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AN ANALYSIS OF THE TECHNIQUE AND STYLE  
OF SELECTED BLACK-AMERICAN COMPOSERS OF  
CONTEMPORARY CHORAL MUSIC

By

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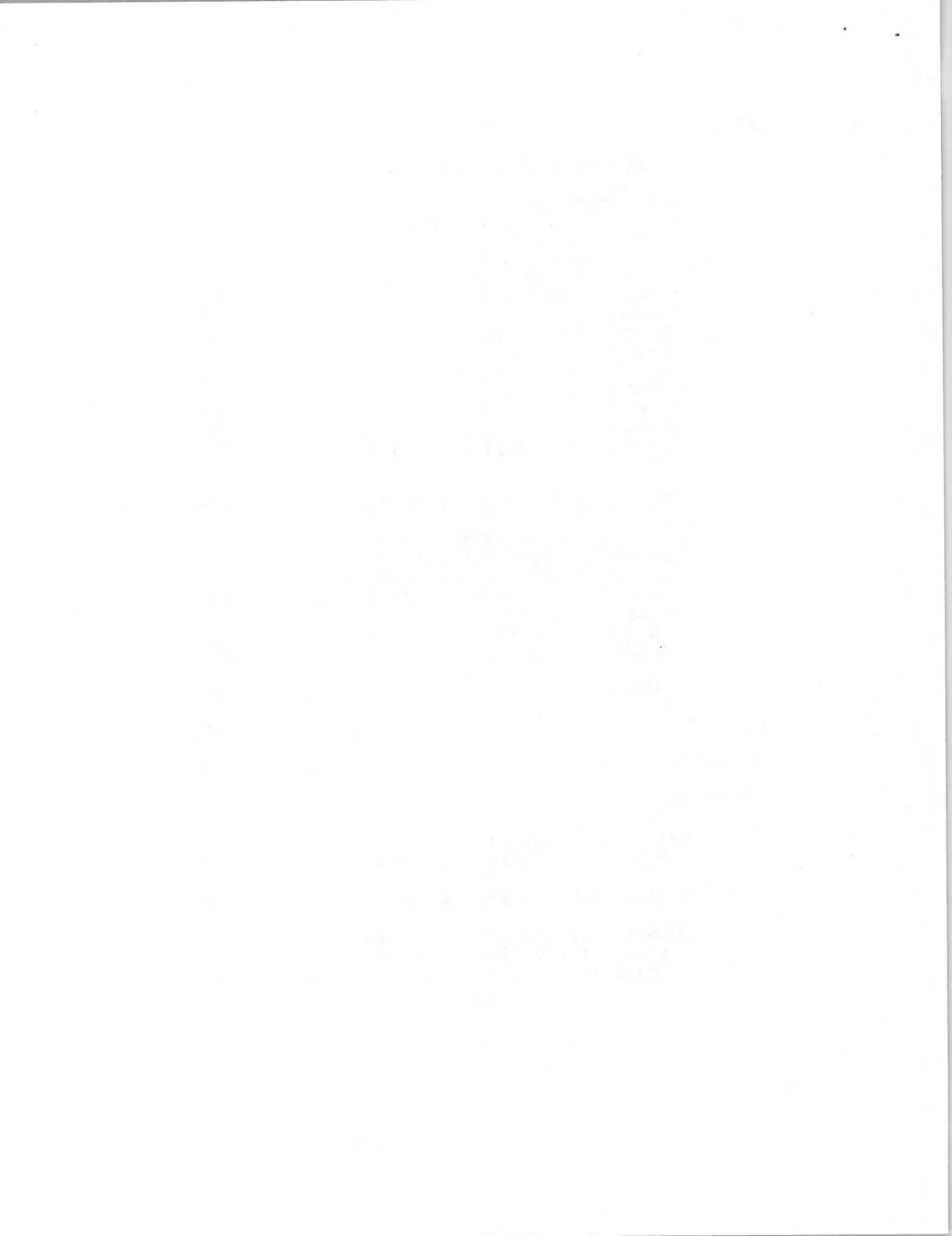
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James Furman

Born January 23, 1937 in Louisville, Kentucky, James Furman was educated at the University of Louisville where he received a Bachelors decree in Music Education (1958) with a major emphasis in piano and voice and a Master of Music (1965) with a major in Theory and Composition. Further studies were undertaken at Brandeis (Ph.D.) and Harvard University. Among his teachers have been Harold Schmidt and Walter Dahlin (choral), Benjamin Owen and Permelia Hansbrough (piano), Irvin Fine, Arthur Berger, George Perle, and Harold Shapero (composition). In 1967, Furman made his New York Town Hall debut with the Western Connecticut State College choir in the area of conducting.

Furman has been the recipient of numerous award and honors. In 1958, he received the Omicron Delta Kappa award, was the first place winner of the Louisville Philharmonic Society's Young Artists Contest which gave him the honor of appearing with the Louisville Symphony Orchestra in 1953, and received a Brandeis University Fellowship (1962-64). The National Federation of Music Clubs awarded him the Award of Merit for distinguished service to music in 1965-66 and the Award of Merit in the 1967 Parade of American Music.

Furman has been active as a teacher, composer, and recitalist. As a composer, his works include several choral compositions, works for chamber ensembles as well as works for the solo vocal and instrumental mediums. As a teacher, Furman has served in the public schools of

Louisville, Kentucky and Mamaroneck, New York, at Brandeis University and is currently engaged as associate professor of music at Western Connecticut State College (1965-78). He also served as the choral director for the British Broadcasting Company documentary film on the life of Charles Ives, as choral director for the American Symphony Orchestra chorus in a Charles Ives Centennial Concert on July 4, 1974, in Danbury, Connecticut, as choral director of the Harvard University summer chorus and chamber chorus in 1961, as musical director-arranger-pianist for the World Touring Army Show, "Rolling Along of 1961," and as assistant choral director of the chorus and chamber chorus at Brandeis University (1962-68).

Furman has been included in the following books and articles: Contemporary American Composers: A Biographical Dictionary by Ruth Anderson, Annual Report 1970-71 Center for Ethnic Music by Vada E. Butcher, AAMO Resource Papers, A Monographic Series No. 2: A Name List of Black Composers by Dominique-Rene de Lerma, Who's Who Among Black Americans, Harmonic Practice in the Art Music of Black Composers by Allen Breach and Constance Hobson and Twentieth Century Black American Composers by Alice Tischler.

One of Furman's most recent and impressive works is The Declaration of Independence for Narrator and Orchestra. The work, scored for full orchestra and bagpipes, is based on the complete text of the independence document. The premiere performance was given April 28, 1977 with Governor

Ella Grasso of Connecticut as narrator.

This account of the work, cast in eight sections, was offered in the program notes for the premiere performance:

. . . The opening Fanfare foreshadows the prominent role assigned the brasses throughout the work. The bold brass statements are replaced with muted sounds in anticipation of the ensuing narration. An incipient, "a la Puccini" lyricism is evident in the string writing that follows We Hold These Truths. After an unaccompanied section for narrator, a percussion ostinato provides the framework for the words He Has Obstructed. A brief interruption of the "Bolero style" accompaniment is found with the phrase "He has erected. . ." where the percussionists are instructed to "use your imagination!" Later, a second ostinato, based upon a figure in the fanfare, is introduced in the timpani, cello, and bass. Infernalis scored for full orchestra and bagpipes, represents the apex of the work. The march-like quality is heightened by the introduction of the bagpipes. The narration returns with He Has Abdicated which features solo writing for piccolo, two trumpets (one muted), bassoon, oboe, field drum, and cello (drone). In Every State is for narrator alone. The organic musical expression of the finale -- from the opening statement in the solo strings to the grandiose pronouncement of the full orchestra with organ -- evokes a deep affirmative spirit that characterizes the document that gave birth to American freedom.<sup>29</sup>

A review of this work offered the following comments:

The music always fitted the words with drum rolls and cymbal brushing; effective pizzicatos in the cellos and basses and the use of a myriad of percussion instruments. . . . a climax of greatness comparable to the great writing which inspired the piece.<sup>30</sup>

#### Works:

##### Chamber Music:

Variants for Violin, Cello, and Prepared Piano	1963
Incantation for B Clarinet and Strings	1976

## Chamber Music (con't)

- Battle Scenes for Winds,  
Percussions and Amplified  
Harpsichord 1976
1. The Battle
  2. Annette
  3. Battle of New Orleans
  4. Johnson's March
- Recitative and Aria for Solo  
Horn and Woodwinds 1977
- Fanfare and Finale for Brass  
and Percussion

## Orchestra:

- Fantasia and Chorale for Strings 1971
- The Declaration of Independence  
for Narrator and Orchestra 1976
- Cantilena for Strings from  
Declaration of Independence 1977

## Solo Instrument or Voice:

- Songs for Juvenilia for Voice  
and Piano 1956
1. Tom, Tom, the Piper's Son
  2. Little Boy Blue
  3. Contrary Mary
  4. Humpty Dumpty
- Roulade for Solo Flute 1975
- Suite for Solo B♭ Clarinet 1976
1. Introitus
  2. Moresca
  3. Incantation
  4. Motore Musica
- Vocalise Romantique for Voice  
and Piano 1976
- Sonata for Solo Violin 1977

## Theatre Music:

- Hey Mr. Jefferson
- The Virgin Voter

The choral works by Furman, as does his instrumental music, falls into several categories. Many of the choral pieces are based on the black experience. (Furman is a gospel specialist and is currently completing a book

entitles Afro-American Gospel Music, a History and Performance Practice.) Others, however, have been influenced by the motet style of the early church while some draw upon twentieth century aleatoric techniques.

#### Choral Works:

Let Us Break Bread Together	SATB	1957
Trampin'	SATB, solo	1959
I Keep Journeyin' On	SATB, solo	1962
The Threefold Birth	SATB, Boys	
	Voices and Organ	1962
The Quiet Life	SATB	1968
1. Fanfare and Pastorale		
2. Quiet by Day		
3. Sound Sleep By Night		
4. Thus Let Me Live		
Some Glorious Day	SATB	1971
Go Tell It On The Mountain		
Spiritual gospelization for	SATB	1971
Ave Maria	SSAATTBB	1971
Come, Thou Long Expected		
Jesus	SATB	1971
Four Little Foxes	SATB	1971
1. Speak Gently		
2. Walk Softly		
3. Go Lightly		
4. Step Softly		
Hold On		
SATB, solo, piano and electronic organ		1972
Hehlehlooyuh, A Joyful		
Expression	SATB	1976
I Have A Dream (Symphonic Oratorio)		1970
Mixed Chorus, Gospel Chorus,		
Baritone Soloist, Folk Singer,		
Gospel Singers I and II,		
Rock Combo		

For the purpose of this study, only those compositions which draw upon the techniques outlined in Chapter I will be examined. These works include: 1) the four movements of Four Little Foxes, 2) Salve Regina, 3) three movements of The Quiet Life. Because of the techniques used in the oratorio, I Have A Dream, a discussion of this work will

also be included.

### Four Little Foxes

Four Little Foxes is a cycle of four short pieces based on the poems by the same name from Covenant with Earth: A Selection from the Poems of Lew Sarett. The four settings are written for unaccompanied mixed choir and include the following poems: 1) Speak Gently, 2) Walk Softly, 3) Go Lightly, 4) Step Softly.

#### Texts:

Speak gently, Spring, and make no sudden sound;  
For in my windy valley yesterday I found  
New born foxes quirming on the ground  
Speak gently.

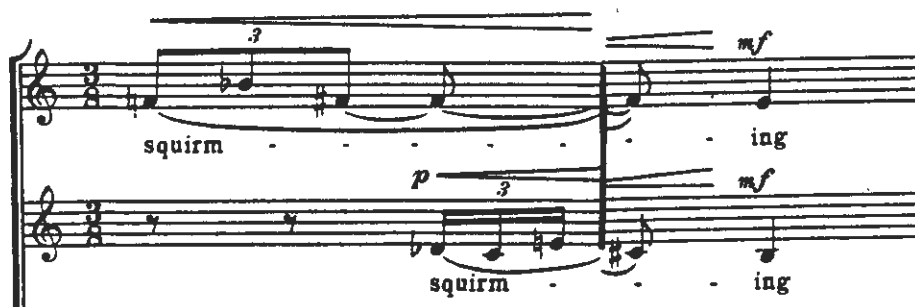
Walk softly, March, forbear the bitter blow,  
Her feet within a trap, her blood upon the snow,  
The four little foxes saw their mother go  
Walk softly.

Go lightly, Spring, oh give them no alarm;  
When I covered them with boughs to shelter them  
from harm,  
The thin blue foxes suckled at my arm  
Go lightly.

Step softly, March, with your rampant hurricane  
Nuzzling one another and whimp'ring with pain,  
The new little foxes are shiv'ring in the rain  
Step softly.

Speak Gently is written in a syllabic style with only one example of melisma which occurs on the word "squirming" (measures 8-9 in the soprano and alto voices).

## Example 66.



The entire movement, permeated by changing meters, is through-composed with a recurrence of the opening phrase at the end of the piece.

Furman makes extensive use of the triplet in situations which imply action. The word "windy" (measure 5, soprano) is an example, but the most poetic instance occurs on the word "squirming" which has been cited above. More emphasis is given to this word with the imitative manner in which the composer presents the triplet figure. In measure 7, another instance of imitation in falling semi-tones is effective on the word "New born" which is next presented syllabically and makes use of the falling minor second.

Chromaticism is prevalent in this setting. The pitch range of the melody of these twelve measures is within the range of an octave and makes use of eleven of the twelve notes of the chromatic scale. The double inflection occurs as a result of the high degree of chromaticism. In measure 2, both the E-natural and the E-flat are found

and in measure 5 the first half of the third beat produces another example.

Example 67.



In the first two lines, the use of rests breaks the setting of the poetry into short bits of conversation-like segments. The overall effect of this setting is a four-voice narrative. In contrast, the last line is a continuous, uninterrupted flow that extends through measure 10.

The form of Walk Softly is cast in three distinct, concise sections. These sections are designated as A B A, not because of similarities and differences in musical materials, but because of the use of contrapuntal contrasted with homophonic treatment.

The setting begins with contrapuntal writing in which a two note motive is presented by alto, tenor, then soprano, respectively. The two notes are not consistently presented intervallically or rhythmically alike, but the effect is an imitative motet style.

## Example 68.

Andante legato ♩ = ca. 66 *mp cresc. poco a poco*

*p* *poco* *mp cresc. poco a poco*

Soft-ly— walk, soft-ly, walk soft.

*p cresc. poco a poco*

Soft-ly walk, walk soft.

*p* *poco* *p cresc. poco a poco*

Walk, walk— soft— ly,

The B section beginning in measure 7, is basically homophonic. The pedal tone, which is featured frequently in Furman's music, is found in the soprano voice. From the repeated D-flat, a series of vertical structures are developed into a four-part female texture.

## Example 69.

*marcato con moto* *mp* *f* *ff* *mf* Solo (off stage)

for - bear the bit - ter blow; Her

*marcato con moto* *mf* *f* *ff*

the bit - ter blow;

The dominant interval in the third section (measure 14) is the fifth. The motive is a falling perfect fifth, answered by the ascending perfect fifth. The words of the text are alternated between the voices.

## Example 70.

Example 70 is a musical score for four staves. The first staff is marked 'Tutti mp' and contains the lyrics 'The four saw their moth-er'. The second staff is marked 'mp' and contains the lyrics 'lit-tle—'. The third staff is marked 'p non cresc.' and contains the lyrics 'fox - es moth - er'. The fourth staff is marked 'p non cresc.' and contains the lyrics 'fox - es moth - er'. The score includes various performance markings such as 'poco', 'non cresc.', and 'mp'. A measure number '15' is indicated above the first staff.

As in the first movement, the title words, "Walk softly" are presented in homophonic style in the closing measures.

Go Lightly is basically contrapuntal and as in the preceding setting, three sections are discernable:

## Example 71.

Example 71 is a diagram showing the structure of the piece. It consists of five sections: 1 (measures 1-8), BRIDGE (measures 9-11), 2 (measures 12-14), 3 (measures 14-18), and CODA (measures 18-19). The measures are indicated by numbers below the section lines.

The technique of imitative writing is clearly evident in section 1 and 2. The motive is stated by the alto in measure 1 and answered by the soprano at the fourth.

## Example 72.

Example 72 is a musical notation for a single melodic line. It is written in a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 3/4 time signature. The melody consists of a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, ending with a double bar line.

Each of the subsequent entries continues with free counterpoint consisting of duplets and triplets. This section is brought to a close in measure 8.

Measures 9-11 have been designated as a bridge because

of the short length and linking character. The eighth note figure used in measure 10 is related to material in section 1, but its character is now changed.

Section 2 uses the motive presented at the beginning of the setting, but it is now sung in inversion.

A texture change takes place at measure 15. The soprano presents in unison the first three words of the text "The thin blue," and from measure 16 to the end, a syllabic treatment of the words insues. In measure 17, the voices sing in octaves, a striking contrast to the six part chord which follows.

The last measure is reminiscent both in rhythm and chord structure of the ending of the previous setting, Walk Softly.

Example 73.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for a vocal setting. Each system consists of four staves, likely representing Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass parts. The first system is marked 'poco rit.' and features lyrics 'Walk soft - ly.' with dynamic markings *p* and *mp*. The second system is marked with a tempo indication '♩ = ca. 42 <poco>' and features lyrics 'Go light-ly.' with dynamic markings *p* and *mp*. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and slurs, indicating a flowing and rhythmic movement.

This movement is rhythmically more flowing than the previous settings. Changing meters are prevalent and there is a gradual decrease in tempo.

Step Softly, the only movement in a quick tempo, has two distinct motives. The tenor and bass execute a motive which suggests soft steps and consists of six vertical dyads that are repeated seven times (measures 1-14).

Example 74.



In measure 15, a different set of harmonies at a higher pitch level is repeated three times.

Example 75.



The same rhythmic pattern in measure 25 is presented in perfect fourths and seven measures later, the fourth becomes augmented.

The second motive is a melismatic duet between alto and soprano. In measure 6, the melisma is simultaneous and in octaves. However, in measure 8, the soprano begins the melody and is subsequently imitated a sixth below. The next entrance, an alto solo, is imitated by solo soprano. Each entry begins alike but becomes free as the line progresses.

The upper voices in measure 25 have an augmented version

of the tenor and bass rhythm. The hemiola effect continues for three measures in a gradual increase in tempo. Intervallically, the tenor and bass have a perfect fourth (G to C natural) while the soprano and alto sing an augmented fourth (G to C sharp). The C sharp against a C natural form a double inflection. Other examples of double inflections can be found in measures 38 (tenor and soprano), measures 17, 19, and 21 (tenor and bass), and measure 34 (alto and tenor).

There are several examples of melismas which are effectively used in what might be considered word-painting situations. The words "rampant" (measure 9-10, soprano, and 13-14, alto), "nuzzling" (measures 18-19), "whimp'ring" (measures 21-22), "rain" (measures 30-31, alto and soprano), and perhaps the most significant example, "shiv'ring" (measure 29, alto and soprano), all suggest motion or action and are treated melismatically.

The fourth and fifth seem to be significant intervals in this setting. The fourth in the "step motive" has already been mentioned. and examples of parallel writing using these intervals are found in measure 29-30.

Each of the movements of the Four Little Foxes cycle is based on tonal centers. The vertical structures in homophonic textures consists mainly of seconds, fourths, fifths, and minor sixths and these intervals comprise compound chords. The same type of interval structures occur as a result of the combination of horizontal lines.

The performance time of the four short, narrative settings is about three minutes.

### Salve Regina

Salve Regina<sup>31</sup> is a motet written for unaccompanied mixed choir.

#### Text:

Salve Regina mater misericordiae  
 Vita, dulce do et spes nostra, salve.  
 Ad te clamamus, excules, filii Havae  
 Ad te suspicamus gementes et flentes in hoc  
 lacrimarum valle.  
 Eia ergo, Advocata nostra, illos tuos misericordea  
 oculus ad nos converte.  
 Et Jesum, benedictum fructum ventris tui, nobis  
 post hoc exsilium ostendi.  
 O clemens: O pia: O dulcis Virgo Maris

#### Translation:

Hail Queen, mother of mercy.  
 Life, sweetness, and hope of ours, hail.  
 To thee we cry, exiles, children of Eve.  
 To thee we sign, groaning and weeping in this tearful  
 valley.  
 Ah then, Advocate of ours, those thy merciful eyes  
 towards us turn thou.  
 And Jesus, blessed fruit of the womb of thee,  
 to us after this exile show thou.  
 O clement: O tender: O sweet Virgin Mary.

With few exceptions, each line of this hymn is treated texturally different so that there are seven variations.

Measures 1-4, which are syllabic, are written in the key of A minor.

## Example 76.

gently flowing (♩ = circa 52) acc. e cresc. rit.

Sop. Sal-ve Re-gi-na ma-ter mi-se-re-ri cor-di-ae:

Alto Sal-ve Re-gi-na ma-ter mi-se-re-ri cor-di-ae:

Tenor Sal-ve Re-gi-na ma-ter mi-se-re-ri cor-di-ae:

Bass Sal-ve Re-gi-na ma-ter mi-se-re-ri cor-di-ae:

The texture at measure 5 changes to a more contrapuntal style with the triplet figure being the significant rhythm. In measure 9, a kind of vocal klangfarbenmelodie<sup>32</sup> is found. Each syllable of the text and melody is taken by a different voice giving a quick succession of timbres to the melody line.

## Example 77.

lightly flowing (♩ = circa 52) acc. e cresc. marc. acc. e cresc. marc. acc. e cresc. marc. acc. e cresc. marc.

Ad mus, fi-li- Ad te sus-ra-mus, He-va-e. Sus-pi-ex-sus-les. He- Sus-

9 10 11 12 13

This technique continues through measure 13.

Still another treatment of text is presented in measure 19. Here the first soprano and tenor sings in a cantabile style while the inner voices (soprano II and alto) present a staccato articulation. The key signature for this section changes to five sharps. The tonalities of B major or

G sharp minor in the tertian sense, however, are not perceivable.

Example 78.

In measure 23, there is a repeat of the first section (measures 1-4) to the text, "Et Jesum, benedictum fructum ventris tui." Measures 27-29 corresponds to measures 6-8 in texture and in devices used. A "sweeping"  $\frac{3}{8}$  meter is used to presented the last line of supplication.

Example 79

This setting of the Salve Regina is tonal. It begins in A minor and cadences on the dominant seventh chord in measure 4. Sonorities then begin to move away from tertian varieties and vertical structures consisting

of seconds, fourths, and sevenths become more frequent. In measure 23, with the return to the first section, the A minor tonality is again perceivable. The final cadence has a bass movement that moves down a fourth, the only plagal-like cadence in the piece. The chords however, are basically built in seconds.

Example 80.



### The Quiet Life

The Quiet Life is a cycle of four movements for unaccompanied mixed choir. The first movement, "Fanfare and Pastorale," also calls for soprano, alto, tenor, and baritone soloists. The text is taken from the works of Alexander Pope.

Texts:

#### I. Fanfare (Happy The Man) and Pastorale (In Winter Fare)

Happy the man, whose wish and care  
A few paternal acres bound,  
Content to breathe his native air  
In his own ground, whose herds with milk, whose  
fields with bread,  
Whose flocks supply him with attire  
Whose trees in summer yield him shade, in winter,  
fire.

## II. Quiet By Day

Blest who can unconcernedly find hours, days, years  
 slide soft away, health of body, peace of mind,  
 quiet by day.

## III. Sound Sleep By Night

Sound sleep by night; study and ease together  
 mixed; sweet recreation, and innocence, which  
 most does please with meditation.

## IV. Thus Let Me Live

Thus let me live unseen, unseen unknown  
 Thus unlamented let me die steal from  
 the world not a stone  
 Tell where I lie.<sup>33</sup>

The opening movement features changing meters and has no perceivable tonal center. The composer, through the use of sixteenth and eighth notes, asks for a non-legato articulation that is further reiterated by the tenor who syncopes the rhythm by singing on the second sixteenth of the beat.

A change in vocal timbre occurs in measure 21 as a four-part male chorus presents the text in a legato versus staccato treatment which has been found in other of Furman's works. (See Example 81.) Another example of syncoping takes place as the bass voice sings the words "whose fields with bread" on either the second or the third beats (measures 23-26).

A significant rhythmic motive, introduced in measure 26, becomes a unifying device for the first three movements. The thirty-second note followed by the dotted sixteenth note or the equivalent of that rhythm in other note values,

is first presented by the first bass (measure 26), and is found again in measures 28 (soprano solo), 30 (tenor solo), and 31 (soprano and alto solo). It becomes predominant in measures 32 and 33 and can be found in every measure after this to the end of the movement including the whispered rhythm in measure 40.

The movement is through composed with each line of text written to a different musical idea. Vertical structures consist of those miscellaneous intervals which have no specific tertian function. Although there are scattered homophonic measures, the movement is basically linear in texture. Lines are interspersed with rests which forms an almost staccato articulation. Cadences are virtually non-existent and the points of rests that do occur are not suggestive of traditional progressions even though bass movement is usually by ascending or descending second.

The beginning mood of this movement, marked "with firm vigor" by the composer, shifts to an adagio that is free and legato. The mood then changes to a playful one and ends with agitation and mystery. As seen in other works by Furman, the composer writes into his music a narrative-like quality which is effected by the use of rhythmic figures and tempo changes.

Quiet By Day, the second movement of the cycle, is a through composed work scored for mixed voices. The bass voice consists of a descending sustained line moving from

C<sup>1</sup> (measure 1) to its lowest point of G flat (measure 18). The only point at which the downward movement is interrupted occurs in measure 10 where the line moves from F sharp up to G sharp before continuing to E flat and D.

The upper voices are more active and more imitative. The imitation in most cases, is not melodic but rather rhythmic as shown in the first measure between the alto and tenor.

Example 81.



The rhythmic figure used is from the previous movement. Further rhythmic imitation using this pattern can be found in measure 5 (alto and tenor), measures 13-14 (alto and tenor), measure 15 (soprano and alto), and measures 11-12 (alto, soprano, and alto).

The setting is linearly conceived, but has one example of homophonic writing which occurs in measure 2. Spacing between voices tends to be wide thus causing an overall open sound. Voice parts, frequently characterized by large skips, utilize their full range.

Sound Sleep By Night begins with the previously discussed unifying motive (alto and tenor) and, in the first five

measures, several additional examples can be found.

The alto and tenor lines, presented in measure 1, is imitated a sixth below by the bass in measure 2. Rhythmic imitation occurs between soprano, tenor, alto, and bass in measures 4-6. Another example in which the bass answers the alto at the tritone, occurs in measures 14-15 on the text "and innocence."


The composer has chosen the word "together" to pair voices in unison presentation. This pairing occurs in measures 8-9 (soprano and tenor) and 9-10 (alto and bass).

An interesting use of what the composer terms "canon using contrary motion" is found in measures 12-20. The alto and bass, in mirror inversion, are imitated by the soprano and tenor. This process with some change in vocal pairing, continues to measure 20 and the last thought, "with meditation" is sung in unison and in octaves by bass and tenor.

Thus Let Me Live, dominated by the triplet as a rhythmic device, is short and narrative and has only two examples of homophonic writing (measures 6 and 13). Free counterpoint is prevalent throughout this piece and there is very little rhythmic or melodic imitation. Rather, at the beginning, there seems to be three independent voices without restraint of contrapuntal rules quietly and freely delivering the words, "Thus let me live unseen, unseen unknown." Only on the text, "Thus unlamented" do these

voices, with addition of the divisi bass, come together rhythmically and at this point (measure 6), the texture expands to eight parts.

The composer wishes independence again as the four voices, each in its own rhythm and unified only by the triplet movement, exclaims the text "Let me die, steal from the world not a stone." In measure 12, all voices except the tenor are dropped and this lone voice acts as a pivot into the homophonic presentation which follows. An interesting effect is achieved as the alto voice sings "Let me live" while the tenor whispers these words. The remaining voices are holding a compound chord that gradually dies out. The closing measures are an effective ending for the cycle.

The Quiet Life, having no perceivable tonal center, is unified by several devices: 1) a recurring rhythmic motive,  found in each setting, 2) the narrative quality exemplified by the use of rests between words and segments of sentences, 3) the use of frequent changes of tempo and mood, and 4) the almost consistent use of linear writing.

The composer uses the voice not only in the traditional singing, but calls for occasional whispers, vocal glissandi (III. Sound Sleep By Night, measure 7), a falsetto quality from sopranos which he indicates with string harmonic symbols (V. Thus Let Me Live, measure 9), and embellishments which are written into the music.

Furman indicates exact directions for performance of tempi and moods to enhance the musical narration of his composition.

### I Have A Dream

I Have A Dream was the result of a commission by the Greenwich Choral Society. The first performance of the work was given on April 20, 1970 in a program of music by American composers from revolutionary times to the present. The work is scored for orchestra, chorus, gospel choir, folk singer, banjo guitar, gospel piano, electric bass, baritone solo, and two gospel soloists. The libretto is based on statements and writings of Martin Luther King conveying some of today's basic concerns: human dignity, love, hate, war, peace, beauty, poverty, hope, and freedom. Part of the text is taken from a Christmas card which King sent to Furman in 1966.

The three parts of the work are: In the River of Life, I've Been to the Mountain Top, which is divided into four movements, and Let Freedom Ring, consisting of three movements. Furman has incorporated in his writings many avenues and techniques of twentieth century American music by combining in one composition twelve tone techniques, gospel and folk style, motive development, twentieth century vocal innovations, and rock style.

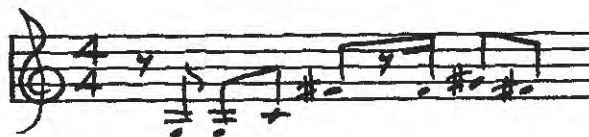
Musically, the work is one of the most inspired contemporary writings it has been my pleasure to hear in some time. Furman most successfully com-

bined jungle rhythms, hymns, blue grass, and marvellous gospel rhythms with symphonic orchestra and choral writing. All blend dramatically and perfectly.<sup>34</sup>

While it is not within the scope of this discussion to delve into a detailed analysis of this work, a description of techniques and devices used will be given in order to provide more evidence of Furman's diversity of style.<sup>35</sup>

The first of the three parts begins with bongo rhythms that suggest African overtones. Very early in the movement, Furman introduced the first of many motives which will unify this movement and the entire work. The "peace motive" is first played by the lower strings and is heard a few measures later played by the horn in F.

Example 82.



The choir enters with the statement, "I refuse to accept the idea that man is flotsam, jetsam in the River of Life. . . ." The last five words of this text is the source of what Furman terms the "life motive."

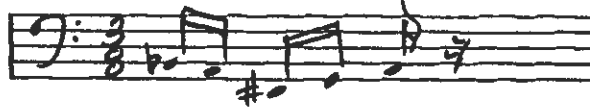
Example 83.



While the bongos continue to beat somberly and the lower instruments play an augmented version of the "tragic motive" which was introduced earlier, Furman effectively writes into the score effects which include sirens, a jazz clarinet,

gospel piano, the chanting of street vendors, and clicking of tongues.

Example 84.



As the baritone soloist speaks "I want it to be said that one day I tried to love and serve," the orchestra punctuates his statement with jazz rhythms, pizzicatos, mixed with the chanting of the chorus.

A twelve tone row is presented in the first violin. Another form of the row, played by the violoncello, will appear as the main theme of the monologue section which follows and will be transposed down a major seventh.

As the soloist sings the word "life;" the "life motive" appears in the orchestra. Furman also interweaves the civil rights hymn, We Shall Overcome into the orchestral parts. The chorus and soloist alternate with the text "love can defeat evil" until the section closes with an Igbo phrase which when translated means "evil shall not overcome good. Amen."

Because of the use of extreme chromaticism in this movement, there is no tonal center. Furman makes use of a twelve tone row which is found in other forms in subsequent parts of the work. He also uses several developmental techniques with his motives. Diminution as well as augmentation is evident and both form a harmonic background for other musical ideas that are being presented. Through

out this section the three main motives of the movement are used. In addition to singing, Furman calls upon his singers to scream, perform glissandi, click their tongues and whisper.

Part II is divided into four movements. The first movement presents the baritone soloist in a monologue, "I've Been to the Mountain Top." The melody is the twelve tone row that was introduced by the violoncelli in the first part, here transposed down a major seventh. The composer indicates that the line should be sung in old-fashioned long meter style, an effect reminiscent of the improvisatory renditions of rural church ministers and soloists in the Black church. The low strings and organ support the soloist with a tremolo which rises and falls in dynamics with the level of the voice. The movement ends with the muted trumpet playing the familiar opening phrase of the Battle Hymn of the Republic.

In the Sermon, the second movement of this part, the baritone soloist continues with words taken from King's last sermon given in Memphis, Tennessee. The movement begins with the same long meter delivery of the chromatic line over a three part contrapuntal background. As the sermon continues, the soloist is required to intone his text as would a minister with the growing intensity of a sermon. The choir supports with the words, "Allah, Allah." The string polyphony, which features the third and sixth as prominent intervals, is extended to four voices and in

addition to the legato line, pizzicato articulation is frequently used. The timbre changes after a few measures as the woodwind family continues the free counterpoint begun by the strings. The solist, speaking at a fervent pitch, is supported by the choir that first talks in an under tone, then gradually accelerates to a high register. Strings and voices are high and tense but come to an abrupt end as the soloist speaks the words "All men are created equal." As the pitch level drops to a whisper, the orchestra begins the Chorale movement.

In describing this movement, the composer states that the melodic fibers constitute a ployphonic quodlibet consisting of the hymns, Lead On O King Eternal, Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus, Onward Christian Soldiers, and a union army song, Stay In The Field. During this melodic weaving, a trumpet using a wah-wah mute intersperses a "mornful, sorrowful cry in the wilderness" based on a motive consisting of a falling third. The composer uses modification of the melody line, inversion, augmentation, and diminution as the counterpoint progresses. Of interest is a sudden intrusion of the gregorian hymn, Veni Creator Spiritus (Come Holy Spirit) played in the hypodorian mode by the orchestra bells. This melody is also heard in augmentation in the lower strings.

The composer in his analysis, comments on this section:

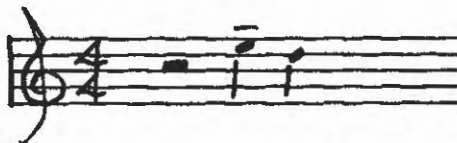
The intrusion of the Holy Spirit theme is representative of the purity of little children. The

gong which represented war in the first movement is now subdued to represent Christ, the peaceful warrior. . . .<sup>36</sup>

The text of the following hymn-like movement comes from the "I Have A Dream" sermon and is basically a homophonic setting. The tonality, beginning in G minor modulates to B flat major.

In the melodic line, cadence points consists of the falling third which the composer has designated as the "cry motive." In two instances in the hymn the tenor states the "peace motive." The use of unison voices singing the main motive of the hymn is an effective ending to this movement and to this part of the oratorio.

Part III presents a change of tempo and mood as the rock combo, gospel chorus, two gospel soloists, a folk singer, electric guitars, electronic organ, kazoos, and drums introduce the first segment, Let Freedom Ring. As in previous movements, Furman introduces a dominant theme on which the music will be based. The "freedom motive" consists of the falling major second and is first used as the basis of a canon between the two gospel singers. Example 85.



The singers are later joined by the folk singer who introduces, as the B section of this movement, the blue grass sounds of the Spirit of Appalachia. The accompaniment changes from gospel instrumentation to strings, classical guitar,

and banjo. The key shifts from the C Major tonality of the A section to B flat Major. The A section returns with the gospel singers and folk singer joining forces. The B section returns with the Appalachian melody and a reiteration of the peace motive by the horn. The movement ends on an A Major chord which acts as a pivot into the bass ostinato that begins the Poor Peoples' March.

This movement, a soulful musical setting in an improvisatory gospel style, is introduced by the folk singer who presents the "poor peoples' motive." The singer is supported by a gospel chorus emphasizing the word "poverty." Shortly after the soloist begins, combs and kazoos present the motive, are later imitated by the soloist. The improvisation continues on these two ideas which are accompanied by full orchestra, rock combo, guitar, and banjo. The opening phrases of the Stars Spangled Banner and America, the Beautiful, are also heard in the orchestra. With an effective modulation to the tonality of G, the gospel soloist presents a soulful variation of My Country tis of Thee, each phrase of which is answered by the folk singer presenting the "freedom motive." The chorus, supporting the improvisations of the gospel soloist, continues with this motive.

The section immediately leads into the gospel spiritual, Free At Last which the composer indicates to be sung "proud and sassy." In a typical call and response fashion the soloist and choir are accompanied by guitar, bass,

organ and drums.

The last section brings all forces together. Furman uses several themes simultaneously: a phrase of America, the Beautiful (and crown thy good with brotherhood) in augmentation, and "let freedom ring" from America (this also is in augmentation). Polytonal writing is evident in the combined uses of B flat and G flat majors. Ten measures later, a new rhythm suggesting E flat is introduced, and at another point, the keys of A, B flat, E, and F are used simultaneously. America, the Beautiful is heard in E Major, Lift Every Voice and Sing is played in F Major by the violoncelli, My Country tis of Thee is in retrograde, and the "freedom motive" is sung by the soloist in A Major.

The work is highly polyrhythmic at this point as well as polytonal and contrapuntal. It is difficult without examining the score to imagine the numerous musical ideas fused by the composer. It combines many of the melodies from the first movements and climaxes with the shouting chorus "We are free at last."

### Summary

James Furman is a composer in immense diversity of style. By presenting techniques ranging from gospel to dodecaphonic idioms, he has in his recent oratorio, I Have a Dream, attempted to draw these styles together in a united effort. His choral works, in addition to the

oratorio, consists of thirteen compositions written for both mixed and boys voices.

When composing without adherence to a tonal center, Furman tends to use the second, fifth, and fourth, more frequently than other intervals. Most of his writings in this style are linearly conceived and intervals occur as a result of moving horizontal lines. Although there are some instances of homophonic writings, these examples tend to serve as strategic changes in basically linear compositions. In his tonal works, homophony is usually the rule because these compositions are gospel or spiritual oriented and lend themselves to this type of texture.

Vocally, Furman calls for traditional singing tones as well as more non-traditional sounds such as whispers, screams, clicking of tongues, glissandi, and falsetto quality in female voices. There are also instances of graphic notation in his I Have A Dream. Occasionally, the composer calls for effects that are usually reserved for instrumental compositions. In *Salve Regina*, a kind of vocal klangfarbenmelodie is found.

There are stylistic features which seem prevalent in Furman's compositions. More frequently than not, treatment of lines is non-legato rather than legato, particularly in the lower voices. There is much use of pedal tones not only in the bass voice, but in upper voices as well. Imitation occurs with both melodic lines and motives comprised of as few as two notes. Among his works, especially

the shorter ones, there is a tendency towards a narrative style.

In regards to form, Furman allows the text to be the determining factor. Usually, he has chosen non-repetitive texts and thus his compositions are through composed. There are only two instances, in the music analyzed in this study, in which returning musical sections were found. Unity in the compositions is gained through recurring rhythms more frequently than by any other device. The triplet and the sixteenth note followed by the eighth note (or its equivalent in shorter or longer note values) are especially common.

Changing meters and fluctuating tempi are characteristic in Furman's music. Although entrances of voices are usually not rhythmically syncopated, lines beginning on the second beat are quite frequently found.