starfish. In addition, little girls imagine catching a star from the sky. Therefore, when this little girl finds a star-like starfish by the sea, she is very excited.

Example 3.3 – Musto, *Quiet Songs*, “maggie and milly and molly and may,” mm. 14-19
In the fourth section, Molly is chased by a horrible thing which races sideways while blowing bubbles. It is not clear what object Molly has found, but from the limited information about “was chased by a horrible thing” and “blowing bubbles,” we can guess that it could be a wave or a crab. The words “horrible thing” depict that Molly has a timid personality and she is not that brave.

The piano accompaniment in a chromatic pattern of left hand triplets that keep repeating gives the message of running and chasing at the beach (see example 3.4, p. 13). In the right hand of the piano repeating Musto writes a pattern that depicts repeating staccato sounds very much like a crab walking on the sandy beach, which scares molly. All along, the voice repeats the same note while singing the words, “which raced sideways while blowing.” Musto wrote a longer note for the next word, “bubbles,” which the voice sings as it concludes the sentence, dropping from C# to A#. 
Example 3.4 – Musto, *Quiet Songs*, “maggie and milly and molly and may,” mm. 20-26

In the fifth section, May finds a smooth stone at the beach and brings it home with her. She is not satisfied with what she finds and she feels she has a huge loneliness in a small world. Musto begins this section with somewhat slow (Meno mosso $J. = 44$) and uses a descending minor second to depict May’s personality, which sounds sentimental and sad. Musto writes a long note value on word “a-lone.” Meanwhile, the piano
accompaniment repeats the same tune over and over again, to support the singer as she sings the long note.

Example 3.5 –Musto, *Quiet Songs*, “maggie and milly and molly and may,” mm. 27-32

In the last section, as in the first one, Musto composed the same melody for the narrator’s opening and conclusion (see examples 3.1 & 3.6, pp. 10 & 16). Using the ABA’ form, the section returns to “*A tempo I*” – same as in the first section. As e.e. Cummings has concluded, no matter what we may lose, we find ourselves at the sea, as expressed in Musto’s musical setting by a return to the first section. In measures 37 and 38, Musto’s ascending chromatic scale in the left hand creates a cadential anticipation of the final sonority, which is not the expected tonic, but rather includes a minor second (E, D#) that gives the feeling of an unresolved ending.
Example 3.6 – Musto, *Quiet Songs*, “maggie and milly and molly and may,” mm. 33-39
4.1 Amy Elizabeth Burton

Amy Burton is a renowned American singer living in New York. She graduated from Northwestern University. In 1984, she married composer John Musto and they live today in New York and have a son, Joshua, who plays guitar.

Burton has been a resident at the Metropolitan Opera since 1993. In 1995, she won the silver medal of the Marian Anderson International Vocal Competition. She also received awards from the New York City Opera, including the 2005 Diva Award, as well as major prizes from the George London, Gerda Lissner, and Sullivan Foundations. Burton also received the Artist Advocate Award from Opera America in 2006. She is currently a voice faculty at the Mannes College of Music and SongFest of Malibu, California.

About “Intermezzo,” Musto commented that he found the text in Ms. Burton’s diary.³ Ms. Burton herself shared the following in our interview:

That was a surprise, a present. I was happy and unhappy at the same time because I like to write poetry. It's something I do for myself. I don't really share it. So I was sort of unhappy that he chose this thing because it wasn't one of the things that I really would want to share necessarily. (Burton, personal communication, February 3, 2012)

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Burton added that she was happy her words fit Musto’s purposes for the song cycle. She also stated that she did not write those words with a romantic feeling. They were written to express her sadness upon the death of her nanny.4

4.2 Characterization and Interpretation

Range: C4- G5

Meter: 7/4, 4/4, 5/4

Tempo: Slowly, simply (♩ = 96)

This song is only 13 measures long. The prelude from measure one to measure four has a shifting meter of 7/4, 4/4, 5/4 and starts with a unison between the left and right hands on the piano and incorporates a range of three octaves. The melody seems mysterious and catches the audience’s attention. Here, the composer uses a modified twelve-tone row. The last note of the prelude, the middle C, ends with three beats which provide the first pitch of the vocal line.

Example 4.1 – Musto, Quiet Songs, “Intermezzo,” mm. 1-4

4 Amy Burton Interview (New York, February 3, 2012).
In measure five, the vocal line is in C major, followed by the right hand of the piano in G major after four beats, which can be “Canon”. The vocal line and piano line sound like call-and-response, reflecting the words in the text, “You are with me and I am with you.”

Example 4.2 – Musto, *Quiet Songs*, “Intermezzo,” mm. 5-6

The last five measures of the postlude return to the same melody as the prelude, but at a whole-step above melodic level of the prelude. In the final measure, at the end of the last note, there is one measure extension to the diminuendo of the two previous measures, into *pp*, very soft, ending with a B♭ major chord. This creates the feeling of resolution that parallels the sentiment of the poem (see example 4.3, p. 19).

---

5 “Canon” originally referred to an inscribed formula or instruction which the performer would implement in order to realize one or more parts from the given notation. Among the many possible instructions provided by a verbal ‘canon’ was that of extracting a second voice from the given voice at a specified intervallic and temporal distance.
Example 4.3 – Musto, *Quiet Songs*, “Intermezzo,” mm. 9-13
Chapter 5

“Quiet Song”

5.1 Eugene O'Neill

Eugene O’Neill was one of the first American playwrights to bring the genre of drama to prominence. He was born on October 16, 1888 in a hotel in the theater district in New York. Eugene’s father, James O'Neill, was born into a poor family, and became a famous Shakespearean actor. He had a likable personality and good social skills. Eugene’s mother, Ira, was from a wealthy and highly educated family. Her eccentric personality was totally opposite from that of her husband. O'Neill did not have a stable childhood, since his family toured around with his father’s acting jobs. Furthermore, the different personalities and family backgrounds of his parents brought a lot of tension into the family. Living in such an environment had a strong influence on O’Neill’s work.

O’Neill attended Princeton University, but was suspended a year later. After leaving school, he became a sailor for six years. At the age of 24, he worked as a reporter for the newspaper, *New London Telegraph*, and also started writing poetry which he contributed to the newspaper. In 1936, he was the only American playwright to receive the Nobel Prize of Literature; he also received several Pulitzer Prizes. He wrote over 50 plays in his lifetime.
O’Neill had three marriages. Coming from an unhappy family deeply affected his belief in human relationships. In his later years, he suffered from several health problems and had a Parkinsons-like tremor, which caused him difficulty in writing. O’Neill died at a hotel in Boston on November 27, 1953.

5.2 Characterization and Interpretation

Range: A3- C#6

Meter: 3/4, 4/4, 5/4, 6/4, 7/4, 8/4,

Tempo: Moderately (♩= 92)

“Quiet Song” was actually the first song of this song cycle that Musto composed. As he shared with me during our interview, he was asked to write songs by the New York Festival Of Song and he built the cycle around it. The original title of the poem was “Quiet Song in Time of Chaos,” which O’Neill wrote for his third wife Carlotta’s 40th birthday on December 28, 1940. In our interview, Musto stated that Carlotta’s birthday coincided with Musto and Burton’s wedding anniversary. Musto told me the following:

It's about love and devotion. [Amy and my] lifestyle then, it's not so much now, but back then, [Amy] was on the road a lot, it could be ten months out of a year singing in different opera houses and concerts and things like that. So, we did a lot of [traveling] . . . We lived a lot in hotel rooms. This poem speaks to [our experience at that time]. So, wherever we were basically was home and this poem kind of struck me. (Personal communication, February 3, 2012)

The peace of silence and the comfort of home are quite suitable as a topic for this poem, “Quiet Song.”
O’Neill’s introductory line, “Here is home. Is peace” consists of two sentences, one of which is an incomplete phrase that contains only a verb and an object, but omits a subject that a sentence must have. This sentence is followed by another incomplete sentence, “Is quiet,” which has a complete meaning of what a home is. From measures two through five, Musto arranges a three-beat rest after “Here” and two-beat rests in “Is home/ Is peace/ Is quiet” in the vocal line in order to drive at O’Neill’s point regarding the solitude and tranquility of his home.

Example 5.1 – Musto, *Quiet Songs*, “Quiet Song,” mm. 1-8

For the piano accompaniment, Musto uses a cross rhythm of triplets against eighths, and syncopation. This unusual rhythmic pattern emphasizes the words, “Is the earth’s sadness.” Musto repeats these words in the vocal line in measures 29 and 30 to stress the melancholic mood of the text (see example 5.2, p. 23).
Example 5.2 – Musto, *Quiet Songs*, “Quiet Song,” mm. 29-30

In the poem, O’Neill describes the phenomenon of time as a measure of the tranquility which the poem describes: “When days grow short/ And the year grows old/ When frost is in the air/ And suddenly one notices/ Time’s hair/ Has grown whiter.”⁶ Musto’s composition expresses time passing in measures 36 and 37 with the use of three quintuplets, followed by two sextuplets, and a septuplet, and then eight thirty-second

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notes. Although the piano plays these notes in tempo, we get the impression of accelerated movement.

Example 5.3 – Musto, *Quiet Songs*, “Quiet Song,” mm. 36-37

The voice and piano complement each other as they reach the climax of the entire song in measure 38. By using broken chord-like arpeggio from bass clef to treble clef, the piano accompaniment supports the vocal part on the text, “…whiter,” on B#5 to represent time passing and hair growing whiter. Also, Musto underscores the significance of the descriptive adjective “whiter” by placing the word in a high range and long note values (see example 5.4, p. 25).
In the poem, O’Neill goes on to state that “Here Where is here?/ In my heart/
Within your heart.” These lines clearly show that O’Neill does not feel the need to use
more complex language in the poem to convey how important peace, quiet, and solitude
are to create tranquility at home. Just as O’Neill dedicated this poem to his wife, Carlotta,
Musto dedicated the song to his wife, Amy Burton, both done with love. The melody for
voice that matches the words “your heart” is marked dolciss e sostenuto, or sweet and
sustained. For the words “Within your heart,” the piano accompaniment is marked colla
voce[^8] and sostenuto (see example 5.5, p. 26).

[^7]: Ibid.
[^8]: A directive to the musician (normally accompanist) to perform the indicated passage in a free manner following the tempo and style of the solo performer.

During the interview, Musto indicated that in the latest version of “Quiet Song,” he added one beat rest in the beginning of measure 34 and the note F in measure 35 is a misprint; it should be F#.
In the last section of “Quiet Song,” in the vocal melody line for the text, “In my heart within your heart/ Is home/ Is peace/ Is quiet,” Musto returns to the same melody pattern as in the beginning, but in a different key, to conclude the song.
Chapter 6

Christmas Carol (To Jesus on His Birthday)

6.1 Edna St. Vincent Millay

Edna St. Vincent Millay, an American lyric poet, was born on February 22, 1892 in Rockland, Maine. She was known for her activism and her many love affairs. Her mother, Cora Lounella, divorced her father due to financial difficulties. She had two sisters. They moved from town to town with their mother and finally settled at their great aunt’s house located at Camden, Maine.

St. Vincent Millay began to write poems at an early age. Her literary talent was influenced by her mother who read classical literature to her children. At the age of 14, she won the St. Nicholas Gold Badge for poetry, and the following year she published her poetry in children's magazines *St. Nicholas*, the *Camden Herald*, and the high-profile anthology, *Current Literature*. In 1923, St. Vincent Millay won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry for her poem, “The Ballad of the Harp-Weaver.”

In the same year that she won the Pulitzer Prize, she married Eugen Jan Boissevain, who fully supported her career and took care of domestic responsibilities. On October 19, 1950, St. Vincent Millay was found dead at home at the age of 58, having fallen down the stairs.
6.2 Characterization and Interpretation

Range: D4- A5

Meter: 3/4, 4/4, 5/4, 6/4, 7/4, 4/8, 6/8, 8/8, 9/8, 12/8, 14/8,

Tempo: Maestoso (♩ = 63)

The original poem by Edna St. Vincent Millay is entitled “To Jesus on His Birthday,” which Musto re-titled, “Christmas Carol.” In the poem, St. Vincent Millay chastises society today for ignoring the principles and teaching of Jesus, and instead celebrating the banal activities surrounding the holiday. She reproaches the reader for being part of some large communal sin, and intends for the reader to give pause.

In measures one through three, the prelude of the “Christmas Carol” starts with dissonant chords with direction for pedal throughout, which parallels the secular activities referred to in the poem. This dissonance is followed by a melodic line in octaves that makes reference to the sacred. Together, they represent two elements: chaos and simplicity. The piano leads the opening by introducing the motive of the entire song. Musto states, “This theme is simply the surplus notes that were not used in the opening chords.”9 Stephanie R. Thorpe believes this melody sounds like a Protestant hymn, inspired by Musto’s early experience of playing the organ during the Bensonhurst Parish Catholic church services10 (see example 6.1, p. 30).

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10 Ibid.
Example 6.1 – Musto, Quiet Songs, “Christmas Carol” (“To Jesus on His Birthday”),” mm. 1-3

St. Vincent Millay’s “To Jesus on His Birthday” opens with “For this your mother sweated in the cold./ For this you bled upon the bitter tree” to briefly inform the reader about Jesus’s birth and crucifixion. In measures four through nine of Musto’s song, the vocal line is preceded and followed by piano accompaniment, which represents striking bells. The simplicity of the chant-like vocal melody, without any piano accompaniment, allows the audience to hear the text clearly and reflects the simple messages that St. Vincent Millay is communicating about Jesus’s birth and death (see example 6.2, p. 31).
Example 6.2 – Musto, *Quiet Songs*, “Christmas Carol” (“To Jesus on His Birthday”), mm. 4-9

The poet is disappointed as she describes how people are insincerely implementing what Jesus taught: “A yard of tinsel ribbon bought and sold/ A paper wreath; a day at home for me.” She writes that people are more interested in decorations and celebrations and having time off at Christmas time than they are interested in the messages taught by Jesus.

St. Vincent Millay implies that there are two types of people in the world: those who appreciate Jesus’s sacrifice and those who do not. The poet also indicts the church which she views as participating in a disingenuous expression of faith. In Musto’s
musical setting, whenever the text relates to church or God, the piano accompaniment repeats the melodic material. For example, we hear this melody in the pick-up of measures 14 through 17 when the voice sings, “The merry bells ring out,/ the people kneel,/ Up goes the man of God before the crowd”.

Example 6.3 – Musto, *Quiet Songs*, “Christmas Carol” (“To Jesus on His Birthday”), mm. 12-17
Example 6.3 cont’d

It also appears in measures 29 and 30 in the piano’s part, as it leads into the vocal line singing “O Prince of Peace!/ O Sharon’s dewy rose!” calling out to Jesus, as shown in the example (see example 6.4, p. 34).
Example 6.4 – Musto, *Quiet Songs*, “Christmas Carol” (“To Jesus on His Birthday”), mm. 29-32

St. Vincent Millay describes the minister who gets up to give a sermon at Christmas time: “With voice of honey and with eyes of steel/ He drones your humble gospel to the proud.” She reflects on how people worship God, but they are led by a minister who represents the word of God insincerely. Her tone is accusatory. She describes the minister’s words as sounding like honey; in contrast, however, his eyes tell
the truth, that he has no real feeling for the meaning of Christmas. He is simply performing his job. In the music, from measure 18 to 20, the vocal line has the melody of a Gregorian chant, as though venerating the minister. However, this reverence seems to be done in irony, since it contradicts the poet’s disapproval of the minister.

Example 6.5 – Musto, *Quiet Songs*, “Christmas Carol” (“To Jesus on His Birthday”), mm. 18-20

The minister seems to speak sweetly, but without thinking or feeling the deeper meaning of the words he utters. Therefore, it is like his words ring empty. At the same time, St. Vincent Millay says that “nobody listens.” The congregation is equally disengaged. The poet is disappointed about the way Jesus’s teachings are diminished and appear to come secondary to holiday celebrations. In measures 23 and 24, matching the words, “less than the wind that blows,” the voice repeats the word “less” three times, to stress how Jesus’s teachings have less and less meaning. Musto’s use of strata harmonic dissonance makes it challenging for the singer, who is singing against, and not with, the accompaniment. This is similar to how the deeper meaning and the reality of Christmas are not aligned (see example 6.6, p. 36).
Example 6.6 – Musto, *Quiet Songs*, “Christmas Carol” (“To Jesus on His Birthday”), mm. 22-26

The poem concludes with the image of Jesus on his birthday being silenced, which challenges the reader’s faith. St. Vincent Millay uses the imagery of the stone keeping Jesus from being able to speak: “The stone the angel rolled away with tears/ Is back upon your mouth these thousand years.” Overall, she gives the impression of despondency and
indignation. In the music, Musto has added in Latin, the words “Stabat mater iuxta ciucem...” from a sad hymn, a Catholic hymn to Mary, translated as “The grieving Mother beside the cross weeping.” In his later edition, Collected Songs (2008), he changed the wording to “Stabat mater dolorosa.”¹¹ These words are not sung by the vocalist, but are used as a marking to direct the piano accompaniment. The melody line in the right hand that matches the Latin words is supported by the left hand’s repeated syncopation of the E♭ in the base clef which gives the pitch of the first vocal entrance. In the music score, this note is indicated as D#, which equals E♭.

Example 6.7 – Musto, Quiet Songs (1991), “Christmas Carol” (“To Jesus on His Birthday”), mm. 35-37

Example 6.8 – Musto, *Quiet Songs* (2008), “Christmas Carol” (“To Jesus on His Birthday”), mm. 35-37
Chapter 7

Palm Sunday: Naples

7.1 Arthur Symons

A great British poet and critic of the 19 century, Arthur Symons was a proponent of French symbolism in England. He was born on February 28, 1865 in Milford Haven, England, and was educated at home by private tutors. He became interested in French literature at an early age and spent most of his adult life in Italy and France. In 1888, he met English essayist Walter Pater, who had a strong influence on his writing.


Symons’s poetry was deeply affected by two emotional traumas in his life, unrequited love for an actress and dancer whom he loved and with whom he was obsessed, and the death of his mother. His career was cut short, as he suffered a mental
breakdown in 1909. In the last twenty years of his life, he wrote very little and died on January 22, 1945 in Kent, England.

7.2 Characterization and Interpretation

Range: C#4 - A♭5

Meter: 5/8, 6/8, 7/8, 9/8,

Tempo: Andante grazioso (♩ = 144)

The palm branch is an important symbol in Arthur Symons’s “Palm Sunday: Naples,” which recounts the request of an individual to have a palm carried for him in Santa Chiara. Palm Sunday symbolizes the beginning of the holy week leading up to Easter. During a church service on Palm Sunday, the congregation waves palm branches that represent the palms that were waved by the crowds of people when Jesus entered Jerusalem for Passover. The poet appears to feel spiritual discomfort, and sounds as though he feels alienated from the church. In our interview, Musto stated:

“Palm Sunday,” pretty straightforward. I really thought of it as a tenor song actually. When I told Amy to sing this song, I said, “Make believe you're a tenor. Sing it like a tenor voice.” It's like a Neapolitan song. (Musto, personal communication, February 3, 2012)

In the first section, we learn that it is Palm Sunday and everyone is carrying palms in Santa Chiara, but there are no palms for the speaker of the poem. Musto begins his musical setting with one measure trill on B♭, leading into the vocal entrance with the words, “Because it is the day of Palms/ Carry a palm for me,/ Carry a palm in Santa
Chiara/ And I will watch the sea.” The song contains long lyrical melodic vocal lines with no chromaticism. It is tonal in E♭ major with a simple and supportive piano accompaniment underneath.

Example 7.1 – Musto, *Quiet Songs*, “Palm Sunday: Naples,” mm. 1-9
Example 7.1 cont’d

Measure ten begins the second section. When the speaker in the poem says, “I sit and watch,” we get the impression that the speaker is removed and disconnected from everyone and everything around him. Symons gives details about the environment like the blue sea that surrounds the speaker, the little sailboat leaning sideways, and the sea wind. The initial vocal line from measures 10 through 12 simply has intervals based on C#₄ from major seventh, major sixth, and minor sixth, which implies that the person is watching the sails moving on the sea.

Example 7.2 – Musto, *Quiet Songs*, “Palm Sunday: Naples,” mm. 10-12
The notes for the piano accompaniment in dissonant ascending and descending clusters represents the waves of the sea in rhythmic motive. This motive is repeated whenever the verse contains the word “sea”.

Example 7.3 – Musto, *Quiet Songs*, “Palm Sunday: Naples,” mm. 13-15

The formal structure of the song is ABACB’. In the third section, Musto returns to the melody of the first section. Measures 41 through 49 comprise the “C” or fourth section of Musto’s song.

In the poem, we learn that even though the speaker hopes the sea will provide an escape from real life, it is not enough to take one away from feeling tired of everything. Here, the speaker conveys having no more desires left: “I have grown tired of all these things.” Musto gives accent markings on three repeating eighth notes of F to represent how frustrated the speaker feels (see example 7.4, p. 44).
Matching the meaning of the words, “And what is left for me?” Musto picks the most dissonant moment on the piano accompaniment in measures 43 and 44. The piano accompaniment, which is a dissonant cluster, is followed by the tonal vocal line in A major. Such tension between piano and voice is a common element of Musto’s compositional style.

Symons goes on to state, “I have no place in Santa Chiara. There is no peace upon the sea,” which illustrates that in fact he has no answer for his worries or his problems.

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13 Ibid.
In the last section, the vocal line starts with humming “Mmm…” for three measures (55-57), which has the same musical pattern with a half step up as in the second section. In the last line of the poem, “Carry a palm for me,” the voice returns to E♭ major as at the beginning of the song, which repeats the speaker’s sentiment that he does not like being alienated from the church, but still wants to be a part of it.

Example 7.6 – Musto, *Quiet Songs*, “Palm Sunday: Naples,” mm. 62-63
8.1 Léonie Adams

Léonie Adams was born in 1899 in Brooklyn, New York. She was raised well-protected by a strict family. In a brief autobiography, she commented that her father made her an agnostic. She later became a Roman Catholic and in her own words, “a very liberal democrat.”

Adams began to write poetry when she was an undergraduate at Barnard College in New York. Her first poem was published in 1921. After graduating from college in 1922, she became an editor of the poetry magazine, *The Measure*. Her first book of poetry, entitled *Those Not Elect*, was published in 1925. In 1928, she received a Guggenheim Fellowship and moved to Paris. Adams taught English literature in a variety of colleges such as Bread Loaf Writer’s Conference, Columbia University, Douglass College, Sarah Lawrence College, and University of Washington. In 1950, she received an honorary doctorate from the New Jersey College for Women.

In 1930, she began to teach at New York University and met her future husband, William Troy, who was also a writer and teaching at New York University. They were married in 1933. Adams died in 1988 in New Milford, Connecticut.
8.2 Characterization and Interpretation

Range: C4- A5

Meter: 3/4, 4/4, 5/4, 6/4, 4/8, 5/8, 6/8, 7/8, 9/8,

Tempo: Slowly (♩ = 44)

The last piece in Musto’s song cycle is “Lullaby.” The musical setting in “Lullaby” contains various elements from previous songs in the cycle, recalling the melodic structures from other songs. A lullaby is a kind of song that is sung to comfort children. But in Léonie Adams’s poem, it is meant differently. Here, the lullaby is not comforting a small child, but bidding farewell to a dying person. The contrast between the poem’s title and its text is deliberate. Adams seeks to develop some understanding between the speaker of the poem and the reader.

Musto begins the piece with pp marking to represent the haunted, but peaceful atmosphere at the last moments as the person lies dying. In measures one through seven of the intro, the meter shifts in every measure from 5/4, 6/4, 5/4, 6/8, 5/8, 9/8 and 7/8. This changing meter may imply the dying person is reviewing different moments of his or her life in the past. In measure seven appears the theme from the previous song, “Quiet Song,” in piano which leads into the vocal entrance and expands the idea of calming someone (see example 8.1, p. 48).
In measures 8 through 18, we only hear “Hush. Lullay” in seventh intervals. A seventh interval represents a longing for the dissonant interval to be resolved; but in this song, the interval does not have a resolution. Musto set an unresolved seventh interval for voice to repeat “lullay,” which perhaps a simple repetition of sounds made to calm children, like “lu lu” or “la la” (see example 8.2, p. 49).
Example 8.2 – Musto, Quiet Songs, “Lullaby,” mm. 8-14

In measures 18 through 21, following “Hush. Lullay,” the “Intermezzo” theme from the second song of the cycle reappears (see example 8.3, p. 50).
It is finally in measure 24 that the words, “Your treasures all/ Encrust with rust,” from the second and third lines of the poem, are heard in the vocal line. In the first stanza of the poem, the spelling and pronunciation of the words immediately cause the reader to trip over the tongue, as it were: “Your treasures all/ Encrust with rust,/ Your trinket pleasures fall/ To dust.” Starting with the word “Your,” the vocal line has a descending whole-step motion, as though life were fading away. This is shown in the musical example from measures 23 through 27: “Your treasures all/ Encrust with rust,/ Your trinket pleasures fall/ To dust” (see examples 8.4 & 8.5, p. 51).
Example 8.4 – Musto, *Quiet Songs*, “Lullaby,” mm. 21-27

Example 8.5 – Musto, *Quiet Songs*, “Lullaby,” mm. 37-43
It becomes clear that the poem is meant to mirror the path of someone’s life from infancy to old age, and then death. Adams presents old age and death conceptually as a kind of sleep, even though it is permanent, unlike that of infants and children. When the poet writes, “Beneath the sapphire arch/ Upon the grassy floor,/ Is nothing more/ To hold,/ And play is over-old,” we gather that the person whom the speaker is addressing is moribund, and would appreciate some attempt at comfort. Musto’s musical setting for these lines is reminiscent of the melody of “Palm Sunday: Naples.”
Example 8.7 – Musto, *Quiet Songs*, “Lullaby,” mm. 31-32

Example 8.8 – Musto, *Quiet Songs*, “Lullaby,” mm. 35-36

Example 8.9 – Musto, *Quiet Songs*, “Palm Sunday: Naples,” mm. 1-2

The piano accompanying the words, “You wander late alone,/ The flesh frets on the bone” holds the rhythm of a heart beating, while the voice recalls the melody of the lines, “O Prince of Peace!” in “Christmas Carol” (see examples 8.10 & 8.1, p. 54).
Example 8.10 – Musto, *Quiet Songs*, “Lullaby,” mm. 45-47

Example 8.11 – Musto, *Quiet Songs*, “Christmas Carol Christmas Carol” (“To Jesus on His Birthday”), mm. 30-31

Musto’s personal experience of sitting by the bedside of his friend and mentor, Paul Jacobs, who passed away from AIDS, may have been why Musto chose Adams’s “Lullaby.” In reference to the last lines of the poem, "Here is the pillow. Rest," Stephanie Thorpe explains that in the interview she conducted with Musto, he “[understood] that in some instances one has to give the dying person permission to go.”

Musto told her in the interview, “It's amazing how hard a person will fight to stay alive.” The vocal line of “Here is the pillow” recalls a melodic line from “Quiet Song”, which also reasserts the subtext meaning of “here is quiet.” Here, Musto sets C#\(^4\) instead of C#\(^5\). The choice of

\(^{15}\) Ibid.
ending this downward leap from E⁵ to C♯⁴ which suggests word painting in relation to the word “Rest” in the poem, that is low in the soprano range helps to establish the meaning of the text. The dynamic markings in the piano gradually soften from p to mp to ppp, giving the impression of the fading breath in a quiet and peaceful atmosphere.

Example 8.12 – Musto, *Quiet Songs*, “Lullaby,” mm. 61-64
Chapter 9

Conclusion

This document is intended to help singers understand the meaning of each poem and to interpret the musical composition when preparing it for performance. The harmonious balance between Musto’s choice of texts in *Quiet Songs* and his musical setting is testimony to his brilliance as a composer. This song cycle poses a challenge for both the singer and the pianist and requires a well-trained singer and a technically accomplished pianist. From the singer’s point of view, by characterizing each poem and interpreting the musical composition of each song, one understands the connections Musto makes between the songs and the cyclical concept of the work. Musto shared the following with me about his selection of poems:

The kind of music I write is a very distilled poem and the audience has to be able to get it the first time because it doesn't come around again. Otherwise [the meaning is] buried. . . . I think a song really should be simple.

The complete cycle describes a lifetime. Musto uses a different melodic material in these six songs to express the meaning of each poem and the various joys, disappointments, and anxieties found therein. The first song in the cycle, “maggie and milly and molly and may,” describes the innocence of kids at the beach, without much to worry about. Musto writes a different style of music to represent each of the characters. The second song, “Intermezzo,” presents love, with a hint of loss. In the music, we hear
the voice and piano’s call-and-response like two people talking to each other. “Quiet Song,” the third song in the cycle, discusses how home is the place where lovers’ hearts belong. Musto uses a simple voice line to reflect the peaceful home and he adds piano accompaniment written in a different rhythm than the voice, which enriches the whole song. The fourth song, “Christmas Carol” (“To Jesus on His Birthday”), bemoans how people are disrespectful of religion. Ironically, Musto’s composition includes an introit for the piano and a melody for the voice that is like a Gregorian chant. Song five, “Palm Sunday: Naples,” is again about religion as was song four. And as in the first song, the speaker in this song is by the seaside. However, unlike the little girls, Maggie, Milly, Molly, and May, the speaker experiences spiritual discomfort and alienation, which is communicated musically through dissonance between voice and piano. The last song, “Lullaby,” describes and comforts a dying person. Musically, Musto includes melodic materials from the previous songs. And accompanying the final word, “Rest,” he has written the dynamic markings $p$ to $mp$ to $ppp$ for the piano which concludes the song and the cycle.

Musto’s song cycle communicates the vitality of life and the meaning of what we have and what we have lost. Musto demonstrates his ingenious composition skills through a musical medium that enhances his interpretation of the poems. Only through performance by an accomplished singer/ pianist team are the songs of the cycle brought to life.
Appendix A
Chronological List of Works

1984

_Canzonettas_
“Western Winds”
“All Night by the Rose”
“The silver Swan” (Orlando Gibbons)
Poems: Anonymous on Elizabethan poetry
Duration: 7 minutes
Type: Voice and Piano

1985

_Enough Rope_
“Social Note”
“Résumé”
“The Sea”
Poems: Dorothy Parker
Duration: 6 minutes
Type: Voice and Piano

1986

_Shadow of the Blues_
“Silhouette”
“Litany”
“Island”
“Could Be”
Poems: Langston Hughes
Duration: 8 minutes
Type: Voice and Piano
Premiered by: Christopher Trakas, baritone; Steven Blier, piano (1986)
Two by Frost
“Nothing Gold Can Stay”
“The Rose Family”
Poems: Robert Frost
Duration: 4 minutes
Type: Voice and Piano

1987

Triolet
Poem: Eugene O’Neill
Duration: 1 minute
Type: Song

1988

Lament
Poem: Edna St. Vincent Millay
Type: Song

Recuerdo
“Echo”
“Recuerdo”
“Last Song”
Poems: Christina Rossetti, Edna St. Vincent Millay and Louise Bogan
Duration: 12 minutes
Type: Voice and Piano
Premiered: William Sharp, baritone; Steven Blier, piano (1988)

1990

Quiet Songs
“maggie and milly and molly and may”
“Intermezzo”
“Quiet Song”
“Christmas Carol (To Jesus on His Birthday)”
“Palm Sunday: Naples”
“Lullaby”
Duration: 25 minutes
Type: Voice and Piano
Commissioned by: The New York Festival of Song
Premiered by: Amy Burton, soprano; Steven Blier, piano

1992

*Encounters for Tenor and Orchestra*
2 Flutes (Piccolo), 2 Oboes (English Horn), 2 Clarinets (Bass Clarinet), 2 Bassoons (Contrabassoon)
2 Horns, 2 Trumpets, 2 Trombones
Timpani, Percussion, Harp, Piano
Strings
Duration: 25 minutes
Type: Voice and Orchestra
Commission: Paul Sperry and the Cleveland Chamber Symphony
Premiere: Paul Sperry and the Cleveland Chamber Symphony; Paul Sperry and the Albany Symphony (1992)

1994

*The Old Gray Couple*
Soprano and Baritone with Piano
Poem: Archibald MacLeish
Duration: 12 minutes
Type: Vocal Chamber Music
Commission: Song Celebration
Premiere: Marsha Hunter, soprano; Brian Kent, baritone; Thomas Linker and John Musto, piano

1996

*Calypso*
SATB, 4-hands Piano
Text: W.H. Auden
Duration: 4 minutes
Type: Choral Music
Commission: New York Festival of Song

**Dove Sta Amore**
“Maybe”
“Sea Chest”
“The Hangman at Home”
“How Many Little Children Sleep”
“Dove Sta Amore”
Poems: E. E. Cummings, Carl Sandburg, James Agee and Lawrence Ferlinghetti
Duration: 15 minutes
Type: Voice and Piano

**Dove Sta Amore for Soprano and Orchestra**
2 Flutes (Piccolo), 2 Oboes (English Horn), 2 Clarinets (Bass Clarinet), 2 Bassoons (Contrabassoon)
2 Horns
Percussion, Harp, Piano
Strings
Poems: E. E. Cummings, Carl Sandburg, James Agee and Lawrence Ferlinghetti
Duration: 15 minutes
Type: Voice and Orchestra
Commission: Concert Artists Guild, 1991
Premiere: Dominique Labelle, soprano; Jacksonville Symphony, Roger Nierenberg conducting; Jacksonville, FL (March 1996) 2. Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall, NYC (1996)

**Words to be Spoken**
Poem: Archibald MacLeish
Type: Song

1997

**Starsong**
“Summer Stars”
“Stars, Songs, Faces”
SATB, Harp and Two Horns
Poems: Carl Sandburg
Duration: 8 minutes
Type: Choral music
Commission: The Spoleto Festival Chorus
Premiere: The Spoleto Festival Chorus (1997)
1998

*Five Concert Rags*
Duration: 26 minutes
Type: Piano Solo
Premiere: John Musto, piano

*Overture to Pope Joan*
Piccolo, Flute, Oboe, English Horn, Clarinet, Bass Clarinet
2 Horns, 2 Trumpets, 2 Trombones, Tuba
Timpani, Percussion, Celesta, Harp
Strings
Duration: 4 minutes
Type: Orchestral
Premiere: The New Haven Symphony, Gerald Steichen conducting (June 1998)

*Piano Trio*
Violin, Violoncello, Piano
Duration: 15 minutes
Type: Chamber music
Commission: For the Miller Theatre, Columbia University (NYC), with support from the Department of Cultural Affairs Challenge Grant program and Mrs. Judith Lipsey.

1999

*Divertimento*
Flute, Clarinet, Viola, Violoncello, Piano, Percussion
Duration: 20 minutes
Type: Chamber music
Commission: The Vail Valley Music Festival
Premiered by: eighth blackbird
2000

Flamenco
Lyrics by C. K. Williams
Duration: 4 minutes
Type: Song

Penelope
“From the wanderer’s cup I drink”
“Life is hell when you’re gone”
“Loneliness unravels”
“In my father’s orchard”
“I can see from my balcony”
“On the flap of a lapel I fly”
“Penelope’s Song”
Lyrics: Denise Lanctot
Duration: 25 minutes
Type: Voice and Piano
Commissioned by: The 92nd Street Y
Premiered by: Amy Burton, soprano; John Musto, piano

Rags for the Richest
Mezzo-soprano, Tenor, and Piano
Type: Song
Commissioned by: The New York Festival of Song
Premiered by: Stephanie Blythe, mezzo-soprano; William Burden, tenor;
Michael Barrett, piano

2001

Five Motets
A Capella mixed chorus
Duration: 10 minutes
Type: Choral Music
Commissioned by: Chanticleer
Premiered by: Chanticleer

I Stop Writing the Poem
Poem: Tess Gallagher
Type: Song
**Old Photograph**  
Poem: Archibald MacLeish  
Type: Song

**Pas Nude at the Piano**  
Lyrics: Mark Campbell  
Duration: 3 minutes  
Type: Song

**San Jose Symphony Reception**  
Poem: Lawrence Ferlinghetti  
Type: Song

**Sextet**  
Clarinet, String Quartet, Piano  
Duration: 25 minutes  
Type: Chamber music  
Commission: The Miller Theatre of Columbia University  
Premiere: Miller Theatre, by David Krakauer, clarinet, Alan Feinberg, piano, and the FLUX Quartet (February 24, 2001)

**The Book of Uncommon Prayer**  
SATB with Piano  
Poems: Katherine Mosby, Tess Gallagher, Archibald MacLeish, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Kenneth Patchen and Mark Strand  
Duration: 45 minutes  
Type: Vocal Chamber Music  
Commissioned by: Carnegie Hall/Miller Theater at Columbia University  
Premiered by: Amy Burton, soprano; Staci Rishoi, mezzo-soprano; Steven Tharp, tenor; William Sharp, baritone; John Musto, piano

**2002**

**River Songs**  
“Song to the Trees and Streams”  
“Ask Me”  
“Quo vadis”  
“Crossing Brooklyn Ferry”  
Baritone, Violoncello and Piano  
Poems: Pawnees, William Stafford and Walt Whitman  
Duration: 10 minutes  
Type: Vocal Chamber Music  
Commissioned by: Close Encounters with Music
Premiered by: William Sharp, baritone; Yehuda Hanani, cello; John Musto, piano

Passacaglia
Piccolo, 2 Flutes, 2 Oboes, English Horn, 2 Clarinets, Bass Clarinet, 2 Bassoons, Contrabassoon
4 Horns, 3 Trumpets, 3 Trombones, Tuba
3 Percussions, Piano
Strings
Duration: 15 minutes
Type: Orchestral
Commission: The Dallas Symphony
Premiere: The Dallas Symphony, Andrew Litton conducting, Dallas, TX (January 8, 9, 10, 2002)

2004

Viva Sweet Love
“as is the sea marvelous”
“Rome in the Café”
“You came as a thought”
“Crystal Palace Market”
“sweet spring”
Poems: E. E. Cummings and James Laughlin
Duration: 10 minutes
Type: Voice and Piano
Commissioned by: The Marilyn Horne Foundation
Premiered by: Jason Hardy, bass

Volpone
A comic opera in two acts after Ben Jonson
Libretto: Mark Campbell
Duration: 2 hours
Type: Opera (with Orchestra)
Commissioned by: The Wolftrap Foundation
Premiered by: The Wolftrap Opera Company, Kim Pensinger Witman, artistic director

2005

Piano Concerto No. 1
2 Flutes (Piccolo) 2 Oboes, 2 Clarinets, 2 Bassoons
2 Horns, 2 Trumpets, 2 Trombones
Timpani, Percussion
Solo Piano
Strings
Duration: 30 minutes
Type: Piano and Orchestra
Commission: The Carmoor Music Festival
Premiere: John Musto, piano; St. Luke's Chamber Orchestra, Michael Barrett conducting, (July 15, 2006)

**Piano Concerto No. 2**
Flute (Piccolo), Oboe, Clarinet, Bass Clarinet, Bassoon
2 Horns, Trumpet, Bass Trombone
3 Percussion
Piano Solo
Strings
Duration: 25 minutes
Type: Piano and orchestra
Commission: The Miller Theater
Premiere: John Musto, piano; The Gotham Sinfonietta, George Steele conducting (2006)

**String Quartet 1**
Commissioned by: The Caramoor Music Festival
Premiere by: The Jupiter String Quartet (Summer 2006)

2007

**Later the Same Evening**
Libretto by Mark Campbell
A one-act opera inspired by five paintings of Edward Hopper
Duration: 75 minutes
Type: Opera (with orchestra)
Commission: The University of Maryland/The National Gallery of Art.
Premiere: The University of Maryland; Leon Major, artistic director; Clen Cortese, conductor.

**String Quartet**
Duration: 20 minutes
Type: Chamber music
2008

*Bastianello*
A one act chamber opera based on an Italian folk tale
Libretto: Mark Campbell
Duration: 40 minutes
Type: Opera (for five singers and two pianos)

*Improvisation and Fugue*
Duration: 8 minutes
Type: Piano solo
Commissioned by: Stecher and Horowitz Foundation

2010

*Passacaglia* (2002 transcribe 2010)
Duration: 15 minutes
Type: Two Pianos

*The Brief Light*
  “When You Danced”
  “Song”
  “The Voices”
  “The Brief Light”
  “The Summons”
  “I Have Drifted”
Poems: James Laughlin
Duration: 10 minutes
Type: Voice and Piano/ Voice and Guitar

2011

*The Inspector*
A comic opera in two acts after Nicolai Gogol
Libretto: Mark Campbell
Duration: 2 hours
Type: Opera (with orchestra)
Premiere: April 27, 2011 by Wolf Trap Opera
Appendix B

Interview with John Musto and Amy Burton

February 3, 2012

CYC: When did you first realize you wanted to become a composer?

JM: I did not study composition ever, because when I went to school, I was a piano major. I got a Bachelor's and Master's in Performance at Manhattan School of Music right down the block here. I grew up playing all kinds of music. I was playing piano, I was playing guitar, I was playing banjo, I mean a lot of popular music, folk music, rock ’n roll music. And then I went to Conservatory and I was always improvising, which is kind of making up music but I wasn't writing things down kind of music.

I was involved with pop song writers and arranging and all kinds of things like that. I actually didn't get interested in composing until I was in my 20s. I just started doing it. So, and I guess I started off with some songs because it's easier to get them performed. It's a little harder to get a symphony to perform new works. That's how I started.

CYC: How would you describe your compositional style?

JM: I would say it's very much influenced by jazz and pop music, and counterpoint. If you look at it in my chamber music or piano concertos and anything like that, it does a lot of counterpoint.

CYC: I find your music is atonal in some places, yet tonal in others. Would you please describe your thought on finding a balance between atonal or tonal forces in your music?

JM: I think that we all look no matter who you are; a musician, a composer, a painter, etc. We look for balance. I mean it goes on for thousands of years, the golden mean and looking for the perfect balance of elements. And I think the balance between atonal and tonal are such politically charged words these days.

In fact, I don't think they mean anything anymore. I think they are words that have lost their meaning. I think of it in terms of the balance between consonance and dissonance. It all depends on the piece. If it's a song, it depends on what the text is. It depends on all kinds of things. I've written opera a few years ago in 2007 called *Later the Same Evening*
and it was based on Edward Hopper's paintings. It was in 1932 and involved all the characters going to a Broadway show in 1932. The language of that piece necessarily had to accommodate my version of what you might hear in a Broadway show in 1932 and marrying that to my own composition and style.

I mean that has a certain sound to that piece, my piano concertos which I'm going to record at the end of April 2012, have very different vocabulary. One of them is very Afro-Cuban jazz tinged. The other, I don't even know how to describe that one, but it's a ragtime middle movement. I think I would say eclectic, but that's another one of those words that people use all the time. I don't know what that means anymore. In my composition style, I use all the things that I hear and things that I think are useful.

CYC: Do you prefer to write for a particular singer or voice type?

JM: No, whatever the assignment is. *Quiet Songs* I wrote for Amy because it was commissioned by a New York Festival of Song for her and Steven Blair. When I get a commission for an opera, that varies too. I mean, you have to. You can't have an opera with five tenors and one soprano. If you're going to have ensembles, you have to balance. You have to have enough voices covering the spectrum to be able to have an ensemble and harmonies and counterpoints. So, that dictates a lot.

*Later the Same Evening* was originally done for the University of Maryland and the National Gallery and all the cast came from the master's program at the University of Maryland and the director of that program said, "I have 11 singers. These are the voices." So, I had to write a piece for these voices. It happens differently; you have to be flexible. It really doesn't matter what voices they are; but you have to understand what that voice type is and what it can and can't do.

CYC: What quality of Amy's voice and musical personality affected your composition of *Quiet Songs*?

JM: I guess this was 1990. It's hard to say, because I just know Amy’s voice so well. I know her range. I just know how to write for her. I specifically tailored that piece to her, but she's had a very solid technique and she could sing pretty much anything. So, I just wrote songs for her. I made sure there were no high Fs because she doesn't have high Fs.

The more difficult part of putting a group of songs, either song cycle or a group of songs or any kind of songs that have to go together, is choosing the texts. That takes a whole lot of time. The actual writing of the songs isn't [difficult]. That's the easy part. “*Quiet Song*” came first. The third one because I was always reading poetry and I found some poetry by Eugene O'Neill who is really known for writing very dark plays, but he had a very slim book of poetry and some of the poems, they were just bright and airy and wonderful. And this particular one he had written for his wife on her 40th birthday. And her 40th birthday I believe coincided with our anniversary, the 28th of December.
The poem spoke a lot. First of all, I didn't realize at that time that it was [O’Neill’s] third wife he was writing for. It's about love and devotion. [Amy and my] lifestyle then, it's not so much now, but back then, [Amy] was on the road a lot, it could be ten months out of a year singing in different opera houses and concerts and things like that. So, we did a lot of traveling and I was off doing this and that. We lived a lot in hotel rooms. This poem speaks to our experience at that time. So, wherever we were basically was home and this poem kind of struck me. It was after I wrote “Quiet Song” actually that New York Festival of Song asked me to write songs like it. So, I wanted to build it around that song.

All of the songs have something to do with seeking something and finding something or not finding it. If there's a theme that goes through the cycle, that's what it is. It starts out with “maggie and milly and molly and may” and the things that they find on the beach.

JM: The second song, “Intermezzo,” was not really a poem. It was a little entry in Amy's diary. Both of Amy’s parents are doctors and she had a nanny. Later her nanny got very sick. It was right before she died that Amy wrote these little lines. And I saw them and said, "Oh that would make a wonderful song, very simple and wonderful song."

And then there is “Quiet Song”; then “To Jesus on His Birthday,” which I changed to “Christmas Carol” because it's a little shorter.

This is about seeking. Again, seeking meaning in religion and apparently not finding it. This is a little tune that I played when I was a kid, Stabat mater dolorosa. It's a plain chant that was played and sung on Good Friday. It's about Mary at the foot of the cross.

“Palm Sunday,” pretty straightforward. I really thought of it as a tenor song actually. When I told Amy to sing this song, I said, “Make believe you're a tenor. Sing it like a tenor voice.” It's like a Neapolitan song. And he's pining for this, whoever it is across the water.

And then the last one is “Lullaby” by Léonie Adams. A lot of the tunes from the beginning of the piece come back, and this is about finding peace and rest.

CYC: How do you decide on a poet and pick the poem?

JM: I have no strategy for that. I just read and read and read until something grabs me. And then sometimes, there is a specific idea that pulls it all together. In other songs like the one I just wrote for guitar and baritone called The Brief Light, a poem by James Laughlin, there's no particular theme running through them; but other than that, it's all by the same poet, which is another thing that could bind a set of songs together.

When I look for a poem, I generally gravitate towards poems that are theatrical and what I mean by that is I could picture a character on the stage singing, playing the scene. I
generally don't get involved with philosophical poems, long screeds about the nature of the universe of anything like that. It's always about a person, about a person's particular predicament which stands you in good stead for when you're writing an opera, because that's really what opera is about, situations and people and people's interactions.

I've always been a huge fan of Randy Newman. I don't know if you know Randy Newman.

CYC: No.

JM: He's a pop singer, pop song writer. Have you ever seen any of the “Toy Story” movies?

CYC: Yes… I see.

JM: [Randy Newman] wrote the scores to those and he wrote the songs. But when he writes his regular songs or his records, he talks about when he writes the lyric and when he comes up with the idea for the song. It's always character and he calls it the unreliable narrator, because usually pop songs are very confessional: “This is how I feel, I love you, you don't love me.” He writes about drug addicts and hookers and you name it. He writes from their point of view. So, each song is very, very different and he really is writing each song as a scene. That's the kind of text, something where the singer can become a character. And it has to be, the poem has to be succinct. The lines can't be long. It has to be a poem that the audience can get the first time. It can't be so abstract that the audience is looking back and saying, "I wonder what does mean?" I mean it really has to be very immediate.

That's why I don't, for instance, go anywhere near Walt Whitman. Because he has his ecstatic way of going on and on with long, long lines. For me, they don't lend themselves to music. I set one Whitman poem in a song cycle called River Songs for baritone, cello, and piano. I wound up cutting the poem to shreds. I just took the parts that I wanted and put them together because there was just too much there. It just goes on and on. A poem can't do that and make a good song for me. Anyway, other people can do that. The kind of music I write is a very distilled poem and the audience has to be able to get it the first time because it doesn't come around again. Otherwise [the meaning is] buried. They're looking at the words and meanwhile, they're going like this and the song is going on and they're missing the rest of the song. I think a song really should be simple.

CYC: Here maybe the last question. I have two versions of Quiet Songs with me. My question is about the third song, “Quiet Song.”

JM: Yes, there were two [versions]. There were many changes.

CYC: Yes, measure 35 in “Quiet Song” has one note different.
JM: “when frost is in the air.” You know what? I just did this song because we’re doing it next Thursday and I am doing it with a soprano. I was reading from an old score and I didn't realize that this changes here. There should be an F#. That's a mistake. There was also something else here I think.

AB: You changed the timing of it.

JM: Yes, The timing in measure 34. I think I added a beat before “the year grows old.” I had a chance when we compiled this and as you can see from my errata page, we still didn't get all the mistakes. But I had a chance to reconsider some things afterward.

AB: There was an earlier version, even earlier than this that I still have in my head and it's very confusing.

JM: In the old version in measure 34, “and the year” comes right on the first beat and I moved it over because it just felt better.

The thing about this piece [in *Collected Songs*] is that after 20 years of performing these songs, I got a real feeling for how they behave. You don't really know how a piece behaves when you do it the first time. And then over all these years with different singers singing them, you really get a feeling for where the difficult parts are, where something isn't quite working, and you might be able to improve it.

Once we put out this volume, it was a chance to fix a bunch of things there. For instance, in the first song, [we made] a big change in measures 13 through 19, the phrase “whose rays five languid fingers were,” on high B, and no one sounded good on that. It was a horrible thing to sing “rays” on high B because I mean you have an open vowel on “rays” and all of a sudden you have to close it and you strangle yourself when trying to sing “rays” on high B. So, I brought that down by a fourth or fifth.

CYC: So, you like the later version better?

JM: Yes, it's much improved.

AB: You couldn't understand the text and really, it was just the shape that was important because [John] wanted the word “rays” like sunrays. He wanted “rays” on a higher note. So, he just took the whole shape of the phrase and brought it down.

JM: You learn a few things after 25 years.

AB: Well, when you hear one singer, me, having trouble with the phrase and then you hear other people having the same trouble, then a lot of composers might just keep looking for that one singer who can sing phrases the way they wanted it, but John is very
practical. I think he figures that if it's not easy to execute, then he can keep his idea and make it easier to execute. He's going to do that.

CYC: Could you talk a little bit about Paul Jacobs?

JM: A pianist, wonderful pianist. He was the pianist and the harpsichord player for the New York Philharmonic. He died in 1983. He played a lot of music, beautiful recordings of Debussy, Schoenberg.

AB: And Elliot Carter.

JM: [Jacobs] played a lot of Elliot Carter and he was very passionate about Busoni, as a matter of fact. There were a lot of Busoni plans. When he died of AIDS, he was 53 in 1983, before anyone really knew what it was when he got sick. This is actually his piano that he left me when he died. He had bought it from Samuel Barber. That's Samuel Barber's piano and Paul bought it. We'll see where it goes next. I got to be friends with Paul the last three years of his life. I would go when I was doing recitals on a play for him and he was very helpful.

CYC: I have a couple of questions for Ms. Burton. May we start with your biography? How did you become interested in music?

AB: I come from a musical family. My parents were both musical, although they were both doctors. But they were also musical. My sister is a musicologist, music theory at Boston University, Debra Burton. My brother is a keyboard player, just rock music. My grandmother was our music teacher. She was a pianist. So, she taught us when we were very little. Actually, I studied at the Mannes Prep when I was little and now I teach at Mannes. For me, it's like a big circle. But I studied piano and a little guitar and flute for a while, and singing. Everyone in my family played the piano and sang. So, we're a musical family.

CYC: From your point of view, what is the most important thing for singing?

AB: Well, having a voice, having an instrument. The most important thing, that's hard to say because my early interest in singing was not classical music. It was more popular music, jazz, and musical theater. I hate to say I wrote songs because of whom I live with, they were very popular kind of songs. But once I really settled on classical singing, I went to Northwestern and wanted to study voice, so from the beginning I really learned about technique. I'd say as a classical singer, technique is the most important thing to learn at the beginning, because it will determine how many artistic choices that you have. The more technique you have, the more artistic possibilities you have.

But it's not everything obviously, passion or dedication, you can't be a singer and not really be interested in text, in poetry. I learned a lot about poetry from John actually
because he had a feeling for poetry. Well, anybody that sets text should really understand a lot about poetry because they're doing a very heightened reading of the poem. As a singer and now as a teacher, it really helps me to get into the song by knowing and trying to see what the composer has found in the poem and his or her interpretation of that poem.

Those are all important things about being a musician. I think it really helps the kind of singer that you can be if you are also a musician, if you play an instrument and you don't just follow the top line, like you really have a feeling for what's underneath you and how you're a part of that or sometimes not part of that.

CYC: Could you share your thoughts about when you first got Quiet Songs from Mr. Musto?

AB: The first song was “Quiet Song.”

JM: I already told her the background. About the poet, his wife, their anniversary, her birthday, and our anniversary.

AB: Well, but that was a coincidence, I think.

JM: Yes, it was a coincidence. Wasn't it on the poem? The date?

AB: I guess it was. I had just sung Baby Doe–The Ballad of Baby Doe. You know that the first three arias are “the Willow Song,” “Dearest Momma,” and “the Silver Aria.” They have these very big leaps. So, there were certain pieces that John would come and hear me because I was traveling so much. A lot of our married life was on the road, in hotels and strange places. Sometimes he would come and hear me sing something that he hadn't heard me sing before, and it would give him ideas and I think when he heard Baby Doe, he wrote “Quiet Song,” which used to be a half step higher.

So the top note was a D and the bottom note was a B♭. He wrote this piece because he never thought about writing for a soprano who could have that wide range. In those days, I did have wide range.

JM: That's the shame about her voice, that she had very strong low voice. It's very rich and colorful down at the bottom where a lot of sopranos won’t.

AB: And in my youth, I used to sing a lot of lyric coloratura things. I did Baby Doe twice. I did Adele in Die Fledermaus. I sang a lot of Juliet's. So, John presented me with “Quiet Song” as a gift. It's really beautiful and then the New York Festival of Song commissioned a cycle from him. It isn't like he just presents me with all the songs because I live with him so I'm around for all the ideas. I think I named it, actually. So, he
had this idea to build a cycle around “Quiet Song.” And so he took this little piece of two lines that I wrote.

AB: It was not romantic, it was about the death of someone that I was very close to, and so [John] found this little scribbling that I did when I was 20 or something. And then he didn't know what to call it so since “Quiet Song” was the centerpiece, I just said, "Why don't you call it Quiet Songs?" even though they're not that quiet. Quiet Songs ends quietly, but they're very challenging.

JM: The pianist has a lot of work to do.

AB: It's a job for both for singer and piano. They're extremely challenging songs and dark, very dark. He wrote them for what my voice could do. He lowered “Quiet Song” to this key [D].

JM: There are two keys in this book. It's a D and a C.

AB: He lowered it to D and that is how the cycle was for many, many years.

JM: It was in E♭. It was a half-step higher than that.

AB: The original was not published in that key.

JM: No, it was really too high. The range was just too wide and there are many sopranos who could sing the other songs who couldn't sing that one; and I also have a version in C of that song. There are sopranos who might not be comfortable in D in this particular song and range.

AB: It's a big range. So John lowered it again because if you have a piece with the sopranos who want to sing a song, like a recital song with a high D in it, they are not necessarily going to want to sing the low parts. And he didn't want to push it up, so that it's like the “Chanson de Mozart” that's just for a super high voice. So he lowered it again, for practical reasons, but then it was 20 years later that we finally got to record it professionally. We made our own recording of it which John has somewhere, it's not released. But by the time we got the offer to record them for Bridge, it was 20 years later and the high stuff felt a little high for me. So I wanted it down a half-step, but John felt that it was awkward to play it a half step down, so he lowered it a whole step, which creates the other problem, which is that there was a low G, which is really too low for me, but it was just for the recording. But it's there; so that means that mezzo can do it or soprano. There are two G's, right?

JM: Yes.
AB: Yes, so there are two G's. But most people perform it I think in D. It was really just so that I could be more comfortable, because 20 years later is a long time later.

CYC: When I was in my undergrad, my voice teacher gave me the “Quiet Song” and the low A for me was kind of too low.

JM: Yes.

CYC: So, then he told me, "You might be doing the whole cycle and if you have a chance to meet the composer, you may ask him if you can sing a higher A instead of a low A."

JM: Oh…OK (laughing)

CYC: But afterwards, I looked through the whole song cycle, I got the idea that if I sing the high A instead of the low one, the melody is not right.

JM: Yes, the melody isn't right and the reason is, you know there's a low A in there because Suzanna sings a low A in her big aria and so I just thought, well, okay, low A. And it's not even as important as her “notturna face.” These are upbeats and they're not important here: “it is home, it is peace.”

AB: Yes, the important words are “here, home, peace.” So as singers, when you have a note that is not so strong, most singers want to spend too much time on it to try to make the sound. And actually you need to spend less time on that note, because it's not important. I mean if you put it up [to the high A], it would sound important, and it's not that important.

CYC: I know you performed *Quiet Songs* with orchestra in 2009.

AB: Yes.

CYC: Could you tell me where did you perform it?

AB: Was it Greeley or was it Eugene?

JM: Eugene. It was the Oregon Mozart Players (OMP), because I played Mozart after the intermission.

AB: Yes, the Oregon Mozart Players. It's a chamber orchestra in Eugene, Oregon. It's called the Mozart Players because it's a Mozart-sized orchestra, but they play other things than Mozart. It was a commission.

JM: Yes, they need orchestration. And the orchestration had to be for that ensemble and I think we added it. And then he wanted me to play a Mozart concerto and I think I
couldn't find a Mozart concerto with only one oboe. So the orchestration actually has two oboes because we wanted to do Mozart K. 271 in E♭ and then had two oboes.

I said, "Okay, we're going to do this. This is the orchestration, now we have the concerto to go with it." These are the very practical things you have to contend with when you're writing.

CYC: How was it different for you as a singer to perform Quiet Songs with orchestra?

AB: The biggest difference, and this is true in any piece that you are used to doing with piano, is that when you sing with piano, the singer is the conductor and it's chamber music, just you and the piano. Sometimes the pianist is the conductor, but most of the time, it's the singer because you can't see the pianist. So you lead with your breath, you lead everything and you can take time as you want.

But with a conductor, for me that's always difficult. But certain things have to be. Especially because John and I have been performing these for so many years that I'll do something literally like if I take more time on an “l”, his fiddle playing adjusts like he can tell when I'm about to stretch a word. I can do spontaneous things and he's there, and some of them are not practical with orchestra. So I felt like I had to be a little bit more straight with the pieces. I couldn't take as many liberties and do as many kinds of subtle things with them.

That was an adjustment, but it's also wonderful to hear all the orchestral colors that John had in his mind. So I can in a way hear how he really heard the piece. That was wonderful.

CYC: Would you give some advice for singers to prepare this song cycle?

AB: That's very tough. Obviously, John's music is challenging. So you really have to do your musical work. It doesn't seem like it should be that challenging because there are beautiful melodies. But it is challenging because the way he does harmony, sometimes makes it hard to hear even simple intervals like why can't I hear a fourth, why can't I even hear an octave sometimes, because he changes the harmony. You're smiling like you know what I'm talking about. A lot of it is, there's some jazz in there too that he'll just change the harmonic underpinning and then suddenly it disorients you.

So, do your musical work for sure because of the way he responds to poetry and the way he writes that, the music comes from the poem. He doesn't take a melody and then try to make the words fit. He really sits and looks at the poem, and he doesn't even choose the poem if he doesn't feel that it needs music or that it doesn't sort of make him hear music. So you have to spend a lot of time with the poetry and really understand everything in it, because he has done that.
There's nothing complicated in my poem. It wasn't even a poem, but he took it.

CYC: Did you know that before?

AB: No. That was a surprise, a present. I was happy and unhappy at the same time because I like to write poetry. It's something I do for myself. I don't really share it. So I was sort of unhappy that he chose this thing because it wasn't one of the things that I really would want to share necessarily.

So, I guess the advice for these songs really is my advice for all of the songs, which is to really spend time with the poetry and to find the music in the poetry, as well as the meaning, because poets choose vowels, they choose consonants, they choose words with particular sounds, you know, that's what they do. That's their art, like “your treasures all encrust with rust” and “your trinket pleasures...” That's the kind of thing, lots of T's and lots of S's. There are all these sounds that the poet could have taken. She could have said this with other words but she chose these words because of their sounds. That's what poets do.

So, as the singer, you have to really use those sounds and any good composer is going to set the words because of the way they sound. They're going to set them in a particular way. And John is, of all the composers that I've known, I think one of the ones who's the most sensitive to poetry. So if you really see the words and see how he's interpreted the art, then you'll have a key pretty much to the song.

The other thing is sometimes, not so much in these songs, but sometimes John uses some more vernacular music, things taken from jazz or popular music. It's not so much in Quiet Songs, they're pretty serious, but when he does do that, he still wants you to sing with a classical voice. He doesn't want you to just suddenly sing like a pop singer.

I'm trying to think if there's anything in here for “Palm Sunday.” It is like in the Neapolitan song, but he had particularly some of Pavarotti's mannerisms.

CYC: In the last song, I know it has a couple of motives from the previous songs.

JM: Yes. In the first few measures it's just on its own. And measure 13 from “Quiet Song.” The “Intermezzo” comes in measure 18, and then we're into the song. The chord, when it gets to the a tempo, it's really kind of both “Quiet Song” and “Christmas Carol.” And this is actually from a piano concerto that I wrote before that.

CYC: Which number of piano concerto?

JM: First. I wrote this piano concerto. No one asked for it, I just wrote it. So it was kind of like an old car just sitting around and I just stripped it for parts. I just used stuff because I figured no one would ever play it. I'm actually going to Denmark and will be
able to record it. We communicated in 2006. I started the piece in 1988 and finished it in 1995. I wrote the first movement in 1988, the second movement in 1995, and the third movement in 1989. It just sat around for years and years but some of this material and in other songs and in other pieces are just from the piano. Do you know *Shadow of the Blues*?

CYC: Yes.

JM: *Shadow of the Blues*, the whole last movement in it is all of the last movement in the concerto.

CYC: In measure 47 of “Lullaby.” Is this similar to “O Prince of Peace!” from “Christmas Carol”?

JM: Yes, it is similar. People do point things out that I've written that I don't realize are there. That happens a lot and I think it's when you're working on a piece like this, you have all these sounds and I'm sure they are related on some level because you're working at this material and you have these sounds in your head and it is, this particularly, is a cycle. It's not just a bunch of songs. It really is a cycle. It's all one piece. I'm sure at some level, all those tunes were in my head floating around and they came out in different ways. So even “Beneath the sapphire arch,” that shape was already in there, and perhaps it didn't come out that way. I wasn't aware of it.

AB: So some things are deliberately put, like in the last song, some of the things are deliberate and other things are subconscious.

JM: Yes, it just happens.

CYC: I also feel in the last two measures, “Here is the pillow” is kind of related to “Quiet Song” like “is quiet.”

JM: I think you're right. I didn't make that connection consciously. That actually makes sense.

AB: I think if a piece is well made, it's made out of certain themes and structures and it fits together for a reason. You might not know exactly when you're writing it, you might not know all the things that are there.

JM: I remember writing the “Christmas Carol.” The opening to “Christmas Carol” actually is all the 12 notes of the scale. The first three chords cover, or they fill in, a certain amount of chromatic space because they're all different pitches of the 12 notes of the scale. And then the ones that were left over and those other little 10, kind of sound like measures two through five. That's not quoting that, I had to make that up, because I needed something that sounded like a hymn.
CYC: Those two versions are different for the *Stabat mater*.

JM: The tune is the same. I think I got the words wrong. It’s *Stabat mater dolorosa*. I got the words mixed up, but that's the tune. I mean they have their ends, sometimes they're different. But that's the point to it.

And I know “less, less, less than the wind that blows” in “Christmas Carol” is very, very difficult to sing, and I'm sorry but it's the way it is (laughing…).

AB: [ Ɛ ] vowel is nasty.

JM: It's almost like we forget all these little tricks. Do you have any questions about the first one? We already talked about the first one.

CYC: Yes, we talked about the first one, it is...

JM: A pretty simple song. I can't think of another straightforward song. Okay. You know you can always email me if you have any more questions.

CYC: Thank you very much. Thank you for making time to meet with me today.

AB: It was nice to meet you.
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