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Warren Benson's *Five Lyrics of Louise Bogan*

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

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ABSTRACT

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Warren Benson's *Five Lyrics of Louise Bogan* is a relatively rare example of a composition for solo voice and flute. The thesis is an examination of this cycle, highlighting its distinctive characteristics and providing a singer's view of its inherent challenges. The musical analysis is preceded by a discussion of the lives of both poet and composer. For a singer, knowledge of the circumstances of Bogan's life dramatically deepens understanding of the work.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I extend sincere thanks and appreciation to Leone Buyse for suggesting we do *Five Lyrics of Louise Bogan* together, for introducing me to Warren Benson and his music, and for working with me and helping me to become a better collaborative performer.

I gratefully thank Honey Meconi for years of support, loving guidance, and enthusiasm. There is no way to measure all I have gained from her extensive knowledge, unending patience, and timely moments of encouragement.

None of this would have taken place were it not for Joyce Farwell. My deepest gratitude goes to this incomparable teacher and role model, with loving appreciation for believing in me, listening to me, and helping me find my voice.

With all my heart I thank Tommy, Benjamin, Patricia, and Joseph for their love, support, encouragement, and patience during these past four years.

I dedicate this work to the honor of my father, with gratitude for sharing with me his love for words both spoken and written; and to the memory of my mother, an inspiring educator and true lady.
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The Poet: Louise Bogan

In order to fully appreciate the poetry of Louise Bogan, it is important to examine the traumatic events and circumstances of her life. Those from her childhood, especially the ones involving her mother, strongly affected her and set the stage for a lifetime of unsuccessful relationships with men. Her poems were filled with expressions of the pain and struggle she experienced as a result of those relationships.

Louise Marie Beatrice Bogan was born in Livermore Falls, a small mill town in Maine, on August 11, 1897. Daniel Joseph Bogan, her father, was a clerk and later superintendent in a paper company; in 1882 he married Mary Helen Murphy Shields. At the time of their marriage they both stood about 5'4". But after they were married a few years, Mary grew to 5'9". The fact that Mary never forgave Daniel for being shorter than she was exemplifies the high-spirited, self-centered life she led that greatly influenced the life of her daughter.

From a very early age, Bogan was present at scenes of violence between her parents. After such a scene, Mary would get dressed up and go downtown and take her daughter with her. Mary had many lovers—men she called "admirers"—and spent hours bathing and dressing for her trysts with them. In her journal Bogan wrote:

I still cannot describe some of the nightmares lived through...so I shan't try to describe them at all. Finished. Over. The door is open. I see the ringed hand on the pillow; I weep by the window as she goes down the street, with another.

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The chambermaid tells me to stop crying. How do we survive such things?\textsuperscript{2}

If Bogan had told what she knew about her mother, she would have felt she had betrayed her, and would have experienced her mother's rage. By not telling, she became an accomplice in deceiving her father. She chose to say nothing about her mother's affairs, repressing them, in fact; it took her nearly a lifetime to be able to chronicle what little she did. sometime in the early 1960s. She knew neither the names of the men who were her mother's lovers, nor why Mary took her along when she went to be with them. She both loved and was jealous of her mother, and felt a strong need to protect her.

In addition to the emotional trauma she experienced as a result of her mother's affairs, Bogan suffered from the cultural prejudices of the day. As a member of an Irish Catholic family, Bogan learned at an early age of the prejudices against her for being a "Mick." "No Irish Need Apply" was the sign of the times posted in business establishments, and the same sentiment was felt even in schools. During her time as a student at Mount Saint Mary Academy in Manchester, New Hampshire (1906-07), dark-haired Bogan fainted several times due to hunger, while the nuns favored the blond students with extra helpings of food.

Bogan learned to read in the winter of 1904; later she described the house where this occurred as the happiest place in her life. The life she discovered while learning to read at this house was her own: no person and no event could take it away from her.\textsuperscript{3}

Even more important, she "began to write verse from about fourteen on. The life-saving

\textsuperscript{2} Limmer, Journey Around My Room.172. In 1901, Louise and her family moved to the Hotel Milton in Milton, New Hampshire.  
\textsuperscript{3} Frank, Louise Bogan , 17.
process then began." Each day she wrote a long poem or sonnet sequence. By the age of eighteen she felt she had learned every essential element of her trade. During her years as a student at the Girls' Latin School in Boston (1910-15), her talent was recognized by her peers, who elected her Class Poet; nevertheless she was told by her teachers not to expect to become editor of the school paper—no Irish girl could be.

Her first printed poem, "The Lily and the Little Soul," was published in the school paper, *The Jabberwock*, and demonstrated that she had already learned the lyric conventions of syntax, apostrophe, and alliteration. The first poem to appear outside the school was "A Night in Summer," published in *The Boston Evening Transcript* in 1912. Both exhibited Bogan's ear for the filled-out line, in which every vowel, consonant, and syllable received its complete, unhurried value, a process that created auditory perfection and sheer richness of assonance and consonance.

Upon graduation from the Girls' Latin School in 1915, she spent a year at Boston University, and was offered a scholarship to Radcliffe for the fall of 1916. Attending Radcliffe would have meant having to stay at home with her parents, who had moved to Boston in 1909, so instead, she married Curt Alexander. She desired passion and sexual experience, but living with one's lover was not an acceptable way of life at that time.

Blond and handsome, Alexander came from Breslau, Germany to America in 1912, hoping to find a job in architecture. Due to the depressed economy, he was unable to find work, and joined the Army, where he rose rapidly through the ranks. It is not

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5 Ibid.
6 Ibid. 27.
7 Ibid. 28.
known just when Bogan met Alexander, but it is assumed they were introduced by "Aunt Anne," one of Mary's friends. Louise Bogan and Curt Alexander were married September 4, 1916 and moved to New York. Their stay there was very brief; when the United States entered World War I in April, 1917, Alexander was sent to Panama, accompanied by his wife. Bogan hated it there. She was pregnant, hot, and miserable, having discovered that Alexander and she had nothing in common except sex. After Mathilde (Maidie) Alexander was born October 19, 1917, Bogan took the baby and went to her parents' home in Boston.

Upon Alexander's return to the states, Bogan and Maidie moved with him to Maine. This attempt at a reconciliation seems surprising, but one would assume Bogan found living with her parents as difficult as ever and needed to get away from them once again. However, Alexander had become very demanding and abusive to Bogan, and after Maidie's birth no longer desired sexual relations with his wife. Bogan left him in the summer of 1919 and moved to New York, having fallen in love with the city during the brief time they had lived there in 1916. Ready to embark on a bohemian lifestyle as a New York writer. Bogan, in what Elizabeth Frank calls a "combination of practical good sense and clear-sighted selfishness," left Maidie to be raised by her grandparents, an act almost as shocking as those done to Bogan by her mother. Alexander died of pneumonia in 1920; his death made it unnecessary for Bogan to file for divorce, and made her eligible to receive widow's benefits from the Army.

In her new life among fellow bohemian writers, Bogan soon found a lover. From

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3 Ibid. 42.
October to December of 1919. she had an unfortunate affair with John Coffey, a young Irishman who tried to champion the rights of the poor by shoplifting and then testifying of their plight in court. When he boasted of his many successful thefts, he was sent not to prison, but to Matteawan, an insane asylum. Although theirs was a very brief affair, it had long-lasting emotional consequences. Bogan’s public humiliation, stemming from her widely-known association with Coffey and his notorious escapades, and the betrayal and disillusionment she felt as a result of his behavior, haunted her the rest of her life.

Her ambition kept her going, however. She knew she had the ability to become a great poet and woman of letters, and was determined to make that her life’s work. Having become quickly acquainted with other writers in New York. by 1921 Bogan was publishing poems in nearly all the advanced and prestigious journals of the day: *The New Republic. Vanity Fair. Voices. The Liberator. Rhythm. The Literary Review of the New York Evening Post*, and a “little” magazine called *The Measure*, with which she was to have a long association. She was having success and becoming well-known.

However, this was also the time in which she exhibited her first signs of mental illness, feeling dazed and insecure, and began seeing a psychiatrist. She had suffered severe psychic pain since early childhood, and would continue to do so for the duration of her life. In 1922 this pain reached an especially acute point. Feeling the need to get away from New York and be alone. Bogan went to Europe so she could write without the demands of receiving acceptance by magazines and critics. After visiting Paris and Zurich, she went to Vienna, where she stayed almost six months. Of interest is the fact
that she took a room seven doors down from where Freud lived.\(^9\)

Returning to New York in January, 1923, Bogan wrote poems full of grief, rage, and a heartbreaking knowledge of sexual betrayal, including "My Voice Not Being Proud" and "Fifteenth Farewell," two of the five poems set by Warren Benson in his cycle. In the fall of that year she received major recognition when her portrait appeared in \textit{Vanity Fair} alongside ones of Amy Lowell, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Sara Teasdale, and others in the article "Distinguished American Women Poets Who Have Made the Lyric Verse Written by Women in America More Interesting Than That of Men."\(^{10}\)

One of the prominent men writers of the time was Raymond Holden, who had published a book of seventy-two poems in 1922 called \textit{Granite and Alabaster} with the help of his close friend Robert Frost. Holden was a member of an old, wealthy family who had lived in New York for generations. Living off the income provided by trusts established for him by his grandfathers, and with his salary from his job as a publisher at Macmillan and Company. Holden was able to provide handsomely for his wife and two daughters. But their marriage suffered when Holden's wife tired of the country life and in 1923 they separated.

Holden and Bogan met at a fund-raising party for \textit{The Measure}. Still suffering the painful memories of Alexander and Coffey, Bogan was reticent to divulge much information about herself to Holden, sharing bits and pieces at sporadic intervals. He learned only that she was widowed, and had recently experienced a disastrous love

\(^9\) Ibid. 51.
\(^{10}\) Ibid. 54.
affair. Their own relationship grew nevertheless, and they moved together to an apartment on Lexington Avenue. When she finally allowed him to see her poetry, Holden knew at once that she had a rare gift, and arranged to have Body of This Death published through a friend at Robert McBride & Company. Only when Holden read the dedication in the book and asked the identity of Mathilde Alexander did he learn of the existence of Bogan’s daughter.

Holden, Bogan, and Maidie moved together to an apartment on West Sixteenth Street in 1924. Late one night, Holden’s wife, Grace showed up at the apartment with her lawyer and a private detective to catch her husband and Bogan “living in sin.” so she could substantiate the charge of adultery that was required by New York law in order to obtain a divorce. Holden suffered major financial losses in the divorce settlement; this, combined with his obligations of alimony and child support, the rapid depletion of his inheritance because of his extravagant lifestyle, and his responsibilities to Louise and Maidie. meant he desperately needed a well-paying job.

He took a job as editor of Travel, a magazine that was published in Boston by Robert McBride and Company. He, Bogan, and Maidie moved there in June of 1925: Holden and Bogan were married a month later.

The family moved back to New York in 1926 when Holden took a job in the advertising department of Raymond and Whitcomb Co., Tours and Cruises. They loved the city, but dreamed of owning a country home. In the summer of 1928, they bought a five-acre property in Hillsdale, a town in upstate New York they had visited the year before. The house needed much repair, including reconstruction of the foundation and
installation of a heating system. Louise loved the house and the months of hard work it required. Confident and content, she found writing easy, and produced many poems during this time; *Dark Summer*, her second book of poetry, was published in September, 1929, and was dedicated to Raymond Holden.

This happy time in their lives was tragically ended during the Christmas season of 1929 when their dream house and everything in it was destroyed by fire. Holden had invested the bulk of the remainder of his inheritance in the stock market, but had lost it in the crash. Because of that they had no money to rebuild, and were forced to move back to an apartment in New York. Bogan worked at home, writing poems and book reviews; Holden was hired as managing editor at *The New Yorker* magazine.

At first, Bogan seemed to take the tragedy of the fire surprisingly well: “After all, it is more important to be alive without possessions than dead either with or without them.”11 In truth, the shock of the fire brought to the fore the emotional turmoil she had succeeded both in repressing over the years and in concealing from everyone, including herself, except in her poems. She soon became withdrawn and depressed, stranded in what she called “creative despair,” resulting from the traumas of her childhood and the failure of her first marriage. Her depression became paranoia when the literary world revived gossip about her affair with Coffey. She was unable to appreciate receiving the John Reed Memorial Prize from *Poetry* magazine in October, 1930, awarded to her in recognition of her books *Body of This Death* and *Dark Summer*. She complained that the

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11 ibid. 133.
hazards of public exposure seemed to outweigh the rewards.\textsuperscript{12}

In addition to her doubts about herself, she was convinced that Holden was in constant pursuit of other women. Although he denied these accusations, Bogan seemed determined to be betrayed, further emphasizing her weakening mental state. After enduring what she described in a rough draft of a poem as a "fever in the brain" and a state in which her body felt as "empty as the dead" for a year, she checked herself into the Neurological Institute in April of 1931. After a few weeks she was transferred to Cromwell Hall, a sanitarium in Cromwell, Connecticut, where she remained through the month of May.\textsuperscript{13}

Having gained renewed strength from her stay in the sanitarium, Bogan returned to her work as if she had never left. and soon she and Holden became a sought-after couple among the sophisticated literary group. But Bogan's doubts about Holden's fidelity continued, and she began to blame him for being the obstacle to her happiness. She was, in fact, seriously ill, and the daily processes of living and working were becoming unbearable. She desperately wanted to see if she could stand on her own intellect, common sense, and work. A friend suggested she apply to the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation for a fellowship abroad. She did, and was named a fellow.

Bogan left for Italy on April 1, 1933, hoping to use the year she had been granted to read, rest, write, and use the time of separation from Holden to clear her mind and

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid. 134.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid. 140.
rekindle her love for him. She kept a journal that was filled with notes about her travels, and her enchantment with the sights and sounds of Palermo, Sicily, and Rome; but she also wrote of being terribly lonely and depressed, relying on liquor to sleep. She was sad for the eighteen days she spent in Florence. Holden’s letters to her, filled with details of his active social life, drove her wild with anxiety. In spite of his words of love to her, she believed he was hiding the truth.

She struggled against these feelings of despair and went to Venice, where her energy was once again renewed. She completed a short story that she sent to The New Yorker, and felt she had conquered her self-doubt and loneliness. It troubled her that she had not yet written any poetry during her European travels, noting in her journal that it seemed she could “write now only when in a rage (of anger or of hatred), or in a state which I can only describe as malicious pity.”

The value of the dollar had fallen, creating a reduction in funds that shortened the length of her fellowship to five months. When she returned to New York, her suspicions that her husband had been having an affair were affirmed within moments of her arrival. when Holden introduced Bogan to the mistress with whom he had been sharing an apartment since June.

Although Bogan had predicted this, she was nonetheless devastated by the fact. Her depression of 1931, which had never really left, was intensely rekindled, and she suffered a severe breakdown. In November she signed herself into the New York Hospital, Westchester Division, determined to stay until she felt human again. At the end

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14 Ibid. 178.
of her six-month stay she was told that she would never be completely well, but at least she would be able to work again. For Louise, to have her work was to have almost everything, and she felt she was at last capable of living on her own. She returned to New York in April of 1934; Holden moved out soon after, and he and his mistress quickly became openly acknowledged lovers.

Louise made staying busy her primary concern, avoiding idleness that led to depression. She spent the summer in Boston, where she made several friends and had an affair with a Jewish librarian. She became more confident, less bitter, and more in tune with reality than she had ever been.

She returned to New York at the end of July, and began divorce proceedings. She and Maidie moved into an apartment at 82 Washington Place, sharing a life together without Holden for the first time. She began to view her daily work-filled life as a gift, and provided herself with many opportunities for enjoyment, including an affair with poet Theodore Roethke, twelve years her junior. Their affair lasted less than a year, but they remained life-long friends.

For the first time, she felt joy in being alive. She was even able to find humor in finding her furniture on the street after having been evicted from her apartment when Holden refused to pay the money he owed her under the terms of their separation agreement. Beginning in 1937, her life seems to have become more stable and positive. Her third book of poetry, The Sleeping Fury, was published by Scribner's; for it she was awarded the Helen Haire Levinson Prize. Her divorce from Holden was final in February; in April she finished the remainder of her Guggenheim Fellowship in Ireland.
researching her ancestry. She began what was to be an eight-year relationship with a man she met on board the ship returning to America. Curiously, Bogan never revealed his identity. In July of 1937, she moved to 709 West 169th Street in New York, where she was to live the rest of her life.

During the last thirty years of her life, Louise Bogan was kept very busy as a writer, critic, lecturer and teacher. Her fourth book, *Poems and New Poems*, was published by Scribner's in 1941. In 1944 she began judging applications for Guggenheim Fellowships, which she continued to do into the 1960s. In November of 1944, she was elected a Fellow in American Letters of the Library of Congress, and in 1945, took up an appointment as Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress.

In 1948, Bogan won the Harriet Monroe Award from the University of Chicago, taught at the University of Washington in Seattle, and, along with T. S. Eliot and other Fellows in American Letters, awarded the first Bollingen Prize to Ezra Pound. In 1951, she received a grant for $1000 from the National Institute of Arts and Letters; in 1952, she was elected to membership in the Institute. She was a visiting professor at the University of Arkansas during the spring semester of 1952. She began teaching evening classes in poetry at New York University in 1954, which she continued to do until the 1960s.


Bogan gave a lecture at Yale in February, 1956; in June of that year she received
an honorary degree from the Western College for Women in Oxford, Ohio. In the fall she began teaching a course in poetry at the Young Men’s Hebrew Association in New York. In 1957 she stayed at the MacDowell Colony for the first of eight annual visits. In 1959 she received a $5000 award from the Academy of American Poets, and delivered a paper on Emily Dickinson as part of the bicentennial celebration of the town of Amherst, Massachusetts. Bogan received an honorary degree from Colby College, Maine in June of 1960, and the Senior Creative Arts award from Brandeis University in March of 1962. In 1965, she wrote The Golden Journey, an anthology of poems for young people, with William Jay Smith; in 1966 she wrote an introduction to A Cookbook for Poor Poets and Others.

In February, 1967, she read and taught at the Poetry Center of the University of Arizona. Later that year she received a $10,000 Award from the National Endowment for the Arts, one of the first ever granted. In March, 1968. Farrar, Straus & Giroux published her last book of poetry, The Blue Estuaries: Poems 1923-1968. In May, 1969, she was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

This summary of the activities of her later years, filled with several new publications, a variety of responsibilities, and numerous awards, demonstrates that Bogan was indeed capable of relying on herself, her talent, and her work in her very successful and impressive career as a woman writer in the twentieth century. Yet the diagnosis of 1934 was proven correct: although she had been able to work and succeed, she was not completely well. In 1965, for the first time in many years, she suffered a severe depression, and entered the Neurological Institute in June. Medication alleviated
some of her suffering for a time, but in September of that year she returned to New York Hospital’s Westchester Division in White Plains, where she had been a patient thirty-one years before. After several months of therapy that included electroshock treatments, she was much improved. Once again, though, her recovery was only temporary.

Believing she could no longer write, Bogan reluctantly resigned her position as poetry reviewer for *The New Yorker* magazine after thirty-eight years. Her continuing depression made her unable to withstand the rapidly increasing deterioration of her physical state, and during the last years of her life, having lost the will to live, she drank and smoked to excess. She died February 4, 1970.

One of the important aspects of Louise Bogan’s life was repression. Elizabeth Frank described Bogan as a “woman whose passion for reticence bordered on obsession. Self-revelation she equated with confession; and since, in her view, to confess was to ask for pardon, an act she considered as useless as it was ignoble, she was incapable of opening the coffers of her experience in any direct way.”

Bogan acknowledges repression in her description of a poet:

> The poet represses the outright narrative of his life. He absorbs it, along with life itself. The repressed becomes the poem. Actually, I have written down my experience in the closest detail. But the rough and vulgar facts are not there.

In the last years of her life, as a part of her continuing struggle against her mental illness. Bogan made a courageous attempt to no longer repress the horrors of her childhood and wrote down some of her memories, such as the adulterous scene quoted at the beginning of this chapter. Yet she said, “Forgiveness and the eagerness to protect:

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15 Ibid. xv.
these keep me from putting down the crudest shocks received from seven on..."17

Although she was able to put down some of her feelings in her poems, one reason she was never able to abandon repression and freely express or fully describe the "rough and vulgar facts" was that she believed that a fundamental part of poetry was form. Form is a matter of beat (meter) and, like the beat of the heart or the rhythm of breathing, is a natural human element. Put another way, Bogan believed that form is a means to an end, and that end is to transform the emotion of the poet into one experienced by the reader or hearer.18

The basic formal elements of meter and rhyme tie poetic form very closely to musical form. Bogan's literary technique has been praised for its mastery of sound and rhythm, two fundamental aspects of music. She often used musical terms and metaphors in her poetry and indicated by notes on manuscripts and by comment that she thought of some of her lyrics as being accompanied by music. For example, the manuscript of "Little Lobelia's Song" has written at the top "...with supposed music." 19

Music, bred into the New England lifestyle, had been a part of Bogan's life since childhood. During her trip to Vienna in 1922 she discovered Mahler and Mozart, and took piano lessons with a student of Leschetizky, who had studied with Beethoven. Her daughter, Maidie, was an accomplished singer who studied at Juilliard 1935-36, and was a member of the Chataqua Opera Chorus in 1937 and 1938. When Maidie practiced at home, Bogan accompanied her.

17 Ibid. 172.
18 Ridgeway, Louise Bogan, 16.
19 Ibid. 1, 127.
Not surprisingly, many of her poems deal with music. The first one to do so was "Sub Contra," which refers to low, resonating notes. Other poems dealing with music include "Juan’s Song," "Girl’s Song," "Second Song," "Song for a Slight Voice."

"Song," "M., Singing" (written after she heard daughter Maidie perform Fauré’s Après un Réve). "Song for a Lyre." "To Be Sung on the Water" (set to music by Samuel Barber and by David Rakowski). "Musician." "Train Tune," "Song for the Last Act." and her final poem, a trilogy entitled "Three Songs" that includes "Little Lobelia’s Song."

"Psychiatrist’s Song," and "Masked Woman’s Song."
The Composer: Warren Benson

Warren Frank Benson was born in Detroit, Michigan on January 26, 1924. His father, Frederick William, worked for a department store and later managed a paint store. His mother, Ella Alma, came from a very musical family: her father played the violin, zither, and organ; her sister played the piano; her brother and another sister were accomplished whistlers; and she, herself, played the piano and led singing in her church.

Benson began his formal music training in 1932, studying percussion with Gerry Gerard. Exhibiting his dedication to music from this very young age, Benson walked an hour each way to the school where the lessons were given. In high school, Benson studied horn with Francis Hellstein, then principal horn of the Detroit Symphony. Throughout his life Benson studied a very impressive number of other instruments, including piano, cornet, trombone, violin, cello, double bass, and clarinet.

In the spring of 1943, Benson enrolled at the University of Michigan. He played horn in the school orchestra at first, then was asked to switch to percussion where his skills were more needed. Because there was no percussion professor on the faculty, from the time he was a freshman he taught percussion majors and a percussion methods class. In 1946 his studies were interrupted when he was hired as timpanist with the Detroit Symphony, where he played under many eminent conductors including Leonard Bernstein. Eugene Ormandy, and Fritz Reiner.

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Unfortunately, his tenure with the symphony was short-lived because of surgery to repair his hip, damaged by the rare, incurable bone disease eosynophylic granuloma. During the fourteen months he was in a complete body cast. Benson's musical needs were served by a toy piano at the side of his hospital bed. Demonstrating his love of books and reading, he read over four hundred books during this period.

Benson received a Bachelor of Music degree and a Master of Music degree in 1949 and 1951, respectively. Both degrees were in the field of music theory. He had changed his major to composition several times during his years at the University of Michigan, but each time changed it back to music theory when his professors irritated him by making too many marks on his music. He is essentially a self-taught composer, just as Bogan was essentially a self-taught poet.

In the summer of 1949 Benson began teaching at the Brevard Music Center, a position he held for several years. During this time he received his first commission, from Lester McCoy, for a chorus McCoy directed in Livonia, Michigan. Benson wrote *Something of the Sea*, which he later divided into two movements and published separately as *A Ship Comes In* and *Two Sea Poems*. This change of title and re-issue exemplifies Benson's habit of constantly re-working his compositions. Of this practice he said. "I feel a piece is always mine and as long as I am alive I will keep 'fixing' them."

Benson received two Fulbright Fellowships to teach at Anatolia College in Salonika, Greece from 1950 to 1952. While there, he organized the Anatolia College

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\(^{21}\text{Quoted in Wagner, "The Life and Works of Warren Benson", 203.}\)
Chorale, the first scholastic coeducational choral group in Greece.\(^{22}\) Upon his return to the States in 1952, he accepted the position of Director of Band and Orchestra at Mars Hill College in Mars Hill, North Carolina. In 1953, he was hired as Assistant Professor of Music and Composer-in-Residence at Ithaca College, a position he held for fourteen years.

In 1955 Benson was accepted for the first of three residencies at the MacDowell Colony in Peterborough, New Hampshire; this was the first time he had the opportunity to associate with professional artists in fields other than music. "It was there," he said, "that I first developed my feelings and concerns for being a professional composer, a professional creative artist."\(^{23}\) In the fall of 1963, Warren Benson met and befriended poet Louise Bogan, during what was his last visit and the seventh of her eight annual visits to the colony. His friendship with a poet was not unexpected. An avid fan of poetry, Benson has almost six hundred volumes of poetry in his collection, and has served as an adjudicator in the areas of poetry and art as well as music. A poet himself, his numerous literary works include "...And My Daddy Will Play the Drums: Limericks for Friends of Drummers," written for and about specific individuals.

Highly regarded as an educator, Benson was involved with the Ford Foundation Contemporary Music Project, lecturing at universities and colleges on the development of a new approach to the teaching of music theory from 1963 to 1973. Benson taught "Learning Through Creativity," a high school composition class at the Interlochen Arts

\(^{22}\) Ibid. 22.
Academy, Interlochen, Michigan, in 1965-66. He received Ford Foundation grants in
1963-64 and 1964-65 to develop at Ithaca College the first pilot project in comprehensive
musicianship. This involved an interdisciplinary approach to teaching that combined
poetry, literature, art, and several styles of music. From 1966-68 he was the Alger H.
Meadows Distinguished Visiting Professor of Composition at the Meadows School of the
Arts at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas. In 1967, he accepted a position
as Professor of Composition at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York, a
position that he held until his retirement in 1994.

Benson has been active as a guest conductor and lecturer at music festivals held in
many places including Lawrence University, Tennessee Technological University,
Northern Illinois University, Sam Houston State University, Indiana University, Ohio
University, and York University in Toronto. He has appeared as a guest conductor in
Belgium, Canada, England, Greece, Mexico, Norway, and Sweden.

Among Benson’s numerous awards are three Consortium Composer Fellowships
from the National Endowment for the Arts, a John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship in
composition, and a “Serious Music Award” from ASCAP. In 1971 he was presented with
the Lillian Fairchild Prize for musical composition; in 1975, a citation from the
University of Rochester Alumni Association; and in 1976 a Citation of Excellence from
the National Band Association. In 1980-81 he was named Kilbourn Distinguished
Professor at the Eastman School of Music. In 1984 he was awarded the most prestigious
teaching award at the University of Rochester, the University Mentor award. In 1998,
Benson was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize for Drums of Summer, a piece for wind
ensemble and chamber choir written on various texts. He is included in national and international *Who's Who* publications and in the *New Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians.*

Benson spends summers in Pittsford, New York, and winters in Ellenton, Florida. He continues to compose and is at the time of this writing working on a piece to celebrate the 200th birthday of the United States Military Academy at West Point. In addition, he plans to complete several books, having received numerous requests for his memoirs.

The works of Warren Benson number approximately 150. It was said of Louise Bogan that her relatively small number of poems (103) was due to her perfectionism: perhaps the same is true of Benson. The habit of constantly re-working and refining their works ultimately resulted in a smaller output for both the poet and the composer. Of his method of composing, Benson says:

> My creative process is essentially a layering process. I tend to write a work all the way through in a very sketchy form and then apply a series of overlays to this until the work is completely finished. I usually then put it away for a couple of months to ferment, bringing it back into the harsh light of the new day for appraisal, correction, and final completion.

In addition to re-examining his works for his own satisfaction, Benson often makes revisions in his works for different groups. One example of this is *Something of the Sea.* Benson's first commission, discussed earlier. Another example is *Shadow Wood,* a song cycle based on poetry by Tennessee Williams, composed for mezzo-soprano and large wind ensemble in 1968. The work, originally commissioned by Frank Battisti for

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the Baldwin-Wallace Wind Ensemble, was scored for thirty-two instruments. In 1991, Jack Delaney, the wind ensemble conductor at Southern Methodist University, wanted to perform the work, and commissioned Benson to rescore the work for twenty-six parts. Following that premiere, in 1993, Benson decided to reduce the number of instruments even further, to sixteen; this last revision also included an additional song.

A large number of Benson's compositions are for wind ensemble. During his years at Eastman, he became associated with the World Association for Symphonic Bands and Ensembles (WASBE), eventually serving on the Board of Directors. Through his association with this organization, Benson has influenced wind bands throughout the world, especially in regard to the creation of a more artistic quality of repertoire for the wind band. David Ewen believes that Benson's full technical and creative maturity as a composer came in the early 1960s with two compositions: *Symphony for Drums and Wind Orchestra* (1962) and *The Leaves Are Falling*, for wind ensemble (1963).²⁶

In addition to his numerous compositions for both wind and percussion ensembles, Benson has written works for piano solo, choirs, orchestra, string ensembles, organ, various solo instruments, carillon, brass ensemble, and a ballet, *Bailando*. *The Solitary Dancer*, written in 1967 for wind ensemble, has served as the background score for several choreographic treatments. Twenty-five of Benson's compositions are choral works. Although he has not received prominent recognition for those works, he has been acclaimed for his solo vocal music, specifically his song cycles. Perhaps owing to his extensive study of poetry and

literature, Benson has been praised for his sensitive and masterful setting of the texts of his vocal works. In a personal letter to Benson, composer Ned Rorem wrote: "Dear Warren. Your songs are beautiful and spare, and so respectful of the unusual (and valuable) poetry."\(^{27}\)

Table 1 is a chronological list of Benson's solo vocal music, with brief comments on each.

Table 1: Vocal Works of Warren Benson

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Instruments and Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td><em>Three Solitary Songs</em></td>
<td>Medium voice and piano 6:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td><em>Shadow Wood</em></td>
<td>Mezzo and wind ensemble revisions in 1992 and 1993 reduced the original 32 instruments to 26 and 16, respectively 6 movements 22:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td><em>Nara</em></td>
<td>Soprano, flute, piano, and percussion 5 movements 16:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td><em>The Beaded Leaf</em></td>
<td>Bass-baritone, wind ensemble Voice and marimba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td><em>How Do I Love Thee?</em></td>
<td>written for daughter Erika’s wedding: daughter Kirsten sang and Benson played marimba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td><em>Five Lyrics of Louise Bogan</em></td>
<td>Mezzo and flute 20:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td><em>Songs for the End of the World</em></td>
<td>Mezzo, English horn, horn, cello, and marimba 6 songs 30:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td><em>Moon Rain and Memory Jane</em></td>
<td>6 songs for soprano and 2 celli set to poetry by 6 various poets 35:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td><em>Dos Antifonas Lindas</em></td>
<td>Soprano, mezzo, and viola written for soprano Linda Seka, hence the play on her name in the title 2 movements vocalization and “alleluya” 8:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td><em>Songs and Asides About Love</em></td>
<td>Baritone, viola, and guitar various American texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td><em>Love and the Lady</em></td>
<td>Mezzo and cello various American texts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Work: Five Lyrics of Louise Bogan

The five poems written by Louise Bogan that were set to music by Warren Benson all came from her first volume of poetry, Body of This Death. In 1923, when the book was published, Louise Bogan was struggling to overcome her childhood traumas, her failed marriage, and subsequent affairs. Not surprisingly, the twenty-seven poems which made up her first volume were not flowery love poems, but dark, violent works. They are filled with bitterness and disappointment, alienation and loneliness, entrapment and self-pity, thus fulfilling Bogan’s requirement that lyric poetry be based on true experience and emotion.

Gloria Bowles describes Body of This Death as “one of the most stunning poetic records in English of a young woman’s response to the first failure of love.” The title of the book is taken from the Roman Catholic version of the definition of sin according to St. Paul:

I find then a law, that when I have a will to do good, evil is present with me.
For I am delighted with the law of God, according to the inward man:
But I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin, that is in my members.
Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

At the time the volume was written, Bogan’s emotional state, in response to the failures of so many loves in her life, was paralyzed, and surely resembled a body of death.

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29 Ibid.
Bowles sees the volume of poetry as Bogan's instruction book for women trying to work through failed relationships by suggesting they try various methods such as chastity, masks, escape, or anger. Jaqueline Ridgeway suggests that although Bogan sees death as the only alternative to the pain of failed relationships, it is also for her the ultimate denial of such.\textsuperscript{30} Some of the poems in the volume deal with this conviction seriously, some satirically. Others address the seemingly insurmountable difficulties of love and passion. The five poems used by Warren Benson will be discussed individually in the following pages.

This setting of five poems by Louise Bogan was commissioned by flutist Bonita Boyd. She and mezzo soprano Jan DeGaetani were colleagues of Warren Benson at Eastman: the work was written for their concerts in Kilbourn Hall at the Eastman School of Music on January 31, 1978, and at Alice Tully Hall, Lincoln Center, New York, New York, on February 19, 1978. The artists recorded the work in 1986.\textsuperscript{31} In 1981, it was one of twelve "Works of Exceptional Merit" selected by the New Music Panel of the National Flute Association.\textsuperscript{32} Critic Frank W. Lidral praised the cycle with the following:

These duets for soprano voice and flute are some of the finest tonal settings in American music, worthy of standing alongside those by John Alden Carpenter and Samuel Barber. The utmost economy of means has enhanced their quality by concentration on essentials. . . The flute part is very rewarding to the performer forming a perfect complement to the voice. . . These are exquisite songs and, in the hands of mature performers, can be breathtakingly beautiful. If Mr. Benson had written nothing else, these would establish his reputation as a sensitive, major

\textsuperscript{30} Ridgeway, \textit{Louise Bogan}, 33.
composer. 

This song cycle is the only one in which Benson used this unusual combination of instruments: voice and flute. It is important to keep in mind that the normal singing voice is capable of producing only one note at a time, and, except for the combination of humming and overtones to produce multiphonics, so is the flute. As Benson does not employ the use of multiphonics in this work, the result is two single lines of notes. In other works he combines the solo voice with either piano, cello, or marimba, each of which is capable of producing several notes at a time. In Five Lyrics of Louise Bogan, however, there is a clear sense of two equal performers, not a solo with accompaniment, because each instrument is given a strictly monodic function.

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My Voice Not Being Proud

My voice, not being proud
Like a strong woman's, that cries
Imperiously aloud
That death disarm her, lull her--
Screams for no mourning color
Laid menacingly, like fire,
Over my long desire.
It will end, and leave no print.
As you lie, I shall lie:
Separate, eased and cured.
Whatever is wasted or wanted
In this country of glass and flint
Some garden will use, once planted.
As you lie alone. I shall lie,
O. in singleness assured.
Deafened by mire and lime.
I remember, while there is time.

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In this poem, Bogan is almost certainly describing her deceased husband, Curt Alexander, whom she had hastily married to escape the traumatic existence with her parents. In it, she struggles with the conflicting issues of heart and mind, knowing she no longer loves him, yet saddened by his death. Her voice does not scream for the mourning color, yet she believes his fate is hers also: "as you lie alone, I shall lie." The poem describes the futility of desire, and the inevitability of death. The coldness of death, the emptiness she feels, and perhaps the emotions of frustration and rage associated with her mother's irrational behavior are represented by Bogan's use of dark, harsh words such as: "cry aloud." "screams." "menacingly," "fire," and "deafened."

One writer believes "My Voice Not Being Proud" is Bogan's attempt to call upon her contemporaries to abandon romantic and rhetorical excess for a greater truth of
feeling.\textsuperscript{34} To that end, she uses simple, straightforward, if painful, language to describe the irony of love and loss.

Benson's setting of this poem follows Bogan's directive well. He uses a lyric, romantic language that includes simple, straightforward melodies with an implied tonal center and harmonic progressions; syncopated, free-flowing rhythms; complex rhythms and mixed meters; an all-pervasive half-step motive; and masterful text-painting to set Bogan's text clearly. Each of these elements will be discussed and examples of each will be given for this piece; the half-step motive will later be shown to be an important unifying factor of the entire cycle.

The first voice we hear is an arching melody in the flute. As the title suggests, it is not a proud statement, but is tentative at first, and seemingly struggles in its next phrase to gain strength and determination through higher pitches. The initial pitch of this statement is Eb above middle C. Fifteen measure later, the same pitch is used at the entrance of the voice, an octave higher. Melodic reinforcement is achieved in the middle of the cycle with the appearance of Eb as the first note of the third of the five songs, \textit{Juan's Song}. The entire work is brought to a definite close with the appearance of Eb (enharmonically spelled as D#) as the final note in both the voice and the flute in the last song, \textit{Knowledge}.

In \textit{My Voice Not Being Proud} the starting pitch Eb serves as the third of the chord; the first three notes of the piece outline a triad indicating the key of C minor. This is

\footnote{Lee Upton. \textit{Obsession and Release: Rereading the Poetry of Louise Bogan} (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1996), 49.}
reinforced at the end of this piece, where the voice holds an Eb and the flute a G, thus comprising two thirds of a C minor triad, the root of the chord having been suggested in m. 63 in the vocal line. Because each of the instruments involved is asked to produce only a single note, a complete triadic harmonic structure can be only implied. Benson achieves a strong harmonic sense, however, through a melodic outlining of harmonies both within each of the lines, and between the two, as in the example cited of m. 63.

Throughout the song, the voices are woven together in a mournful conversation, often echoing each other, such as in m. 19. mm. 26 and 27, and mm. 37 and 38; and often crossing parts (the flute going below the mezzo), such as in m. 21 and mm. 32-34.

The futility expressed in the wandering melodies of the first fifty measures of the piece is rhythmically reinforced by the use of notes of longer values in a consistent mix of duple and triple rhythms filled with syncopation, totally undermining any feeling of pulse in a supposed triple rhythm as indicated by the marking 3/4. This free feeling returns in the last measures of the piece.

In the intervening measures, 52-58, we find rhythmic intensity. Here the much faster sixteenth- and thirty-second-note values become the norm, heightening the anguish of the word “deafened.” The fluteexplodes in a rhythmic display of thirty-second-notes that ornament an ascending scale spanning the range of an octave and a fourth, from Eb to Ab. (See Appendix B. Example 1c.)

Other examples of rhythmic intensity are found in mm. 24 and 40, where Benson employs the unusual meter 3 ¾ over 4 to intensify Bogan’s harsh words “screams,” “menacingly,” and “separate.” It is interesting to note that in m. 40, at the word
"separate." the vocal line logically subdivides into patterns of 3/8, 2/4, whereas the subdivisions of the flute line are 2/4, 3/8.

These measures are also good examples of Benson's careful attention to the text. As mentioned earlier, Benson is praised for his sensitivity to the text in his vocal settings; these five songs are no exception. One of the most intense examples of his use of text painting is his setting of the word "death" in m. 21. Most of the piece is written in step-wise motion, or leaps of small intervals. Here, in a sudden, dramatic leap of a minor tenth, the mezzo sings the word "death" on a high Ab, an octave and a sixth above middle C, the highest note Benson writes for the voice in the entire cycle. (See Appendix B, Example 1b.) Curiously, the lowest note written for the mezzo is found soon after, in m. 26, deepening the word "desire." For further emphasis, the two notes written for the voice on the word "desire." Ab and F#, are immediately echoed two octaves higher in the flute.

Previously mentioned as an example of rhythmic intensity, the section from mm. 52-58 is also an example of text painting. Here the flute is in a high range, and the mezzo in a low range, two octaves apart. The rhythmically intense thirty-second-note eruption in the flute in this section creates a deafening effect as the voice projects the word "deafened" in m. 54. (See Appendix B, Example 1c.)

A half-step motive, both ascending and descending, appears multiple times in this song, and, as mentioned above, serves as a unifying motive throughout the entire cycle. The most frequently used and therefore the most important half-step interval is Ab descending to G.
The first significant use of this interval is found in the apex of the opening measure, stated by the flute. (See Appendix B, Example 1a.) The first entrance of the mezzo in m. 21 has previously been cited as the highest note written for the voice; it occurs in the motivic Ab to G interval, emphasizing the word “death.” (See Appendix B, Example 1b.) The combination of these factors—the repetition in the voice of the same climactic half-step interval as in the first entrance of the flute, the fact that it is the highest note in the singer’s range, and the poignant text—make this an extremely important element.

After the lowest note in the voice, on the word “desire” (previously cited as an example of text-emphasis), the flute has a six-beat transitional passage that consists only of the two notes of the motive, Ab descending to G. The voice joins the flute in octaves on the second note of the motive with the haunting words “it will end.” Soon after, in mm. 33-35, the flute repeats the motive in both ascending and descending order, in a mesmerizing mix of duple and triple meters; the voice follows this with the words of complete resignation: “as you lie.” using the motive in its ascending order, G to Ab.

Reinforcement of this interval as an important unifying element is found at the last phrase of the piece: “I remember, while there is time.” In m. 63, the flute plays the ascending motive, G to Ab, as the voice sings “I remember.” The voice sings the motive an octave lower in ascending order, G to Ab, on the words “while there.” The last statement of the flute is G; the high point of the final statement is Ab and the last note played by the flute is G. This outlines the motive in both ascending and descending orders, bringing this unifying motivic element full circle.
Warren Benson has been quoted as having often said that he writes “easy music that is almost impossible to play.” This is somewhat the case with the music of *Five Lyrics of Louise Bogan*: because there are only two lines of music at any given time, one could be led to a false sense of ease and simplicity. The opposite is true, however: the challenges of performing this work lie in the soloistic nature of the two parts, and the vulnerability of the spare lines.

Careful breath management is paramount in any unaccompanied work for either flute or voice: Benson’s long, arching phrases require the highest level of ability in this area. Technical proficiency is required for both performers in order to achieve all of the composer’s indicated dynamics, tapering phrase structures, and wide ranges. With regard to the voice range, in *My Voice Not Being Proud* it is challenging for a mezzo to sing the highest note and the lowest note of the piece within a few measures (mm. 21, 27). At the other instance where a high Ab is to be sung (m. 43), there is some measure of difficulty in pronouncing the words clearly.

Because each instrument is required both to stand alone, and to blend with the other, masterful management of the breath is also necessary in tuning the two instruments. The performers must listen carefully to each other with regard to the partials in the tones, and the natural timbre of each instrument, especially when tuning the perfect, open intervals: the fourth, fifth, unison, and octave.

In some twentieth-century works, finding a pitch can be a challenge for a singer if

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there is not a strongly implied tonal center. Because Benson has written these songs with very definite tonal centers, this is not a problem. In addition, there are few wide leaps (more than an octave in range) for the voice, another potential challenge in singing the correct pitches. Of the four wide leaps in the first song of the cycle (mm. 21, 43, 52-53, and 65), only the one at m. 52-53 is fast, and therefore potentially difficult to execute. (See Appendix B, Example 1c.)

The most challenging aspect of the cycle is the extremely complex rhythms Benson uses throughout the work. Rhythmic patterns are complex both within each part and when the parts are combined, making precise counting mandatory. One example of this combined complexity is mm. 24-25, written in 3 ½ over 4 and comprised of duple against triple subdivisions in each part and between the two. (See Appendix B, Example 1b.) The ultimate challenge, then, is to allow Benson’s lyrical, free-flowing phrases to be just that, and not be bound by the constraints of the ever-present rhythmic divisions and subdivisions. Of his complex rhythms and their performance Benson writes:

How strict is my notation in terms of rhythm? It is very precise, given that suppleness of the phrase is more important than the rigidity of the phrase and the flow more important than the note by note exactitude. I am very concerned that the singers and instrumentalists that play my music play with a certain amount of abandon and sing with the same because they know the music well enough to feel that quality and spirit, and in order to sufficiently embrace their concepts of the work based on sufficient study and execution of minutiae as well as its overall art and the aura, which is a phenomenon about which I am most concerned in all of my music. 36

36 Interview with Warren Benson, March 11, 2002.
The Alchemist

I burned my life, that I might find
A passion wholly of the mind,
Thought divorced from eye and bone,
Ecstasy come to breath alone.
I broke my life, to seek relief
From the flawed light of love and grief.

With mounting beat the utter fire
Charred existence and desire.
It died low, ceased its sudden thresh.
I had found unmysterious flesh—
Not the mind’s avid substance—still
Passionate beyond the will.

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Alchemy is defined as: “the doctrine, study, and practice of chemistry in the
Middle Ages, which was chiefly concerned with transmutation of metals into gold and the
finding of a universal remedy for diseases.” In Bogan’s poem, the writer is an alchemist
who conducts an experiment to separate her “mind’s avid substance” from her body in
an attempt to convert the gross metals (experiences) of her life into gold. When the
experiment fails, she discovers “unmysterious flesh” and returns to the familiar passion
of her body, which is still stronger than her mind/will.

That the experiment fails is not necessarily seen as a “failure” to the poet.
however, but a type of victory: she understood the nature of the feeling of passion and
desire; her hypothesis as to the inevitability of the failure of any experiments to over-
come them was proven correct. Other poems written during this time in Bogan’s life
reflect the restlessness and suffering she was experiencing when she left Curt Alexander

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and struck out on her own. In this poem, however, Bogan seems to confront her situation head on, and with bold feminine pride. Her use of the first-person pronoun three times emphasizes this rare attempt at an expression of self-worth: the formal structure of the regular, rhyming tetrameter couplets that make up the two six-line stanzas strongly depicts the inevitability of the experiment's failure.\footnote{Upton. \textit{Obsession and Release}. 42.}

Benson reinforces Bogan's sense of inevitability with one of his own: the use of a theme that is repeated six times in the voice, beginning in mm. 2, 10, 29, 48, 56, and 69. Although the theme is varied both rhythmically and melodically in the six statements, it serves as a solid foundation when combined with the through-composed part of the flute, and is quickly recognized as a repeating theme with an ostinato-like effect. This is not surprising, as Benson has claimed to be "addicted" to ostinato.\footnote{Warren Benson, as cited in Wagner, "The Life and Works of Warren Benson." 205.} While this thematic repetition does not qualify as a strict ostinato, it does serve a similar purpose: that of grounding the work, and highlighting Bogan's ongoing sense of inevitability. Bogan's formal poetic structure, so important to her, is ignored by Benson in his attempt to keep the pulse going. The poem is made up of two six-line stanzas, yet the end of one stanza and the beginning of the next are juxtaposed in the second statement of the theme, mm. 14-15. (See Appendix B, Example 2b.)

In addition to ostinato, another favorite compositional technique of Benson is the use of strict imitation. There are two examples of this technique in this group of songs: one in \textit{The Alchemist} and the other in \textit{Fifteenth Farewell II}. The section of strict
imitation in this song, *The Alchemist*, interrupts the mezzo’s six thematic statements. The first voice appears in the flute at m. 37 with a grace note leap from the D above middle C up an octave. The imitation appears in the mezzo part at the interval of a fourth below, with an octave leap from A below middle C to the A above, starting in m. 40. (See Appendix B, Example 2c.) Interestingly, Benson employs this device after having set the words of the entire poem: the mezzo sings the syllables “ay ah” and “yah nah” while in imitation with the flute. Although the entrances of the two voices in imitation occur ten beats apart, Benson’s use of neutral syllables rather than text helps to identify the imitative lines. The use of neutral syllables and humming throughout the remainder of the song strengthens the sense of continuation and inevitability.

Points of rhythmic interest prevail in *The Alchemist*. The opening statement is again taken by the flute, as it was in the first song of the cycle, *My Voice Not Being Proud*. Here the statement is an explosive motor pattern of repeating thirty-second notes, interrupted occasionally by whole-step lower-neighbor tones and half-step upper-neighbor tones, reminding us of the unifying half-step motive. (See Appendix B, Example 2a.) At the end of the word “desire” in m. 20, the motor pattern occurs in sixteenth-notes rather than thirty-second notes. Benson marks the middle of this pattern with a diminuendo, noting in the score that the diminuendo is more important than playing all the notes. This indicates his use of rhythm as a device to emphasize the text, which at this point is “it died low.” It should be noted that further emphasis of this text is provided by a lengthy melisma (thirteen and one-half beats) for the mezzo on the word “low”. This is one of the few instances of melisma Benson uses in his primarily syllabic
setting of these texts.

The motor pattern slows, melting (like the alchemist's chemicals?) into the free, lyrical counterpoint found in *My Voice Not Being Proud*. This continues through the imitation, and the fifth and sixth statements of the theme. At the completion of the sixth and final statement of the theme in g minor, the key in which the piece opened, the flute bursts once again into the thirty-second-note motor pattern. This is briefly interrupted in mm. 83-84 by a twenty-one-note flourish of thirty-second notes spanning a three-octave range. (See Appendix B, Example 2d.) Unlike anything previously heard in the flute, this is perhaps one final, desperate reminder of the poet's passionate attempt to will mind over body. It, like the experiment, fails: the motor rhythm of thirty-second notes returns unheeded and completes the piece with a headstrong crescendo.

In addition to the half-step upper-neighboring tones emphasized in the opening statement of the flute, the half-step interval is used in the motivic pattern of G ascending to Ab in an extremely significant way in this piece. In its first three appearances, the repeated theme found in the voice clearly functions in the key of g minor (mm. 3, 11, and 29). The first note of the theme, D, is followed by the outline of a tonic triad in the key of G minor: G, Bb, D; a V7 harmony is outlined in m. 5: F#, A, D, C; and the resolution to the tonic in G minor is achieved in m. 6 with Bb, the third of the tonic chord. This strong tonic/dominant/tonic harmonic outline unquestionably establishes the key of G minor. As stated, the first three appearances of the theme are in this key.

After the appearance of this tonic/dominant/tonic key establishment in the fourth statement, the remainder of the thematic line is written one half-step higher. This is
shown by comparing mm. 8 and 54: the notes G, Eb and C# in m/8 are transposed up one half-step to G#, E and D in m. 54. The remainder of the fourth statement of the theme and most of the fifth statement occur, then, in the key of G#, or, enharmonically, Ab minor, thus creating an impressive use of the half-step motive on a much greater time scale.

A facile tonguing technique is required by the flutist to execute cleanly the groupings of eight thirty-second notes that begin The Alchemist. The groupings lessen in number from seven to six and then five sixteenth notes, thus requiring precise, clear articulation. At the culmination of this reduction in number of notes the flute is presented another challenging directive: a gradual diminuendo a niente, requiring a well-controlled airstream. This combination of demanding techniques is repeated in the next section, mm. 20-25, which Benson has marked “no accents: even rhythms more important than 6’s” and, as mentioned earlier, “the diminuendo is more important than playing all the notes.” Once again, the gradual diminuendo is a niente.

The coda-like section that ends the song presents additional challenges for the flute; in the final two measures Benson increases the number of repeated thirty-second notes to a grouping of six requiring extremely rapid compound tonguing. The desperate, passionate flourish in mm. 83-84 is made up of random notes, not belonging to any pattern, and may require additional practice.

The eight-measure transition after the completion of the poem text uses the neutral syllables “ay ah” and “yah nah” and is marked “reflective, not wailing.” (See Appendix B, Example 2c.) This specific indication by Benson requires that the mezzo pay careful
attention to accurate tuning of the glide ‘y’ to the center of the subsequent pitch. as a
tendency to portando between pitches on a glide would color the sound more toward a
‘wail.’ Following these measures of neutral syllables, ending the section of strict
imitation, Benson completes the last two statements of the theme, and continues the
‘reflective’ idea by having the mezzo hum them. Achieving a unified hum color
throughout the wide range of this section (A below middle C to high G#) is difficult: it
may be necessary to free the sound slightly by either opening the lips of a hum on ‘m,’ or
slightly lowering the front of the tongue of a hum on ‘n’ or the back of the tongue of a
hum on ‘ng’ to prevent the higher pitches from becoming pinched or strident. As in the
long, sustained sections requiring extremely efficient breath management in the flute,
evenness of breath flow is necessary for the mezzo to achieve an even tone throughout the
hum.
Juan’s Song

When beauty breaks and falls asunder
I feel no grief for it, but wonder,
When love, like a frail shell, lies broken.
I keep no chip of it for token.
I never had a man for friend
Who did not know that love must end.
I never had a girl for lover
Who could discern when love was over.
What the wise doubt, the fool believes—
Who is it, then, that love deceives?

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In her biography of Louise Bogan, Jaqueline Ridgeway states that the undercurrent of the poems that make up Body of This Death is the fact that alienation and loneliness are inherent in the relationships between men and women.\(^40\) Of this poem, Bogan herself remarked that in it “one can detect the bitterness which comes with a breakdown of early idealism.”\(^41\) Bogan seems to accept this breakdown as inevitable, as seen also in The Alchemist. She believed that men shied away from real commitment, feeling that love would end, and that women tried too hard to please, became resentful or expected too much, and were not willing to accept when love was over.

“Juan’s Song” is one of three poems in Body of this Death in which the speaker offers a male perspective of women: the other two are “The Frightened Man” and “The Romantic.” Although not specified, “Juan” could refer to the ultimate seducer, Don Juan, and Bogan’s view of men at the time this poem was written. Benson concurs with this

\(^{40}\) Ridgeway, Louise Bogan, 42.

opinion, stating that “Louise had a lot of trouble with men.”

Benson’s setting of Juan’s Song is unique among the five songs of the cycle, in that he does not use any of the text of the poem, only the title. The mezzo is instructed to use “oo” as in “Juan,” or “ah” as in “Juan,” or “n” as in “Juan,” or projections of these sounds. Wanting to create something different for the voice, Benson offer only these neutral syllables: the absence of text allows the voice to become more instrumental in nature, and therefore even more of an equal partner to the flute. Describing this choice, Benson says:

I thought it would be interesting to reverse the usual roles of wordlessness and bring the flute to the forefront as a soloist of great expressive and especially, seductive, power. This required me to create an accompaniment for the singer that was interesting, challenging, progressively developing, but remaining fundamentally the same so that in the process flowing melodic interest would lie entirely in the flute line. At the same time. I wanted to write a flute line that was essentially improvisational in its nature with a significant amount of vibrato. I was also interested in the structural elements of the piece, that is, simulating a change of key and style without basically altering the vocal ostinato while at the same time making things appear to be more different than they really were.

Following the example set in The Alchemist, Benson uses the voice as the groundwork over which the flute part is through-composed. Here, the voice is given a nine-measure passacaglia that repeats six times (the same number of repetitions used for the repeated pattern in The Alchemist), beginning at mm. 1, 10, 19, 28, 37, and 46.

Unlike the first two songs in the cycle, which begin with opening statements in the flute, Juan’s Song begins with the voice, stating the nine-measure passacaglia theme. It is

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44 Interview with Warren Benson, March 11, 2002.
important to note that the penultimate measure of the thematic statement contains the unifying motivic interval, Ab-G. Rhythmic emphasis is given to the motive through the change of meter from 3/4 to 4/4 the first four times the motive occurs, in mm. 8, 17, 26, and 35. The motive is also highlighted rhythmically in the last two statements of the theme. In m. 44, it is in triple meter against duple meter in the flute. At the conclusion of the piece, the Ab-G interval spans twelve beats, the Ab occurring first in m. 53, and the G not until m. 56. This lengthening of the time frame of the motivic interval greatly reinforces its importance.

In addition to this significant rhythmic emphasis, the Ab-G motive is important harmonically in Juan’s Song. The tonic harmony of the piece is C minor. This is found in the opening measures of the nine-measure passacaglia, where the voice outlines the harmonies: C minor, (Eb, G), G minor, (Bb, D, G), C minor, (C, Eb, G), and G minor7, (D, F, G). (See Appendix B. Example 3a.) This tonic/dominant/tonic/dominant relationship firmly establishes the key of C minor. The motivic interval, occurring in the penultimate measure of each of the statements of the passacaglia, provides a suspenseful harmonic emphasis, with the Ab acting as the upper neighbor non-chord tone to the final note of the tonic triad: C, Eb, Ab, G.

At the conclusion of the song, the motive is found in longer note values in the vocal passacaglia. The flute ends on D against the second note of the motive, G. Although an incomplete harmony, this open-fifth interval outlines the dominant triad, leaving us with an unresolved conclusion.

At the entrance of the flute in m. 10, the motivic interval occurs for the first of
eight times throughout the song. Here, the interval in its descending form, Ab-G, echoes the vocal occurrence of the motive in m. 8 an octave higher. It is then decorated by a triplet sixteenth-note mordent on the two pitches, once again emphasizing its importance. The remainder of the flute's opening statement follows this mordent pattern in eighth notes, highlighting the pitches of a descending C minor scale in the natural form.

The motivic interval occurs at the end of this descending scale pattern in mm. 14-15. and is emphatically repeated in mm. 16-17, immediately preceding the occurrence in the penultimate measure of the vocal passacaglia. It appears, therefore, three times within three measures, in the same octave, thus receiving further reinforcement.

The next appearance of the motivic interval in the flute again immediately precedes the penultimate measure of the vocal passacaglia, in mm. 25-26. Here, though, the interval appears in the flute an octave higher. The next two appearances of the motive are in this same octave, found in mm. 43-44 and 47-48. The last time the motive appears it is given rhythmic lengthening similar to the last appearance of the motive in The Alchemist: here the interval spans nine beats.

The same free, contrapuntal, lyric style found in the flute part in the first two songs is found in the first section of this one. Coinciding with the beginning of the fourth statement of the passacaglia in the voice, however, the flute gains in intensity, through increased dynamics, accented notes, and widening range. The bitonal climax of this heightened intensity is found in m. 32, where the flute outlines a striking A major triad marked forte, juxtaposed against an F minor triad in the voice, with the same dynamic marking. The lyric style returns in m. 37, in counterpoint with the fifth statement of the
passacaglia.

The starting pitch of this song is Eb, which, as previously mentioned, is used as both the starting and ending pitch of the cycle. The last note of *The Alchemist* is D; the starting pitch of *Juan’s Song*, Eb, is one half-step higher, another example of the pervasive half-step motive.

As mentioned above, the first voice we hear in this song is that of the singer. Following the instructions, described earlier, to use any part of the word “Juan,” either “oo,” “ah,” or “n.” means the mezzo continues the humming from the end section of the previous song, *The Alchemist*. The continuation of humming further emphasizes the motion of the half-step from the second to the third song.

It is sometimes difficult to maintain a steady neutral syllable for a length of time while singing. The choice of a neutral syllable for *Juan’s Song*, in the absence of any of the lyrics of the poem, results in the singer’s need to control the sound for a substantial length of time, from the last two statements of the theme in *The Alchemist* through all of *Juan’s Song*. It may be helpful to change sounds in *Juan’s Song*: perhaps starting with the “n” for the first three statements of the theme, and then opening to “oo” in m. 28 as the flute begins the louder section which is in a higher tessitura. A return to the “n” sound in m. 37 coincides with the flute’s return to the softer, more gentle style: the more closed sound of “n” may be easier to sustain throughout the last measures of the song and their gradually diminishing dynamic level.
Fifteenth Farewell

I
You may have all things from me, save my breath,
The slight life in my throat will not give pause
For your love, nor your loss, nor any cause.
Shall I be made a panderer to death,
Dig the green ground for darkness underneath.
Let the dust serve me, covering all that was
With all that will be? Better, from time's claws,
The hardened face under the subtle wreath.

Cooler than stones in wells, sweeter, more kind
Than hot, perfidious words, my breathing moves
Close to my plunging blood. Be strong, and hang
Unriven mist over my breast and mind.
My breath! We shall forget the heart that loves,
Though in my body beat its blade, and its fang.

II
I erred, when I thought loneliness the wide
Scent of mown grass over forsaken fields,
Or any shadow isolation yields.
Loneliness was the heart within your side.
Your thought, beyond my touch, was tilted air
Ringed with as many borders as the wind.
How could I judge you gentle or unkind
When all bright flying space was in your care?

Now that I leave you, I shall be made lonely
By simple empty days,—never that chill
Resonant heart to strike between my arms
Again, as though distraught for distance,—only
Levels of evening, now, behind a hill.
Or a late cock-crow from the darkening farms.
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As with The Alchemist, Fifteenth Farewell is a struggle between mind and body.

Here, the poet is describing the difficulties experienced in ending relationships. Although
not always successful in dismissing unworthy lovers. Bogan assesses her self-worth and
strength in this endeavor by referring to it as her “to-hell-my-love-with-you” mode, and feels that “we gals are at our best” during those times. The title of this poem, and the harshness of the first of its two Italian sonnets, indicate the extreme difficulties Bogan felt during those times in her life, calling on sheer determination of will to overcome the pains of loss. The poet summons numbing forces to squelch the fire of her passion, and to forget the love in her heart.

In the second sonnet, which is the portion of the poem set by Benson, Bogan’s tone is calmer, slower, more rational. She uses the past tense to describe her feelings; the farewell was successful this time. Yet the pain of loneliness is ever present; it was felt at the inattentive lover’s side, and will be felt in empty days without the lover.

In keeping with Louise Bogan’s constant struggle with relationships, with both males and females, throughout her life, the exaggerated number of (fifteen) attempts to dismiss this unsatisfactory partner is a recognition of her pattern of abiding unsatisfactory relationships rather than choosing to be alone in the world. In addition, the humor in the title seems to suggest an almost giddy uncertainty in this attempt to try a different, defiant approach.

Benson seems to adopt this giddiness in the syncopated, detached style he uses in setting the first eight lines of the second sonnet; this is the first time Benson has matched the form of the poem as set by Bogan, assigning different styles for the octet/sextet divisions of the sonnet. Giving the singer the instructions “dancy, (spaced syllables) but distant, removed” and the flute the expressive indication “detached” shows his intentions.

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45 Frank, Louise Bogan, 69.
in following Bogan's attempt to remove and detach herself from her distant lover.

In this song the voice enters first, as it does in Juan's Song. In a syncopated seven-measure statement, the first sentence of the poem is stated in a mix of eighth- and quarter-note values. Against this are contrapuntal interjections in the flute, in faster note values, creating the sense of distance, or perhaps mockery.

In mm. 8 through 18, we find the second example of Benson's favored contrapuntal technique, strict imitation. (See Appendix B, Example 4a.) This device was used also in The Alchemist, mm. 37-47. In Fifteenth Farewell the voice begins, and the flute follows two beats later, in strict imitation at the interval of a fifth above the voice. The shorter time lapse between the entrances of the imitative voices makes this section more easily recognizable as imitation than the section found in The Alchemist, where the voices are separated by 10 beats. A strong conclusion is given to this section: in m. 14. Benson sets the voice and the flute in a pattern of descending major and minor thirds; for the first time in the piece, the voices are found in rhythmic unison. (See Appendix B, Example 4a.) As in m. 32 of Juan's Song, Benson sets the two instruments in bitonal triads: here the flute outlines a B major triad, and the voice an E major triad. This same pattern is found in m. 22, reinforcing the end of the first eight lines, and the first sentiment of the poem, at the words "space was in your care." (See Appendix B, Example 4b.) Here the descending pattern of thirds (and here, one perfect fourth), again set homorhythmically, outlines an E major triad in the flute, and a C major triad in the voice. In each case, m. 14 and m. 22, the two forces "fight" in alternating half-step intervals: E in the voice against D# in the flute in m. 14; and G in the voice against G# in
the flute in m. 22. Although not the motivic interval of Ab-G, this rhythmically emphatic harmonic "conversation" again highlights the importance of the half-step interval.

Beginning in m. 24. Benson's tone changes along with Bogan's. As she becomes more despondent with the realization of her aloneness, he slows the tempo and lengthens the note values. Here, the motivic Ab-G interval is emphasized both rhythmically and textually. In m. 25 the voice sings "Now that I leave you," twice repeating the Ab-G descending half-step motivic interval. (See Appendix B. Example 4b.) The statement that follows greatly enhances the text "I shall be made lonely By simple empty days," as Benson uses ever-widening intervals to show Bogan's increasing loneliness. The flute in mm. 28-29 outlines descending intervals in gradually increasing degrees of a perfect fifth, a minor seventh, a major ninth, and a perfect eleventh, consecutively.

Throughout most of the cycle, Benson uses various contrapuntal techniques, including two sections of strict imitation, and syncopated rhythms to create a "weaving" texture between the flute and the voice. In Fifteenth Farewell II, however, he makes use of homorhythm with great effect, giving even greater emphasis to the passages of falling thirds (m. 14 and m. 22). In addition to these instances, Benson uses homorhythm to provide a solid, steady beat to the "chill resonant heart" in mm. 31 through 33.

In her final realization of loneliness, Bogan rejects the "chill resonant heart" and accepts her new-found "levels of evening," and the emptiness she will find in them. Benson's emptiness is realized in an even slower tempo, with the direction "more connected." The voice drones a repeating half-step interval between C and B, accompanied by a single, mournful statement in the flute, fading to nothing. The final.
even slower statement of the piece is taken by the voice, and resolved by the motivic Ab-G descending half-step.

_Fifteenth Farewell II_ begins with the mezzo in an opening statement clearly centered around G, the final pitch of _Juan's Song_, and therefore gives further unification to the cycle of songs. The section of strict imitation, beginning in m. 8, starts with the mezzo on C above middle C; at the end of the imitation, the mezzo completes the first section of this sonnet with a variation of the theme of the imitative section. This time the theme appears on C# above middle C, reinforcing the pervasive half-step motive.

_Fifteenth Farewell II_ is rhythmically challenging for the mezzo because of its constant syncopation; this is found through the entire piece except for the two measures of quarter notes in rhythmic unison with the flute, mm. 14 and 22. Also, it may be difficult to pronounce easily the words in mm. 19-21, written in a high tessitura, and marked "*piu mp. detached."

This is the only song of the five that ends with the mezzo alone. as Benson emphasizes the poet's description of thealoneness to be felt in the future.
Knowledge

Now that I know
How passion warms little
Of flesh in the mould,
And treasure is brittle.—

I'll lie here and learn
How over their ground,
Trees make a long shadow
And a light sound.

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In August of 1922, Poetry: A Magazine of Verse published five of Louise Bogan's poems. Of these, Bogan thought well enough of only the poem "Knowledge" to include it in her first book of poetry, Body of This Death. Stating that it moves from "a seventeenth-century plainness in its first stanza to a perfect Romantic image in its second." Elizabeth Frank believes that "Knowledge" is one of Bogan's consummate lyrics, dramatic and yet unforced.46 Profound statements abound in these few lines: "knowing" the sound and shadow of trees implies understanding mortality; yet women who desire "passion" and "treasure" and the brittleness of each, greatly fear that same mortality, and its boundaries of time.

The five poems published in 1922 show evidence of Bogan's ordeals with Alexander and Coffey, the other titles including "To A Dead Lover" and "Leave Taking." Although written when Bogan was much younger, the traditional, rhyming form and more objective tone of "Knowledge" exemplifies the style she was to take in her mature poetry, thus providing further evidence that her struggle between the heart and the mind existed

46 Frank. Louise Bogan, 62.
throughout her life.

In her book *The Veiled Mirror and the Woman Poet*, Elizabeth Dodd suggests that Bogan has earned intellectual "knowledge" through formalism, renouncing feeling and sexual passion. Dodd also takes quite a different approach in her view that the poet is writing from the grave, where the bitter unhappiness she felt when alive has now been translated into intellectual understanding, and hoped-for acceptance of loneliness remains an understanding of the body.  

If we say, then, that "Knowledge" can be interpreted as a summation of Louise Bogan's life, it is not surprising that Benson chose it to close his cycle. The song opens with a long, plaintive flute solo, as did the first song in the cycle. *My Voice Not Being Proud*. In a very slow tempo, with note values no smaller than an eighth, the poem is simply stated, and, gradually slowing through the end of the song, ends with a short, even slower, resolute coda in the flute.

In *Knowledge*, we are reminded of the series of falling thirds that were found in two passages (mm. 14 and 22) of *Fifteenth Farewell II*, in mm. 8-10 in the flute part, and mm. 18-21 in the voice, where a broken diminished triad outlines the words "lie here and learn how, over their ground Trees." This section spans a wide range for the mezzo: high G down to B below middle C, possibly describing the height of trees. (See Appendix B, Example 5a.)

The falling half-step motive that unifies the cycle is found at the very beginning of

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this song, in m. 1. (D-C#), mm. 5-6. (G-F#), and mm. 7-8 (D-C#). The rhyming words "little" and "brittle" are each set by a falling half-step: Bb-A and G-F#, respectively; this is rhythmically reinforced by a similar eighth-note/quarter-note pattern on each word. In mm. 18-19, the words "lie here" (in the grave?) are highlighted by the falling half-step motive first in the voice on G-F#, and echoed by the flute a fifth higher, D-C#, repeating the interval in the flute that opens the song. (See Appendix B, Example 5a.)

The final word sung by the mezzo, "sound," is set to the falling half-step interval E-D#; this is echoed an octave lower by the flute in its final two pitches of the piece. Although written enharmonically, it should be noted that this pitch (D#) is the same one that opened the cycle in the first song, My Voice Not Being Proud. (Eb), bringing the cycle full circle.

The shortest poem of the five, Knowledge is also the shortest song, thirty-one measures. In his typically syllabic style, Benson sets this poem simply, quietly, and slowly, with a tempo marking of quarter note = 48, and a dynamic range of p to ppp. Earlier, Bogan's formal outline of two four-line sections was described as having two distinct styles. Once again, however, Benson ignores this form, and ends the first four lines with a half-step motive in the flute (mm. 16-17) that is echoed in the voice in m.18, thus providing a sense of continuity between the two statements rather than completion of the first.

In summary, the sense of continuity that prevails throughout Five Lyrics of Louise Bogan is achieved by Benson's use of many factors in all five of the songs: ignoring the formal structure so important to Bogan's poems, with the exception of the octet/sextet
formal structure so important to Bogan's poems, with the exception of the octet/sextet break in *Fifteenth Farewell II*; use of syncopation and complex rhythmic patterns; firmly established tonal centers; a definite melodic relation from one song to the next; beginning and ending the cycle and the middle song with the same pitch; the use of primarily syllabic text-setting that pays careful attention to the texts; and the all-pervasive half-step motive. These and other factors make this an example of a well-written cycle, not one that fulfills the requirement solely by definition of using a single poet as the author of the texts.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


__________. Interview with the author. March 11, 2002.


APPENDIX A

Interview with Warren Benson

A questionnaire was mailed to Warren Benson, to which he responded on a cassette tape sent to his secretary to transcribe. She then mailed a copy of his answers to me. The following is that transcription, with emendations.

March 4, 2002

Dear Mrs. Jaber:

Regarding your questions:

Question: What was your association with Louise Bogan at the MacDowell Colony?

Answer: It was during my third residency at the Colony in the fall of 1963 that I met Louise. At that time she was employed as poetry critic for the New Yorker magazine. She was also acknowledged as one of the finest lyric poets of our time and very much respected by all the other members present. During my five weeks there, we gradually became acquainted and became friends. I would not say that we were close friends in any respect, rather fellow Colonists. We did enjoy several poetry readings in the evening in which she participated as well as afternoons in the library when she loved to play piano four-hand music with various other residents, not with myself. We rarely talked about
our work unless asked. Although I did come to ask Louise about the possibility of setting some of her poetry to which she responded favorably with relatively no direct experience of my music, but rather, comments from other composers present.

Question: Why did you choose Bogan’s poetry for this work?

Answer: I had read a number of her things in the past. My first choice was a setting which I did for the New York Choral Society, one of six movements that they performed at Lincoln Center, Avery Fisher Hall. The selection of poems for the songs took place over a rather lengthy period of time as I absorbed her work and the work of a number of poets who were being considered by myself at that time. The overriding feature regarding my choice was the rather edgy quality of her work in general as well as the strength and intensity of the feeling of the poems which I found rather special in poetry of such lyric style.

Question: Was there any specific reason why you chose these five poems?

Answer: After spending a great deal of time selecting maybe 35 or so poems as the general pool from which I would make my final selection, I decided rather than using the work of various poets to use these five poems of hers, which seemed to fall together quite naturally. I had not found a group of poems by other poets at that time which fit my present state of mind, whatever that was. I have always been very fussy about my texts. I live with them for months after choosing the final poems to see how stable they are as far as my own feelings are concerned, continually searching their sonoric quality as language.
their rhythmic quality as rhythm regardless of their poetic rhythms which are useful to
only a degree in music. There is a great deal of speculation about the relationship
between poetic rhythm and musical rhythm, rather more than is deserved, I think. The
rhythm of melody as opposed to the rhythm of harmony as opposed to the kinetic non-
pitch rhythm of words, as opposed to the rather artificial metric footage of poetry iambic
pentameter, for instance, indicating a five foot line which in music requires six beats, not
five to accomplish any kind of useful comparable rhythm. The poetry does not count
rests, so the actual line for a musician would read: tadaa, tadaa, tadaa, tadaa, tadaa, rest.
Also the pronunciation of certain letters in songs offers interesting problems. And I work
with these for a great deal of time before I make my final decision. When we think of the
word long, and pronounce the word slowly, we find that the beginning of the “L,” with
the tongue on the roof of the mouth and a rather guttural growl somewhere down below is
followed by the “au” sound, followed by the “n” sound hooked to the “g” sound. With a
release sound “guh,” it being almost impossible to release without making that noise. So
the word “long” has four or more parts to it as opposed to being a one-syllable word.
This kind of analysis can be very important in the expressive delineation of a song text.
Again, I think too much time is devoted to vowel expression, and very little, too little,
time spent on consonant expression of various kinds, and the breakdown of these into
their actual audible particles. In regard to the last statement, most of my choral music as
well as a lot of my vocal music notates the release as a percussive release, a pitchless
release of the consonant letter “t.” Too often choral groups and singers hide these very
important sounds with the results rather syrupy overall sonic blanket resulting, without
the marvelous sibilants and clicks and sputters of the various other sounds. So we are
leaving out one of the most important elements of the language and that is the
recognizable percussive contrasts to the smooth and silky vowels.

Question: Why was number three, Juan's Song, given no text?

Answer: Two reasons seem to come to mind this far away from the song:

1. I didn't think the text offered any more than I could give it without actually
uttering it.

2. I thought it would be interesting to reverse the usual roles of wordlessness and
bring the flute to the forefront as a soloist of great expressive and especially, seductive
power. This required me to create an accompaniment for the singer that was interesting,
challenging, progressively developing, but remaining fundamentally the same so that in
the process flowing melodic interest would lie entirely in the flute line. At the same time,
I wanted to write a flute line that was essentially improvisational in its nature with a
significant amount of vibrato. I was also interested in the structural elements of the piece,
that is: simulating a change of key and style without basically altering the vocal ostinato
while at the same time making things appear to be more different than they really were.
This is the game we play!

Question: Are there any factors which qualify this as a song cycle other than the poet's
name?

Answer: A song cycle is a song cycle, as you choose to name it. Some cycles are timely,
that is flowing through the seasons of the year or the months of the year or the moods of
man or the seasons. Some cycles are cycles because they bring the composer to one
mind, over and over again, and that is the entity of the piece not its independent parts as
the foremost concern.

Question: One author suggests that "Knowledge" is the view of the writer from the
grave. Do you agree?

Answer: That doesn't seem to me to be a remarkable observation. The attribution of
meaning of the poem by a variety of writers, critics and others is only one part of the
poem and a questionable one at that. Poetry is poetry because its direction is not
declarative and to impose on it the declarative issues of academic prose, which is where
most of this kind of stuff springs from, is a disservice to the poet. That is not to say that I
don't interpret poems myself, but think to put my interpretation in prose writing is an
intrusion into my music. My music is what the poem means to me. We shouldn't forget
Mendelssohn who reminds us that music is too precise for words.

Question: Because it was commissioned by them, was this work written for any specific
talent of Miss Boyd and Miss deGaetani?

Answer: The work was only commissioned by one of them. It was commissioned by
Bonita Boyd. Without question, the work was for their specific talents, which are too
numerous to mention and because of my personal acquaintance with them too subtle to be
useful to a lot of other people. I think. Except to say that anything that I could write or
dream up, Jan de Gaetani would do, as long as I was able to replicate it with some degree of indication of what I wanted myself. She loathed composers who didn't recognize wrong notes in their own pieces.

In conclusion, I would just like to say that I was very close to Bonnie since she had been my student in the earliest '70s, a classmate of your delightful and wonderful flute companion in this work [Leone Buyse]. The years that passed before I wrote the work in '78. I guess it was, I heard her play many, many times since her student days and my experience with Jan was that of intimate acquaintance with her recordings and her public concerts in Rochester. We were often lunchtime companions and talked shop as people sometimes do. Sufficiently, so that I was very well acquainted with her attitudes as well as her extraordinary technical skills, her will and her daring as well as the sumptuous voice. I would say that many, many commissions are written for individuals and organizations, and written very successfully by composers who do not have intimate knowledge of the individual performers, or even sometimes of the ensemble for whom they are writing. Fundamentally, all of the above notwithstanding, it comes down to two things with songs: the quality of the words and the quality of the music. the poet and the composer. With poor quality on either side the song cycle has to suffer or the song.

How strict is my notation in terms of rhythm? It is very precise, given that the suppleness of the phrase is more important than the rigidity of the phrase and the flow more important than the note by note exactitude. I am very concerned that the singers and instrumentalists that play my music play with a certain amount of abandon and sing with the same because they know the music well enough to feel that quality and spirit. and in
order to sufficiently embrace their concepts of the work based on sufficient study and
execution of minutiae as well as its overall art and the aura, which is a phenomenon about
which I am most concerned in all of my music. So I would just conclude the current
installment with that only to add a comment that I did all of this once before and
somehow I have lost the tape and after investigating whether I had mailed it or not
decided I had better do it over again. You can be sure that this session is much better
than the last one. Believe me. Sorry for being so remiss. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Warren Benson
APPENDIX B

Music for Warren Benson's *Five Lyrics of Louise Bogan*
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Example 1: Warren Benson's *Five Lyrics of Louise Bogan*
*My Voice Not Being Proud*
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Example 1a: *My Voice Not Being Proud* mm. 1-5
Example 1b: My Voice Not Being Proud mm. 18-25

Example 1c: My Voice Not Being Proud mm. 50-58
Example 2: Warren Benson's *Five Lyrics of Louise Bogan*

*The Alchemist*

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Example 2a: *The Alchemist* mm. 1-13

I burned my life, the

I might find A passion wholly of the mind, (d)

Thought divorced from eye and bone, Ecstasy come to

breath alone. I broke my life to seek relief from the flawed light of
Example 2b: The Alchemist mm. 14-17

love and grief. With mounting beat the utter fire. Chilled.

Example 2c: The Alchemist mm. 36-43

still passionate beyond the will.

yah yah yah yah yah
Example 2d: *The Alchemist* mm. 82-86
Example 3: Warren Benson's *Five Lyrics of Louise Bogan*

*Juan's Song*

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Example 3a: *Juan's Song* mm. 1-20
Example 4: Warren Benson's *Five Lyrics of Louise Bogan*
*Fifteenth Farewell II*
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Example 4a: *Fifteenth Farewell II* mm. 7-18

(Musical notation with lyrics overlaid)

*Translation:*

7th measure:

- "Lone-li-ness was the heart within your side."

11th measure:

- "Beyond my touch, was tilled air ringed with so many"

14th measure:

- "Borders as the wind."

(Continued with musical notation and lyrics)
Example 4b: *Fifteenth Farewell II* mm. 19-26

How could I judge you gentle or unkind when all bright flying

space was in your care? Now that I leave you,
Example 5: Warren Benson’s *Five Lyrics of Louise Bogan*

*Knowledge*

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Example 5a: *Knowledge* mm. 18-22

lie here and learn how, over their ground, trees make a long