HARMONY, TIMBRE, AND POETIC MEANING IN THE
LORCA CYCLES OF GEORGE CRUMB

A Thesis in
Music Theory and History
by
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ABSTRACT

George Crumb has spent nearly half a century setting the texts of Federico García Lorca. In each of the ten (and counting) Lorca cycles, Crumb’s primary goal is to serve the text with his music. Through an analysis of harmonic, timbral, textural, and theatrical elements in selected movements of these cycles, this thesis demonstrates how Crumb uses his music to illuminate the poetic meaning of Lorca’s words. The use of trichords and tetrachords that suggest larger pitch collections, extended performance techniques, and structural elements are explored as examples of the ways in which Crumb uses his music to compellingly set Lorca’s texts.

In the initial chapters, this thesis addresses the artistic spirits of Lorca and Crumb through an examination of the life, major creative output, and historical significance of each. Next, the Lorca-Crumb “collaboration” is investigated, with a focus on the concept of “duende” that describes the dark, mystical quality that permeates their works. Finally, four movements of the Lorca cycles are explored: (1) Madrigals Book I, II (“No piensan en la lluvia, y se han dormido”); (2) Madrigals Book II, I (“Bebe el agua tranquila de la canción añeja”); (3) Ancient Voices of Children, III (“¿De dónde vienes, amor, mi niño?”); and (4) The Ghosts of Alhambra, III (“Danza”). A detailed poetic interpretation of each movement’s text is considered, followed by an investigation of the ways in which different components of Crumb’s music enhance that poetic interpretation.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Aesthetic Portrait and Rationale

The Lorca cycles of George Crumb span over forty-five years (and counting) of the composer’s career, from Night Music I in 1963 to The Ghosts of Alhambra in 2008 to new cycles Crumb is currently writing. These cycles are extraordinary in that they represent the works of one composer and one poet, spanning the lifetimes of each—rarely, if ever, have we encountered a composer who is so fascinated with the works of one poet that he spends nearly half a century setting his texts. Indeed, we can understand why Crumb was so captivated by this poet—involved with the Spanish avant-garde until his death, Federico García Lorca covered a diverse array of topics, including love, death, and nature, and often featured dark imagery. He uses elemental imagery with fairly simple language and formal structures in his writings, yet this simplicity often masks hidden depths of meaning.

Crumb’s compositions form a distinctive sonic world for which he has gained considerable acclaim. This compositional voice comes in large part from his music’s formal simplicity combined with its timbral complexity, as well as from his use of textural and theatrical elements. Other characteristic components of Crumb’s compositional approach include the use of extended vocal and instrumental techniques, and incorporation of mystical elements, all notated in beautifully handwritten scores. He has won both the Pulitzer Prize for Music for Echoes of Time and the River (in 1968) and a Grammy Award for Best Contemporary Composition for Star-Child (in 2001).

Many twentieth- and twenty-first-century composers have set texts by Lorca, employing them in such diverse classical genres as symphonies, masses, ballets, chamber works, and many more, as well as popular forms such as rock, punk, and folk songs. These composers include
Dmitri Shostakovich (1906–75), Luigi Nono (1924–90), Einojuhani Rautavaara (b. 1928), and Osvaldo Golijov (b. 1960). In the popular realm, The Pogues, Marea, and Joan Baez have also incorporated Lorca’s texts into their songs. For Crumb, though, Lorca’s works hold a special fascination. He became acquainted with Lorca’s poetry while a doctoral student at the University of Michigan. Another student used Lorca’s “Casida of the Boy Wounded by the Water” in a composition, and Crumb “recognized a kindred artistic vision in the works of the Spanish poet.”¹

As Richard Steinitz wrote in the New Grove article on Crumb,

> haunted by Lorca’s surreal and explosive imagery, Crumb created musical landscapes of similar luminescence and intensity. In Ancient Voices and Night of the Four Moons, for example, Crumb set Lorca texts that reveal the poet’s interweaving of fantasy and reality, of childish innocence and adult voluptuousness, of life, love and mortality; his perception of the elements (earth, moon, sea, etc.) as animate spirits; and his vivid evocation of actual sounds.²

Lorca’s texts influenced Crumb so powerfully that from 1963 until the present, the composer has incorporated these texts into numerous compositions. The most significant of these compositions are ten song cycles employing Lorca’s texts, which are commonly referred as the “Lorca cycles,” and which may be aptly described as a “cycle of cycles.” These cycles are:

1. Night Music I (1963)

2. Madrigals I (1965)

3. Madrigals II (1965)

4. Songs, Drones, and Refrains of Death (1968)

5. Night of the Four Moons (1969)


7. Madrigals IV (1969)

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Furthermore, not only is Crumb currently working on yet another cycle, but he has also started planning and selecting texts for several others that he intends to write, which I will describe in greater detail in Chapter 3 of this thesis.³

In Crumb’s settings of Lorca’s texts, he uses three- and four-note melodic cells from which larger collections of pitches are generated through symmetrical dispositions of notes. These cells function as motives, fostering local and long-range connections within the formal boundaries defined by the music’s larger pitch collections. In addition, Crumb uses timbral techniques to create a sonic world befitting the imagery of Lorca’s words: this is seen not only in the instruments for which he chooses to write but also in the extended performance techniques he uses for those instruments. His use of textural and theatrical devices also serves to form the musical atmosphere into which the listener is drawn. In each of these areas—harmonic, timbral, textural, and theatrical—Crumb uses his music as a means to illuminate the meaning or Lorca’s poetry. In my thesis, I will draw specific connections between many of Crumb’s musical choices and Lorca’s texts.

In an interview that I conducted with Crumb, we discussed his choice of texts for these cycles, and he told me that while some of the cycles do have unifying textual themes (such as children in Ancient Voices of Children, the moon in Night of the Four Moons, etc.), others do not have such explicit thematic connections (for example, the four books of Madrigals, which cover a variety of subject areas, including death, love, and water). Throughout his all-too-brief career, Lorca wrote about a multitude of different subjects, and Crumb’s interest in Lorca’s poetry is not

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³ George Crumb, interview by author, Media, PA, 26 June 2011.
limited to a single subject; therefore, it is not possible to find a single theme that will span every movement of these ten cycles. However, although the topics of the poetry Crumb chooses to set in these cycles are certainly diverse, they are all by the same poet, and thus there is a distinctly “Lorca-esque” aesthetic that unifies them. This Lorca aesthetic is recognizable for its simple language and elemental imagery. Furthermore, as Crumb’s purpose is to serve the text with his music, the different subject matter he employs is what allows him to produce such a wide stylistic variety in these cycles.

In my interview with Crumb, he described a meeting with some of Lorca’s family in Madrid, Spain: “So they told me that my music was the best match they’d ever seen for a lot of Lorca’s poetry…They said that the setting [and] the surreal quality in the music, and the changing images, were a beautiful reflection of their interpretation of Lorca’s poetry.” Crumb was extremely moved at hearing this from Lorca’s family, revealing just how high a value he places on effectively setting the texts that he fell in love with so many years ago as a doctoral student. This thesis will demonstrate how Crumb successfully uses certain components of his music to create a sonic world that so compellingly suits Lorca’s text.

**Objectives and Organization**

Through an analysis of four selected movements of these Lorca cycles, this thesis will show that Crumb used his music above all else to serve the text. Furthermore, this thesis will show that while his approach to composition was—and still is—in many ways intuitive, the music itself is highly systematic. In addition to the use of pitch and the texts that will be considered, I will examine how Crumb used texture, timbre, and theatricality to enhance Lorca’s poems.

4. Interview by author.
Due to the limited scope of my paper, I will analyze only the following movements from the Lorca cycles: (1) *Madrigals Book I*, II ("No piensan en la lluvia, y se han dormido"); (2) *Madrigals Book II*, I (“Bebe el agua tranquila de la canción añeja”); (3) *Ancient Voices of Children*, III (“¿De dónde vienes, amor, mi niño?”); and (4) *The Ghosts of Alhambra*, III (“Danza”). I chose these movements because they offer a representative sample of the Lorca cycles as a whole. Not only do they include both early and late works in Crumb’s career, but they also present a wide variety of both subject matter and musical style. Yet, despite the forty-three years that separate the composition of *Madrigals, Book I* and *The Ghosts of Alhambra*, there are musical links that connect these and the other Lorca cycles, which I will discuss further throughout this thesis.

In Chapter 2 of this thesis, I will present background information on both Lorca and Crumb, delving into the biography, creative output, artistic spirit, and historical significance of both poet and composer. Chapter 3 will treat the “collaboration” between Lorca and Crumb, exploring the history of this connection and identifying what makes them such a perfect artistic combination. In addition, I will examine the Lorca cycles as a whole, tracing stylistic developments throughout the forty-five year span of their composition. In the fourth chapter, I will narrow my focus to four movements: “No piensan en la lluvia,”; “Bebe el agua tranquila”; “¿De dónde vienes?”; and “Danza.” For each of these movements, I will consider a poetic interpretation of Lorca’s text, then explore how this meaning emerges in Crumb’s setting.

These Lorca cycles are masterful works of art that combine poetry, music, and theatricality into a stunning experience that captures not only the ear but also the intellect and the emotions. They unite the artistic efforts of one of the greatest Spanish poets of the twentieth century and one of the greatest American composers of our time, and thus the importance of
these cycles cannot be overstated. Crumb has long held a position of great importance in the contemporary classical music scene, and many performances of his works have taken place. However, although there has been much scholarship written about Crumb and his music over the course of the last several decades, the depths of his music have by no means been fully uncovered. In this thesis, I attempt to fill some of the gaps in the Crumb literature. By focusing so deeply on poetic interpretations of Lorca’s texts, I unearth the artistic sentiments that Crumb attempts to express in his settings, revealing how important his understanding of Lorca’s poetry was in inspiring his compositional techniques. Finally, by examining selected movements of the Lorca cycles that represent over forty years of the composer’s career, I am able to discover in some respects what unifies these cycles despite differences in thematic content and stylistic development.

5 While many scholars have written about Crumb, significant gaps remain. Regarding the Lorca cycles, for example, there are certain works (namely, A/V/C) that have been written about more frequently and in much more detail than the other cycles. Some of the seminal works on the Lorca cycles include: Thomas R. De Dobay, “The Evolution of Harmonic Style in the Lorca Works of Crumb,” Journal of Music Theory 28, no. 1 (Spring 1984): 89–111; Thomas R. De Dobay, “Harmonic Materials and Usages in the Lorca Cycle of George Crumb” (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 1982); Nancy López-Aranguren, “George Crumb’s Lorca Settings,” in “Special Issue in Honor of Federico García Lorca,” Anales de la literatura española contemporánea 11, no. 1/2 (1986): 177–92; Edward Pearsall, “Symmetry and Goal-Directed Motion in Music by Béla Bartók and George Crumb,” Tempo 58/228 (2004): 32–40; and Christopher Rouse, “The Music of George Crumb: Stylistic Metamorphosis as Reflected in the Lorca Cycle” (D.M.A. thesis, Cornell University, 1977). Currently, there is no existing scholarship on The Ghosts of Alhambra, despite the fact that it was published in 2008. However, even the literature that does exist does not serve to adequately consider all of the musical choices Crumb makes in light of the Lorca texts that are being set, a step which I take in this thesis, knowing how passionate Crumb is about serving the text with his music.
Chapter 2: Lorca and Crumb

Introduction

In this chapter, I will examine the artists whose work comprises the Lorca cycles being explored in this thesis. By considering the biography, creative style, and artistic output of both Lorca and Crumb, I will prepare the reader for an examination of the ways in which their works interact with each other, a topic that will be the focus of the third and fourth chapters of this thesis.

In the first part of this chapter, I will explore further details of Lorca’s biography, as well as his creative output, his connection to music, and his poetic style. In examining Lorca’s artistic temperament and how this manifests itself in his poetry, this section will provide the reader with a deeper understanding of the texts that Crumb sets in the Lorca cycles. The rest of the chapter considers Crumb, focusing on his background, artistic aesthetic, and creative output. By supplying the reader with a greater knowledge of Crumb, this section will prepare the reader for an analysis of his music.

Federico García Lorca

Background

Federico García Rodríguez, Lorca’s father, was born in 1859, the oldest of nine children, and was a talented, good-humored, well-liked young man. 6 Musical ability graced many generations of the García family, and several members of this family were known for their exceptional musical ability, including Federico, who exhibited a great deal of talent on the

guitar. When he was only twenty years old, he made an advantageous match by marrying Matilde Palacios, the daughter of a well-to-do farmer. Their marriage began harmoniously, but difficulties arose with the discovery that Matilde was unable to conceive. Meanwhile, Federico’s wealth and standing in society continued to rise, and he even spent some time as secretary to the town hall and then as municipal judge in Fuente Vaqueros, a small village near Granada in the south of Spain. In 1894, Matilde died suddenly.

Upon his wife’s death, Federico inherited both money and property, and invested this wealth by acquiring more land, with which he helped to better the fortunes of his eight brothers and sisters. Soon, he was one of the wealthiest men in Fuente Vaqueros. In 1897, he remarried, this time making a much less advantageous match for himself. His new wife was Vicenta Lorca Romero, a poor schoolteacher eleven years his junior. In fact, Federico’s brothers at first disapproved of the marriage due to her low status and lack of wealth. Nonetheless, the marriage occurred. Life had been hard for Vicenta, but attracting the wealthy widower Federico promised to lift her out of all the difficulty and poverty she had endured.

Approximately nine months after Federico and Vicenta were wed, their first child, Federico del Sagrado Corazón de Jesús, was born on 5 June 1898, near Granada. Although the young Federico was lacking in physical agility and capability, he more than made up for those deficiencies with his quick and imaginative mind, with which he amused his childhood companions, among whom he was popular. The young Federico later attributed much of his creative temperament to his mother. While Vicenta had ceased her official teaching duties upon marrying, she continued to instruct the village peasants informally. Federico’s childhood memories include scenes of his mother reading Victor Hugo aloud to neighbors, laborers, and peasants alike.

7. Gibson, 7.
Lorca’s parents had four other children after the young Federico, one of whom, a younger brother named Luis, died at a young age. In order to seek a better education for their children, they moved the family to Granada in 1909, placing Federico under the shadow of the Alhambra, that iconic towering Moorish fortress that remained as a symbol of Granada’s Islamic past. As with many other artists of his time, Lorca fell in love with Granada. In that city, he continued his education. Despite being four years his junior, Lorca’s younger brother Francisco was a much better student than he was, because Federico, though intelligent, did not apply himself to his studies.

Federico’s lack of discipline in his schoolwork may have come in part because he was devoting himself to musical study instead. He must have inherited the musical bent of the García family, and soon discovered that he excelled at the piano. In Granada, he studied with Antonio Segura Mesa, a talented musician who had been unable to realize his childhood dream of becoming a great composer. However much Lorca may have desired to pursue a career in music, his father insisted that he and his brother seek more traditional professional careers. Lorca entered the Universidad de Granada, but moved a few years later to Madrid to continue his studies at the Residencia de Estudiantes. It was here in Madrid that Lorca really came into his own, joining groups of radical students and becoming involved with some of the most influential young minds of his time. He also became acquainted with the other poets with whom he would later be grouped in the so-called “Generation of 1927”: Rafael Alberti, Manuel Altolaguirre, Emilio Prados, Pedro Salinas, and Jorge Guillén. In addition, he met filmmaker Luis Buñuel, poets Juan Ramón Jiménez and Antonio Machado, and artist Salvador Dalí.

Dalí in particular became a huge influence in Lorca’s life. The two shared an intense personal and artistic relationship (some have even conjectured that there could have been a
homosexual element to their attachment). From 1929–30, Lorca left Spain, visiting London, New York, and Cuba. While in New York, he briefly attended classes at Columbia University. Lorca’s return to Spain was soon followed by the establishment of the Second Republic. Around the same time, Lorca became director of the Teatro Universitario la Barraca, a touring student theater group that gave performances from 1931–36. Political tensions in Spain continued to rise over these years until finally the Spanish Civil War broke out in July 1936. Indeed, the political climate became so dangerous that in August, Lorca went into hiding, afraid for his life due to suspicions that arose from his liberal views. About a week later, however, he was arrested, and on August 19th, the poet was shot and buried in an unmarked grave. Thus the world was deprived all too soon of one of the greatest Spanish poets of the twentieth century.

Cut off in the prime of his life, one can only wonder what other contributions Lorca could have made to poetry and literature. His thirty-eight years, however, were fortunately fruitful ones, and he left behind a vast wealth of poems and plays.

Lorca’s Poetic and Dramatic Style

As a whole, Lorca’s poetry and plays blend traditional Andalusian styles with modern Surrealist influences. He uses elemental imagery that describes such themes as love, death, water, nature, antiquity, music, and more. In many ways, his poetry is remarkably simple, generally employing short poetic forms and straightforward language. However, the simplicity of form and language masks a hidden depth of poetic meaning, often through the use of symbolism. In addition, he was greatly inspired by the Spanish and Moorish cultures, and incorporated many gypsy elements and characters into his writing. Lorca’s aesthetic is a dark one, and a personal obsession he had with the concept of death is certainly revealed in much of his writings. Many of his poems and plays also include erotic imagery and symbolism. It is generally accepted that
throughout his life he wrestled with homosexuality, although he was not open about this with many people. He did, however, use his writing as a means to communicate the feelings that he could not express in the culture in which he lived.

Lorca’s Literary Output

Lorca’s first book, Impresiones y paisajes [Impressions and landscapes], was published in April 1918. This book was inspired by a series of class trips he undertook around Spain. This book was financed by Lorca’s father and dedicated to Lorca’s piano teacher, Antonio Segura Mesa. In 1919–20, Lorca made his first attempt at staging a play, El maleficio de la mariposa [The butterfly’s evil spell], which told the story of an unlikely love between a butterfly and a cockroach. Unfortunately, this play was unappreciated by its audiences, who laughed it off the stage, and closed after only one performance. Lorca was of course quite shaken by this event, and turned to poetry for several years. Libro de poemas [Book of poems], written in 1918–20, was published in 1921 with a dedication to his brother, and contained sixty-six poems. Poema del cante jondo [Poem of the deep song] was his next project, written in 1921–22, but not published until 1931. As Lorca became increasingly involved in the avant-garde, several more works were released: Canciones [Songs] in 1927 and Romancero gitano [Gypsy ballads] in 1928. His second attempt at writing for the stage was Mariana Pineda, which was premiered in 1927 by Margarita Xirgu’s company. This play featured scenery and costumes designed by Dalí, and was better received by critics than El maleficio de la mariposa. In January of 1929, Lorca completed another play, El amor de Don Perlimplín con Belisa en el jardín [The love of Don Perlimplin with Belisa in the garden], but the play was censored and not staged for several years.

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At this time, Lorca had been going through some personal struggles, particularly in his friendship with Dalí, which splintered and eventually fell apart, leaving Lorca devastated. The ensuing depression prompted Lorca to go to the United States, where he wrote a collection called *Poeta en Nueva York* [A poet in New York], which was published posthumously in 1942, as well as a play called *El público* [The audience], which was not published until 1976.

Despite the hectic nature of his life as director of *La Barraca*, Lorca continued to write, and it was from the group’s inception in 1931 to Lorca’s death in 1936 that he produced some of his best-known works. His poetic output of this era included “Seis poemas gallegos” [Six Galician poems], “Llanto por Ignacio Sánchez Mejías” [Lament for Ignacio Sánchez Mejías], and *Diván del Tamarit* [Diván of the Tamarit]; additionally, he wrote several plays, including *La destrucción de Sodoma* [The destruction of Sodom], *La zapatera prodigiosa* [The shoemaker’s prodigious wife], *Retablo de Don Cristóbal* [Don Cristobal’s puppet theatre], and *Doña Rosita la soltera* [Doña Rosita the spinster]. Furthermore, it was during this period that he wrote what are perhaps his most famous plays, a trilogy of tragedies related to Spanish womanhood: *Bodas de sangre* [Blood wedding] in 1932, *Yerma* in 1934, and *La casa de Bernarda Alba* [The house of Bernarda Alba] in 1936.

Lorca and Music

Since this thesis is an exploration of Crumb’s settings of Lorca’s texts, it seems worth examining Lorca’s musical pursuits in further detail. Lorca’s poetry is filled with musical imagery, and as I have already mentioned, although he was known primarily for his writing, he was quite musical as well. A classically trained pianist, Lorca impressed audiences with his skill in performing when he was young before turning to other musical pursuits. As Federico Bonaddio writes, “Having achieved his mastery as a pianist, Lorca then started to compose.
Some of his work has unfortunately been lost, while much of what remains is either incomplete or sketchy. He had a talent for improvisation and it is quite likely that he did not feel it necessary to write out his compositions in full in order to be able to perform them. In time, Lorca shifted his creative focus toward writing; however, he never completely abandoned music, and musical themes figure in many of his poems and plays. In an autobiographical note written in New York in 1929–30, Lorca wrote: “As his parents did not allow him to go to Paris to continue with his initial studies and as his music teacher died, García Lorca turned his (dramatic) pathetic creative urges towards poetry.” Lorca was also interested in folk and gypsy music, and he wrote arrangements of folksongs.

Lorca was close friends with the composer Manuel de Falla (1876–1946), and collaborated with him on several occasions. Their most important collaboration was *El concurso de cante jondo* [The competition of the deep song]. Falla organized this event, held in Granada in 1922, and Lorca was one of its most famous contributors. Falla and Lorca were passionate defenders of *cante jondo* [deep song], a traditional Andalusian genre of song that they believed was losing its purity. The festival was intended to revive *cante jondo*, and they invited performers from all over Granada to participate in it.

Lorca’s Historical Significance

Lorca is a fascinating character not only for his remarkable life and death and his own artistic achievements but also because he moved in the circles of some of the greatest artistic minds of his time. Lorca was a peer and friend not only to many of the poetic and literary

11. Ibid., 67. For some unknown reason, Lorca wrote this note in the third person.
12. Ibid., 74.
13. Ibid.
giunases of the first half of the twentieth century but also to prominent artists and musicians. His place in the “Generation of 1927,” as well as his friendships and collaborations with Falla and Dalí, make him a particularly intriguing character. Furthermore, the era in which he lived made him a witness to some extraordinary historical moments, such as the crash of the stock market while he was in New York (in fact, Lorca claimed to have witnessed six suicides when this occurred), as well as a turbulent domestic political scene culminating in the Spanish Civil War that led to his death. He used his writings to give us fascinating insights into the atmosphere of these events, as well as the difficult shift into modernity (in particular, the three tragic plays that describe the plight of Spanish women in modern society). Lorca wrote what he knew, from poems that describe the village and gypsy culture he experienced while growing up, to plays presenting the plight of infertile Spanish women in a culture where children were of paramount importance (a subject that had fascinated him ever since he knew about his father’s first wife’s infertility), to his own homosexual desires, to the cante jondo that so enthralled him in its musicality and its distinction as a purely Spanish traditional genre.

George Crumb

Background

George Henry Crumb, Jr. was born in Charleston, West Virginia on 24 October 1929. Like Lorca, Crumb was born into a musical family. His father, George Henry Crumb, Sr., played

15. Gibson, 10.
clarinet professionally with what was then the Charleston Symphony Orchestra. He also worked as a music copyist, arranger, and conducted pit orchestras for silent films. Crumb’s mother, Vivian, was musical as well. Like her husband, she also played in the Charleston Symphony Orchestra, and eventually attained the position of first cello in that ensemble.

Crumb’s start in music came early in life. His father taught him how to play the clarinet as a young child. His brother, William, played flute, and the family often played chamber music together. Soon after he began to play the clarinet, Crumb also started piano lessons. Many of the musical habits that Crumb would develop more fully later in life started as a result of his father’s influence. Perhaps most importantly, Crumb saw the care and precision with which his father approached his work as an arranger and music copyist, which led him to incorporate a similar exactness in notation, a trait which is perhaps the first thing one notices when one sees his elegantly notated scores.

At about age ten, Crumb began composing. As David Cohen describes it, “Crumb evolved through ‘forgeries’ of other master composers, including Chopin, Beethoven, Brahms and Bartók. In order to get to the present Crumb had to work through the styles of the past.” During high school, Crumb began to compose more serious works, and held performances of these by the so-called “Crumb Family Players,” by small groups of kids he organized into ensembles, and even by the Charleston Symphony Orchestra.

Following high school, Crumb enrolled at Mason College, where he met and married his wife, Elizabeth May Brown. He graduated with a Bachelor’s degree in piano and composition in 1950. From there, he and his family moved to Illinois, where he pursued his Master’s degree in composition under Eugene Weigel at the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana. Next, Crumb entered the doctoral program at the University of Michigan, studying composition with

Ross Lee Finney. During his time at Michigan, he received a Fulbright Fellowship to study for a year at the Hochschule für Musik in Berlin. Upon returning to the United States, Crumb continued his studies at Michigan, where he received the D.M.A. in 1959.

After graduating, Crumb taught theory briefly at Hollins College in Virginia, then piano and composition at the University of Colorado at Boulder. It was at this institution that Crumb became acquainted with David Burge, a member of the piano faculty. Burge was devoted to twentieth-century music, and he encouraged Crumb to write some piano music for him. Crumb responded by composing *Five Piano Pieces* in 1962, which Burge premiered in early 1963. Widely recognized as Crumb’s first serious work, these pieces were shocking to Burge (and everyone who heard them) because of their prominent use of extended piano techniques such as pizzicato, martellato, and glissando. Although skeptical of playing inside the piano before the work’s composition, Burge was so impressed with the piece that he decided it needed to be heard by more people, so he played it on a cross-country tour, where the critical response was almost unanimously laudatory. He describes Karlheinz Stockhausen’s reaction to this work the first time he heard it: he “listened to the pieces repeatedly, shaking his head and exclaiming over and over about all the things in the score that he wished he had done.”

Following his time at the University of Colorado, Crumb spent a year as composer-in-residence at the University at Buffalo. It was during this time that he began to establish himself in the east coast’s musical scene. He used connections he made to secure a faculty position at the University of Pennsylvania, where he remained for thirty-two years until his retirement in 1997. Since then, he has remained active as a composer, in addition to traveling extensively to take part in festivals or attend concerts of his music, as well as overseeing recordings of his works, which

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18. Gillespie, 6.
are being done in their entirety by Bridge Records. He and his wife currently reside in Media, Pennsylvania, in the home in which they raised their three children.

Compositional Aesthetic

Crumb’s striking musical aesthetic blends carefully crafted proportions with intensely emotional expression. Immediately apparent in his music are the many timbral innovations, a tendency toward ritualistic motives (small fragments that Crumb develops in an additive manner), and (at least in the Lorca cycles) a sparseness of texture. The composer attributes his musical voice to his West Virginia upbringing. In an essay entitled “Music: Does It Have a Future?,” he wrote:

Perhaps many of the perplexing problems of the new music could be put into a new light if we were to reintroduce the ancient idea of music being a reflection of nature. Although technical discussions are interesting to composers, I suspect that the truly magical and spiritual powers of music arise from deeper levels of our psyche. I am certain that every composer, from his formative years as a child, has acquired a ‘natural acoustic[,]’ which remains in his ear for life. The fact that I was born and grew up in an Appalachian river valley meant that my ear was attuned to a peculiar echoing acoustic; I feel that this acoustic was ‘structured into’ my hearing, so to speak, and the ocean shore or endless plains would produce an altogether different ‘inherited’ acoustic.  

Crumb’s compositions often contain spiritual or mystical elements. For example, *Makrokosmos, Volume I* and *Volume II*, both written for amplified piano, each contain twelve pieces that are based on the signs of the Zodiac. *Lux Aeterna*, for five masked musicians (soprano, bass flute/soprano recorder, sitar, and two percussionists), puts a traditional requiem text in a modern guise. The instructions at the beginning of the work tell the players to perform “very slowly, with a sense of meditative time; pregnant with mystery.” In *Black Angels*, scored

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for electric string quartet and inspired by the Vietnam War, Crumb incorporates numerological symbolism at various structural levels, as well as “quasi-programmatic” and musical allusions to evoke spiritual and mystical themes.\textsuperscript{21}

The element of musical style Crumb is least known for is his use of form. Most of his well-known works consist of short movements (the majority of the movements of the Lorca cycles, for example, last only a few minutes each). Although the four books of \textit{Madrigals} are each able to stand independently, they are short enough that they are can be grouped together, and when all four volumes are performed together, they only last about thirty-two minutes.\textsuperscript{22} However, despite his preference for small-scale forms, Crumb’s sense of proportion and balance in these short movements is impeccable, and when he uses them in groups to fit into a larger context, as in the Lorca cycles, each movement not only functions as a complete whole in and of itself, but great attention is also given to the interaction of movements within the larger cycle.

Upon hearing or seeing Crumb’s music, it is easy to focus on the innovative instrumental and vocal techniques, the beautifully handwritten scores, or the theatricality of certain pieces; yet, when one looks past this, one finds a wealth of musical substance. Crumb is not interested in writing music without emotional and spiritual appeal, a sentiment that he expressed to me in an interview, in which he expressed his distaste for so much modern music that is “university music . . . like it’s separated from all the mystery in the universe, it’s just become a collection of notes . . . I go against this whole recent tradition. I don’t think it’ll live, either. I think this music doesn’t have enough spiritual intensity at the core of it to last very long.”\textsuperscript{23} Yet while Crumb

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\textsuperscript{21} See the “programme notes” section on the \textit{Black Angels} page of Crumb’s website: http://georgecrumb.net/comp/black-p.html.
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\textsuperscript{22} See the “programme notes” section on the \textit{Madrigals, Books I–IV} page of Crumb’s website: http://georgecrumb.net/comp/madrig-p.html.
\end{flushleft}

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\textsuperscript{23} Interview by author.
\end{flushleft}
does succeed in writing music that makes a human connection with its listeners, one must be careful not to take this romantic, emotional aspect of his music as a sign that it is not systematic. Indeed, while his music is very intuitive, it is also highly structured—a strange combination made possible only because Crumb has such a high level of musical intuition. Although he is known for not being self-analytical, and expresses no interest in becoming so, his musical works reflect a depth of musical organization and structure.

Crumb’s Compositional Output

Crumb typically writes for small chamber ensembles or even for solo instruments. He has, however, written for larger forces with great success, such as in (1) *Echoes of Time and the River (Echoes II)* (1967) for orchestra; (2) *Star-Child* (1977) for soprano, antiphonal children’s voices, male speaking choir, bell ringers, and large orchestra; and (3) *A Haunted Landscape* (1984) for orchestra. Some of the works Crumb is best known for (aside from the Lorca cycles) are: (1) *Vox Balaenae (Voice of the Whale)* (1971) for electric flute, electric cello, and amplified piano; (2) *Black Angels (Images I)* (1970) for electric string quartet; (3) *Makrokosmos, Volume I* (1972) and *Volume II* (1973) for amplified piano; and (4) *Music for a Summer Evening (Makrokosmos III)* (1974) for two amplified pianos and two percussion parts. In recent years, Crumb has turned to another large-scale collection of related works (another cycle of cycles, in fact), the *American Songbooks*, which focus on the culture of the American people, and which include Crumb’s modern interpretation of various folk songs. From 2001–10, he has written seven volumes for small chamber ensemble that includes soprano (sometimes joined by baritone), percussion quartet, and piano: (1) *American Songbook I: The River of Life;* (2) *American Songbook II: A Journey Beyond Time;* (3) *American Songbook III: Unto the Hills;* (4) *American Songbook IV: Winds of Destiny;* (5) *American Songbook V: Voices from a Forgotten
Crumb’s Historical Significance

Over the course of his career, Crumb’s enormous impact has been recognized in innumerable ways, including the six honorary degrees that have been conferred upon him, and the many prizes and grants he has been awarded (including Guggenheim grants in 1967 and 1973, the Pulitzer Prize in 1968, the Koussevitzky Recording Award in 1971, and the Grammy for Best Contemporary Composition in 2001). Only time will tell whether Crumb’s music will endure, but it is my opinion that its innovative timbral techniques, romantic yet modernist aesthetic, and deeply spiritual nature will keep it relevant for countless generations to come. Crumb’s ability to employ compositional methods such as extended instrumental and vocal techniques, harmonic materials that blend modern pitch collections with hints of traditional tonality, and a sonic world that is avant-garde yet approachable, make him one of the best representatives of modern music, and the popularity of his works even forty or fifty years after their composition seems like a good omen for their lasting impact on classical music.

24. For a more detailed listing of Crumb’s awards, see the biographical section of his website: http://georgecrumb.net/life.html.
Chapter 3: The Lorca-Crumb “Collaboration”

Introduction

As noted in the introduction to Chapter 1, the Lorca cycles are intriguing works because they unite the artistic efforts of one composer and one poet, spanning the careers of each. Lorca and Crumb never met (in fact, their lives only overlapped for about seven years), and Lorca died twenty-seven years before the first cycle was published. Yet, these works form a sort of collaboration between Crumb and Lorca. Crumb’s fascination with Lorca’s poetry reflects a kindred artistic spirit. It is this spirit and the connection between these two artists that I shall explore in this chapter.

Background of the Crumb-Lorca “Collaboration”

First, we turn to an exploration of the Lorca cycles. Crumb’s first encounter with Lorca’s poetry took place while he was pursuing his doctorate at the University of Michigan. When he heard Edward Chudacoff’s setting of “Casida of the Boy Wounded by the Water,” Crumb was immediately impressed with the work, and in particular the poetry it set. However, although he heard this piece around 1953, his first Lorca cycle did not appear until ten years later (Night Music I in 1963). He discussed the journey to this first Lorca work with me in my interview: “. . . there was a long gestation period. I tried several times and I couldn’t find the match, I couldn’t find the way to approach it, so eventually I went to the poetry, always referred to the poetry, and tried to capture the images and the musical thematics.”

The majority of the Lorca cycles were written between 1963 and 1970 (from Night Music I to Ancient Voices of Children). Following this, Crumb left Lorca’s poetry behind for sixteen years, and he even thought that he was done with Lorca. On this subject, Crumb said, “at one

25. Interview by author.
time, I thought *Ancient Voices*, I’m never going to write another Lorca piece, I’ve done all I can
do with Lorca, so these other things came along as postscripts almost.”

However, in 1986, he returned to Lorca’s poetry with another cycle, *Federico’s Little Songs for Children*. After

Crumb plans to compose several other Lorca cycles. He is currently completing *Sun and Shadow* for soprano and piano, which will be the first cycle in which he sets English translations of Lorca’s poetry rather than the original Spanish. He also discussed with me three cycles for
which he has already selected themes and texts:

I had planned [to] write two more. I have an idea that I would like to do just two
more sets. Three love songs of Lorca, a special little work for tenor, because I
haven’t used [a] tenor voice in the cycle. And the other I’d like to do, a projected
title was *The Yellow Moon of Andalusia*. And it would be—I was thinking of
doing something for Tony Arnold; I love her voice, she’s sung a lot of my stuff—
one that you know, . . . *Dream (Sueño)*, *In the Forest of Clocks*, and *Song of the Dead Orange Tree*, that’s a famous one, *Cicada*, and outside, *Casida of the Lament* . . . So that would be five songs if I could ever write those . . . And [here are] the love songs] . . . : *Ghazal of Unforseen Love*, *Summer Madrigal* would be the second one, and the third one would be *Ghazal of Desperate Love*, . . .

marvelous poetry. And here was still another, third unwritten work of Lorca, *The Knelling Bells of Andalusia*. *Camino, Death Knell* (this is a rather dark one, I
think), *Castanet, Pueblo, El Grito, Afterwards*, and the last one is *De Profundis*.

So if I get around to it, these are three I should get to one day. [I’m not] done with
Lorca, you know. 27

### The Lorca Cycles

To set the stage for the analysis of the four selected movements in Chapter 4, we now
survey each of the ten current Lorca cycles. This section will describe any themes that exist in
each cycle, as well as outlining their musical style. By examining these works chronologically, I

26. Interview by author.

27. Ibid.
will also trace developments in Crumb’s style throughout the forty-five year span in which they were composed.

*Night Music I*, the first of the Lorca cycles, was written in 1963, and features soprano, piano doubling celeste, and two percussionists. It consists of seven movements: Notturno I: (Giocoso, estatico); Notturno II: “Piccola Serenata” (Grazioso); Notturno III: “La luna asoma” [The moon rises] (Lirico; fantastico); Notturno IV: (Vivace; molto ritmico); Notturno V: “Gacela de la terrible presencia” [Gacela of the terrible presence] (Oscuro; esitante, quasi senza movimento); Notturno VI: “Barcarola” (Delicato e tenero); and Notturno VII: (Giocoso, estatico). Crumb originally planned this piece to be purely instrumental, but discovered that several Lorca poems would fit well with the artistic intent of the work, so he incorporated two movements involving these texts. Crumb also intended to include aleatoric elements in this cycle, but later decided against this, preferring instead to compose written-out yet improvisational material. Both movements that do set texts describe things associated with nighttime, and Crumb’s label of each movement as “notturno” (as well as the title of the cycle itself) suggest that this is Crumb’s perception of the music.

Crumb followed *Night Music I* with two books of *Madrigals* in 1965. Each book of *Madrigals* contains three movements, each of which sets a brief line or fragment of Lorca’s texts. *Book I* is scored for soprano, vibraphone, and double bass. The three movements of this book are: I. “Verte desnuda es recordar la tierra” [To see you naked is to remember the earth]; II. “No piensan en la lluvia, y se han dormido” [They do not think of the rain, and they’ve fallen asleep]; and III. “Los muertos llevan alas de musgo” [The dead wear mossy wings]. While the four books of *Madrigals* that Crumb has written do not have as explicit a theme as some of the

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other cycles, many of them do feature imagery of death and nature. In Chapter 4, I shall address the second movement of Book I in greater detail.

The instrumentation for the second book of Madrigals consists of soprano, flute (doubling alto flute and piccolo), and percussion, and the movements are: I. “Bebe el agua tranquila de la canción añeja” [Drink the tranquil water of the ancient song]; II. “La muerta entra y sale de la taberna” [Death goes in and out of the tavern]; and III. “Caballito negro ¿Dónde llevas tu jinente muerto?” [Little black horse, where are you taking your dead rider?]. I shall explore the first movement of this book in Chapter 4.

Songs, Drones, and Refrains of Death, for baritone, electric guitar, electric double bass, amplified piano/harpsichord, and two percussionists, was written in 1968. This cycle features four Lorca poems that all focus on death (these are the “songs” of the title); each poem setting is preceded by a refrain, and there are also three death-drones interspersed throughout the work. The structure of the cycle, then, is: Refrain 1; I. La guitarra [The guitar], Death-Drone I; Refrain 2; II. Casida de las palomas oscuras [Casida of the dark doves]; Refrain 3, Death-Drone II; III. Canción de jinete, 1860 [Song of the rider, 1860]; Refrain 4; and IV. Casida del herido por el agua [Casida of the boy wounded by the water], Death-Drone III.

In 1969, Crumb composed Night of the Four Moons for alto, alto flute (doubling piccolo), banjo, electric cello, and percussion. This cycle was written while the Apollo 11 flight was in progress, and the texts and music are centered around this occasion. The four movements of this piece are: I. “La luna está muerta, muerta . . .” [The moon is dead, dead . . .]; II. “Cuando sale la luna . . .” [When the moon rises . . .]; III. “Otro Adán oscuro está soñando . . .” [Another obscure Adam dreams . . .]; and IV. “¡Huye luna, luna, luna! . . .” [Run away moon, moon, moon! . . .]. Each of these poems explores the theme of the moon, and Crumb says of the piece:
“I suppose that Night of the Four Moons is really an ‘occasional’ work, since its inception was an artistic response to an external event. The texts . . . symbolize my own rather ambivalent feelings vis-à-vis Apollo 11.”

Crumb returned to the series of Madrigals with Book III in 1969, in a setting for soprano, harp, and percussion. The fragments of text used for this book include: I. “La noche canta desnuda sobre los puentes de marzo” [Night sings naked above the bridges of March]; II. “Quiero dormir el sueño de las manzanas” [I want to sleep the sleep of apples]; and III. “Nana, niño, nana del caballo grande que no quiso el agua” [Lullaby, child, lullaby of the proud horse who would not drink water].

The fourth and final installment of Madrigals was also written in 1969 for soprano, flute (doubling alto flute and piccolo), harp, double bass, and percussion. Here the texts Crumb sets are: I. “¿Por qué nací entre espejos?” [Why was I born surrounded by mirrors?]; II. “Tu cuerpo, con la sombra violeta de mis manos, era un arcángel de frío” [Through my hands’ violet shadow, your body was an archangel, cold]; and III. “¡La muerte me está mirando desde las torres de Córdoba!” [Death is watching me from the towers of Córdoba!].

Perhaps the best known of the Lorca cycles, Ancient Voices of Children (AVC), was written in 1970, the closing Lorca cycle in the productive period between 1963 and 1970, and, as I have mentioned earlier, the work that Crumb thought would be the end of his “collaboration” with Lorca. AVC is in five movements with two instrumental dance-interludes. These movements are: I. “El niño mudo” [The little mute boy]; “Dances of the Ancient Earth”; II. “Gacela de la huida” [Gacela of the flight]; III. “¿De dónde vienes, amor, mi niño?” [From where do you come, my love, my child?] (Dance of the Sacred Life-Cycle); IV. “Gacela del niño muerto”

29. See the “programme notes” section on the Night of the Four Moons page of Crumb’s website: http://georgecrumb.net/comp/night4-p.html.
[Gacela of the dead child]; “Ghost Dance”; and V. “Balada de la placeta” [Ballad of the little square]. This cycle is for mezzo-soprano, boy soprano, oboe, mandolin, harp, amplified piano (and toy piano), and three percussion parts. Each of the poems set in this cycle deals with children in some way. The cycle as a whole presents views on childhood from several different perspectives, all structured in an arch form that comprises the life-cycle. This idea will be addressed in more detail in Chapter 4 in my analysis of the third movement of AVC.

After sixteen years, Crumb returned to Lorca’s poetry with Federico’s Little Songs for Children in 1986. This cycle is scored for soprano, flute (doubling piccolo, alto flute, and bass flute), and harp, and consists of seven movements, all employing poetry from Lorca’s Canciones para niños (Songs for children). These seven movements are: 1. “La señorita del abanico” [Señorita of the fan]; 2. “La tarde” [Afternoon]; 3. “Canción cantada” [A song sung]; 4. “Caracola” [Snail]; 5. “¡El lagarto está llorando!” [The lizard is crying!]; 6. “Cancioncilla sevillana” [A little song from Seville]; and 7. “Canción tonta” [Silly song]. As in AVC, all of these poems relate to children; however, these are more from the perspective of a child and the fantasy world he might create. Crumb describes these texts by saying “the mood can be reflective, playful, mock-serious, gently ironic, or simply joyous.”

Crumb’s most recent Lorca cycle, The Ghosts of Alhambra (Spanish Songbook I), was written in 2008, and is scored for baritone, guitar, and one percussion player. It consists of seven movements: 1. “Alba” [Dawn]; 2. “Las seis cuerdas” [The six strings]; 3. “Danza” [Dance]; 4. “Paisaje” [Landscape]; 5. “¡Ay!” [Ay!]; 6. “Malagueña” [Malagueña]; and 7. “Memento” [Memento]. This cycle does not have as obvious a theme as, for example, AVC, but it does contain prominent imagery of music and death, as well as many references to themes associated

with Andalusia (as the title implies). In Chapter 4 of this thesis, I will examine “Danza” in greater detail.

In addition to these ten cycles, Crumb has also used Lorca’s poetry in two other works, *Eleven Echoes of Autumn, 1965* (1966) and *Echoes of Time and the River* (1967). In each of these works, Crumb uses the same Lorca text: “y los arcos rotos donde sufre el tiempo” [and the broken arches where time suffers]. This text aids in his exploration of what Suzanne Mac Lean describes as “the various psychological, metaphysical and musical meanings of time,” a subject which has captured his interest greatly, and which he has incorporated into other works (my analyses of “¿De dónde vienes, amor, mi niño?” and “Danza” in Chapter 4, for example, will consider temporal issues).\(^{31}\)

*Artistic Connections*

Despite the huge time span over which the Lorca cycles were composed, they are united in several ways. The most obvious link is that their texts all come from the same poet. However, there is a deeper artistic connection between Crumb and Lorca that I will explore in this section.

In the program notes for *AVC*, Crumb writes about the themes Lorca portrays and about his use of Lorca’s poetry:

In *Ancient Voices of Children*, as in my earlier Lorca settings, I have sought musical images that enhance and reinforce the powerful, yet strangely haunting imagery of Lorca’s poetry. I feel that the essential meaning of the poetry is concerned with the most primary things: life, death, love, the smell of the earth, the sounds of the wind and the sea. These *ur*-concepts are embodied in a language which is primitive and stark, but which is capable of infinitely subtle nuance.\(^ {32}\)

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\(^{31}\) Gillespie, 23.

\(^{32}\) See the “programme notes” section on the *Ancient Voices of Children* page of Crumb’s website: http://georgecrumb.net/comp/ancien-p.html.
Lorca’s artistic aesthetic may best be described as falling into the realm of “duende.”

This term is difficult to define, but is at the core of the spirit of Lorca’s works. Crumb describes it as “passion, élan, bravura in its deepest and most artistic sense.”33 In 1933, Lorca gave a lecture entitled “Teoría y juego del duende” [Theory and play of the duende], in which he explored the concept of duende and ideas of beauty and creativity.34

The concept of duende was known throughout Spain in Lorca’s time, and his fascination with cante jondo and the folk people who performed it (as described in Chapter 2) stemmed from an awareness of the presence of duende in this art. Lorca’s lecture describes duende by quoting Manuel Torres: “All that has black sounds has duende.”35 He also refers to Goethe’s description of Paganini, explaining that duende is “the mysterious power that everyone feels and that no philosopher can explain.”36

Lorca goes on to try to find a more tangible explanation of duende: “So duende is a power and not an act, it is a struggle and not a thought. I have heard it said by an old guitar master: ‘The duende is not in the throat; the duende climbs up inside from the soles of the feet.’ That is to say, it is not a question of ability, but of real living style; that is to say, of blood; that is to say, of ancient culture, of a creation act.”37


35. Ibid., 110. Todo lo que tiene sonidos negros tiene duende.

36. Ibid. Poder misterioso que todos sienten y que ningún filósofo explica.

37. Ibid. Así, pues, el duende es un poder y no un obrar, es un luchar y no un pensar. Yo he oído decir a un viejo maestro guitarrista: “El duende no está en la garganta; el duende sube por dentro desde la planeta de los pies.” Es decir, no es cuestión de facultad, sino de verdadero estilo vivo; es decir, de sangre; es decir, de viejísima cultura, de creación en acto.
Although duende is not easily defined, and it is not something that must fit or not fit a specific set of criteria, Lorca also gave examples of duende in his lecture in order to help his listener further understand what he is describing:

This ‘mysterious power that everyone feels and that no philosopher can explain,’ is, in sum, the spirit of the mountains, the same duende that embraced the heart of Nietzsche, that is looked for in the exterior forms over the Rialto Bridge or in the music of Bizet, without finding it and without knowing that the duende that he pursued had jumped from the mysterious Greeks to the ballerinas of Cadiz or to the beheaded Dionysian shout of Silverio’s siguiriya.38

Another connection between Crumb and Lorca is the way each incorporates multiple arts in their work. As I described in Chapter 2, Lorca exhibited a great deal of musical talent, and his friendship with Dalí also led him to dabble in the visual arts. His poetry includes musical and visual imagery that make his strengths in these non-literary arts plain. For Crumb, too, there are inescapable connections between the different areas of the arts. His scores are works of art, particularly the ones in which he shapes the staves into artistic images, usually involving some sort of symbolic meaning, such as in Makrokosmos, Volume I, in which various movements are shaped like a cross, a circle, and a spiral. Furthermore, the majority of Crumb’s music involves some level of theatricality. Crumb demands a wide range of theatrical devices in his works, including instructing the performers to wear masks, writing passages that call for optional dance solos, and placing the performers at different locations onstage and offstage. In my interview with Crumb, we discussed the theatrical aspect of his music, and he expressed a belief that all music is by its nature theatrical. By focusing on the artistic and theatrical components of his works, particularly in the Lorca cycles, in which the text itself is of paramount importance, Crumb demonstrates that multiple art forms are all vital to his craft as a composer.

38. My translation.
Musical Connections

There are musical connections, moreover, between the cycles. In his article about the first two books of *Makrokosmos*, Richard Bass explores how Crumb uses certain trichords and symmetrical four-note combinations of these trichords to generate larger collections of pitches.\(^3^9\) These trichords and tetrachords figure prominently in Crumb’s Lorca cycles, as well. While De Dobay describes specific developments in Crumb’s style that took place in the Lorca cycles, the prominence of these trichords and tetrachords, their use to signal larger pitch collections, and Crumb’s predilection toward symmetry are consistent throughout the forty-five year span of their composition.\(^4^0\)

In his essay, “Music: Does It Have a Future?,” Crumb has written about the importance of some of these cells:

An interesting practice in music since the atonal period of the Viennese composers has been the widespread use of a few tiny pitch cells. One such cell, which pervades the music of Anton Webern and Bartók, is the combined major-minor third: C–E–E-flat; another such universally used cell is the perfect fourth flanked by tritones: C–F-sharp–B–F; another is the chromatic cluster: C–C-sharp–D. These three cells, in various permutations, together with a few other basic types, are astonishingly prevalent in contemporary music of whatever style.\(^4^1\)

Beyond these symmetrical pitch collections that appear in various guises throughout the Lorca cycles, Crumb focuses on crafting a sonic world to match the intensity and “duende” of Lorca’s poetry. To accomplish this, he expands the timbral possibilities of the instruments for which he writes by using a vast array of extended performance techniques. In addition, Crumb

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41. Gillespie, 18.
employs textural and theatrical devices to further shape this aural atmosphere into which the listener is drawn.
Chapter 4: Analysis

I will now turn to an analysis of four movements of the Lorca cycles, proceeding chronologically through the following works: (1) “No piensan en la lluvia, y se han dormido” from Madrigals, Book I; (2) “Bebe el agua tranquila de la canción añeja” from Madrigals, Book II; (3) “¿De dónde vienes, amor, mi niño?” from Ancient Voices of Children; and (4) “Danza” from The Ghosts of Alhambra. By exploring aspects of harmony, timbre, texture, and theatricality, I will demonstrate the ways in which Crumb uses his music to serve Lorca’s texts.

No piensan en la lluvia, y se han dormido

Published in 1965, Crumb’s first book of Madrigals features three movements that each set a single line or fragment from Lorca’s writings. The imagery of the texts for this collection focuses on nature and death.

The second movement of this collection sets the text “No piensan en la lluvia, y se han dormido” [They do not think of the rain, and they’ve fallen asleep]. This text comes from “Casida de los ramos” [Casida of the branches], a poem from Diván del Tamarit, a collection that was published after Lorca’s death. Although Crumb only sets one line of “Casida de los ramos,” it is worth exploring the entire poem to gain a better understanding of this one line in context, which may aid in a fuller comprehension of why Crumb composed this movement the way he did.

“Casida de los ramos” has five stanzas of four lines each. In this poem, Lorca describes “las arboledas del Tamarit” [the groves of the Tamarit]. The Tamarit indicated here is the Huerta del Tamarit, a home in the Andalusian countryside owned by Lorca’s uncle.42 Throughout his

career, Lorca frequently included Andalusian places in his writing, and as C. Brian Morris has pointed out, after his return from New York, “places are now inseparable from personal problems and . . . emotional dilemmas affect the depiction of places, particularly Granada.”

In this case, it is Lorca’s lifelong fascination with death that inundates the images and themes of the poem, which was indeed written only briefly before his death.

In the poem, particularly in the first four stanzas, Lorca paints a picture of the groves of the Tamarit, with striking imagery of various elements of the grove, including the branches, an apple tree, birds, the rain, two valleys, autumn, an elephant, and children. The fifth and final stanza presents an interesting situation—it is almost an exact repetition of the opening stanza, with the second line completely changed and a pronoun of the third line changed, as shown here:

First stanza:

Por las arboledas del Tamarit
han venido los perros de plomo
a esperar que se caigan los ramos,
a esperar que se quiebren ellos solos.

Fifth stanza:

Por las arboledas del Tamarit
hay muchos niños de velado rostro
a esperar que se caigan mis ramos,
a esperar que se quiebren ellos solos.

Let us now examine how the first four stanzas lead to the slightly altered repetition in the last stanza. In the first stanza, Lorca describes “perros de plomos” [leaden dogs], which are waiting for the branches of the groves to fall and break. These dogs seem to be omens of doom for the branches, and their lingering is a sign that death is coming. In the second stanza, new

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imagery of an apple tree “con una manzana de sollozos” [with an apple of sobs] appears, with a nightingale and a pheasant each offering comfort against this distress. It is as if the “apple of sobs” were an observer, mourning the inevitable demise of the branches. The third stanza, however, offers an alternative to this grief, telling us of what seems to be ignorant bliss on the part of the branches: “No piensan en la lluvia y se han dormido, como si fueran árboles, de pronto” [They do not think of the rain and they’ve fallen asleep, suddenly as if they were trees]. Here, Lorca compares the oblivion of the branches to “ourselves,” and one must wonder if he could be reflecting on the turbulent political scene that would soon result in his own death, as well as the death of several of his close friends. The fourth stanza continues the imagery of various components of the grove’s atmosphere sitting in anticipation of the autumn, which will cause the branches to fall. The final two lines of this stanza, however, tell us that the branches (and tree trunks) will be pushed aside “con paso de elefante” [with the step of an elephant] by dusk, which brings out the more global truth of this poem: death will come regardless of whether or not we are ready—despite the mourning of the “apple of sobs,” and despite the oblivion of the branches themselves, when death does come, it knocks us over with an elephantine strength that we cannot endure.

After introducing this global aspect to the poem, Lorca returns to the original sentiment of the first stanza, but this time inserts himself into the poetry. Here, it is his branches that are about to fall. To go along with the humanization of this stanza with the phrase “mis ramos” [my branches] instead of “los ramos” [the branches], Lorca alters the characters that sit in wait of destruction—in the first stanza, it was “leaden dogs,” which were inhuman harbingers of doom, yet here, it is “niños de velado rostro” [children with veiled faces], who bring a more human and a more mournful atmosphere to the stanza. By repeating almost the exact same lines as the first
stanza, Lorca asks the reader to reexamine the situation that he has presented to us, this time with this more global understanding in mind.

Accordingly, the line of text that Crumb sets in this movement of the *Madrigals* presents the blissful ignorance of the branches, which, despite their impending doom, do not let this stop them from being happy. Even in using only this line, Crumb still conveys to us the message that death (here represented by the rain) is inevitable, which he communicates in this movement with music that presents the enveloping nature of the rain.

We now turn to an exploration of Crumb’s musical setting of this line of text, beginning with an examination of the piece’s form. The movement opens with a short introductory phrase (section A) involving the soprano, vibraphone, and contrabass. The soprano sings several phonemes, as indicated in Example 1. Following this, the soprano sings the first portion of text, “No piensan en la lluvia” [They do not think of the rain], accompanied by vibes and bass (section B).

Next, a section labeled “Rain-death music I” (section C) enters, driven primarily by vibes and bass (with a few subtle sprinklings of soprano phonemes). In the next phrase, the soprano again sings the text, but once again she only utters the first phrase of the text (B’). Next, a phrase reminiscent of the opening phrase returns (A’). The piece concludes with “Rain-death music II” (section D), which once again features vibraphone and contrabass, but this time the soprano alternates between phonemes and text. It is here for the first time, at the very end of the movement, that we get the sole full appearance of the text.

Crumb uses instrumental and vocal sounds that resemble rain prominently in this movement, a technique that has clear textual inspiration. The extended vocal and instrumental
Example 1. Beginning of “No piensan en la lluvia”
techniques he uses to achieve a rain-like sound include: (1) singing percussive phonemes, “unvoiced” and unpitched syllables, imitating the sound of wind rising and falling, and speaking phonemes at three different pitch levels; (2) playing the vibraphone with fingernails, mallets, a very light triangle beater, and soft sticks, and playing harmonics on the vibraphone; and (3) playing the contrabass sul ponticello, glissandi over the strings’ harmonics, pizzicato, and col legno. By using these sounds, Crumb creates a music that emulates the sounds of actual rain and wind, which enhances the atmosphere created for the setting of Lorca’s poetry. Furthermore, Crumb employs a disjunct, pointillistic style to imitate the sound of rain.

Such obvious timbral text painting, however, is not the only way in which Crumb incorporates rain-like qualities in his musical setting. He also uses chromatic pitch materials to convey an environment of rain. The chromatic collection is harmonically important in the movement. While many of the pieces in the Lorca cycles use intervals or pc sets that have chromatic connotations, Crumb is much more explicit in this movement, employing the aggregate in several key places to stress the importance of the chromatic collection for this particular movement. Crumb uses this collection to represent rain because, like rain, it features a sense of totality. The rain envelops everything it touches, just as Crumb’s aggregate contains, literally, everything. This connects to Lorca’s poetic meaning that whether or not the branches think of the rain and the inevitable breaking that will come with it, the rain comes, and it covers everything it touches.

The aggregate appears at several important moments in this movement. It is first presented in the three simultaneities of the opening A section, distributed between the soprano, vibraphone, and contrabass. Each simultaneity sounds a chromatic or nearly chromatic collection.

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45. From here on, I will use pc to indicate pitch class and SC to refer to set classes. When referring to the prime form of sets, I will use parentheses; for normal forms, I will use square brackets.
(the first and second are each chromatic tetrachords, and the third is drawn from SC 5-7 (0,1,2,6,7)). Throughout the movement, Crumb emphasizes the chromatic collection not just by employing the aggregate but also by using three-, four-, and five-note collections that have chromatic connotations, in particular the trichords (0,1,2), (0,1,6), and various larger sets that are interlocking versions of these, such as (0,1,2,6), (0,1,6,7), and (0,1,2,6,7).

In the B section, the entire chromatic collection is sounded, with the focus again on smaller sets that emphasize the minor second and the tritone. In this section, as in the opening A section, although the aggregate is sounded, it is split between the voice, vibraphone, and contrabass. This occurs again in “Rain-death music I,” in which the vibraphone sounds every chromatic pc except one; this missing pc, however, is supplied by the contrabass to complete the aggregate. It is the B’ section that features for the first time a single line that sounds the entire chromatic collection—here the soprano accomplishes this herself, while the instrumental parts focus on (0,1,6) trichords. Despite its focus on chromatic sets, the return of the opening material in A’ thwarts the listener’s expectations of hearing the aggregate again. In the final “Rain-death music II” section, however, the pinnacle of chromaticism is achieved. Both the vibraphone and the contrabass contain the full chromatic collection independent of any other line (this is the first time this has occurred in the piece), but the real gem here is the soprano line. While the soprano has sounded the aggregate by herself once before, here she does so in a fascinating way. This section contains the first and only pronunciation of the full text of the madrigal. For this text, which is thirteen syllables long, Crumb employs the aggregate for the first twelve notes, repeating a pitch only at the final syllable, which is the final sound of the entire movement, as the vibraphone and contrabass have already dropped out (see Example 2).
Example 2. Soprano aggregate at the end of “No piensan en la lluvia.”
To make sense of these various uses and avoidances of the aggregate, it is best to think of this movement as containing a spectrum of chromaticism. Crumb begins with total chromaticism divided among the three instruments, eventually moves toward even fuller chromaticism with the soprano’s sounding of the aggregate by herself in B’, then leans slightly to the other end of the spectrum with the incomplete A’ section, and finally to the most extreme chromaticism in “Rain-death music II,” as each instrument sounds its own aggregate, and the soprano does not repeat pitches (as she did in the previous sections).

Just as the pit materials of the piece change by moving closer to and further away from chromaticism, the rhythmic aspects of the movement move in and out of metric dissonance. Throughout the piece, Crumb employs various conflicting meters to add to or lessen the rhythmic disunity of the rain sounds. For example, in “Rain-death music I,” the contrabass is given a time signature of $5/\text{X}$ at a speed of $\text{X}=100$, while the vibraphones are in $4/\text{X}$, with $\text{X}=80$. This causes each measure of five sixteenths for the bass to last for the same amount of time as a measure of four sixteenths for the vibes. In the B’ section, the meters begin together, but Crumb soon alters them to switch back and forth between $5/\text{X}$ and $5/\text{Y}$, coming in and out of sync with each other. The piece ends with the meters back in alignment. By employing these contrasting meters, Crumb enhances the magnitude of the rain without drawing on greater forces of volume or quantity. The texture remains sparse, but the attacks of each note—of each raindrop—move in and out of sync with each other to create a much less metrical sound, which seems truer to nature.
Crumb’s second book of *Madrigals* was published in 1965, the same year as the first book. Once again, he sets one line or fragment of Lorca’s texts in each madrigal, and once again, there is prominent imagery of nature and death throughout.

The first movement of this book sets the text “Bebe el agua tranquila de la canción añeja” [Drink the tranquil water of the antique song]. This line is from Lorca’s “Balada de la placeta” [Ballad of the little square], which was written in 1919 and published in the collection *Libro de poemas* [Book of poems] in 1921.

Lorca’s poem imitates a child’s song or game. It is structured as a conversation between “los niños” [the children] and “yo” [myself], and the children constantly return to a refrain, “¡arroyo claro, fuente serena!” [clear stream, serene fountain!]. Childhood is a prominent theme throughout Lorca’s poetry, as is nostalgia or the desire to return to innocence, and in this particular poem, he creates a poeticized version of a game children might play to communicate these themes.

“Balada de la placeta” also contains the section of text that Crumb sets in the fifth movement of *Ancient Voices of Children*46:

Se ha llenado de luces
mi corazón de seda,
de campanas perdidas,
de lirios y de abejas.
Y yo me iré muy lejos,
más allá de esas sierras,
más allá de los mares,
cerca de las astrellas,
para pedirle a Cristo
Señor que me devuelva
mi alma antigua de niño.

My heart of silk
is filled with lights,
with lost bells,
with lilies, and with bees,
and I will go very far,
farther than those hills,
farther than the seas,
close to the stars,
to ask Christ the Lord
to give me back
my ancient soul of a child.

It is of great importance to note that it was this section of poetry, particularly the last three lines, that inspired Crumb to write the entire \textit{AVC} cycle. Although it is worth comparing this movement of the \textit{Madrigals} to \textit{AVC} as a whole, as both involve ancient or antique themes, a thorough examination of the connections between \textit{AVC} and this movement is beyond the scope of this thesis.

The specific fragment of text that Crumb sets in this movement contains imagery of water, antiquity, and music, and he crafts his music in such a way as to communicate these images. The importance of musical imagery in Lorca’s poetry is seen here, and Crumb uses the form of his musical setting to display Lorca’s musical imagery. De Dobay describes the movement’s form as a quasi-binary with coda:

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|}
\hline
Section: & A & B \\
Measures: & 1–8 & 9–15 \\
\hline
& A’ & B’ \\
& 16–22 & 22–28 \\
\hline
& A” (coda) & \\
& 29–35 & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

Figure 1. The form of "Bebe el agua tranquila" according to Thomas R. De Dobay.\textsuperscript{47}

However, De Dobay’s formal interpretation is problematic. I interpret the form as consisting of two distinct musics in this movement—that of the ancient song itself, and that of the poem or narration, which describes this ancient song to us and urges us to immerse ourselves in it. The ancient song is presented in the A sections, and the narration in the B sections. To contrast these sections, and thus the two musics of the movement, Crumb uses more limited pitch material in the A sections, and makes the B sections freer.

Thus, I interpret section A’ as mm. 16–19, and B’ as the pickup to m. 20 through 28. Not only is this pickup to m. 20 the spot at which Lorca’s text returns but it also signals a change in

\textsuperscript{47} De Dobay, 95.
the harmonic atmosphere of the piece. To better understand what is happening with these two contrasting musics, let us turn now to a more detailed analysis of the work.

In his setting of “Bebe el agua tranquila,” Crumb draws the listener gradually into an antique or ancient world. He begins the movement with motives, which he uses to generate larger phrases. It is as if we are entering this ancient world drop by drop. These ever-expanding motives also give this section a sense of progression. The first section of “Bebe el agua tranquila” features soprano, alto flute, antique cymbals, and glockenspiel. The soprano sings only the syllable “ah,” giving the music an antique sound, as the title indicates. The wordless nature of the song distances us from the music, which, though we hear, we cannot understand without knowing its words. It is this wordless soprano line that seems to capture Crumb’s interpretation of the antique song of Lorca’s poetry.

The antique quality of the poem’s song is also represented in the drone-like content that the percussionist plays on the glockenspiel and antique cymbals. This whole opening section features limited pitch material for each of the three performers. The soprano sings C5, D5, C♯4, and F♯5. She begins by alternating just the C and D, and the C♯ and F♯ are gradually introduced. Meanwhile, the alto flute sounds B♭4, A3, D♭3, C♯3, and G3. Like the soprano, the flute motive begins rather simply, and Crumb varies it throughout the rest of the section. While the percussion instruments utter their drone-like material (which is limited to a single (0,1,6) trichord on the pitches E, F, and B, repeated over and over again), the soprano sings and the alto flute plays melodic material that sounds almost improvised. All of this contributes to the impression that this section is Crumb’s perception of what the antique song in Lorca’s poem would sound like.
The A section also introduces the listener to a figure that acts as a head motive for the whole piece, as De Dobay has described. This (0,1,6) motive begins with the rhythm but Crumb manipulates both the pitch and rhythmic aspects of it throughout the movement in order to achieve variety within the unified framework provided by the head motive. This head motive represents a sort of trademark of the antique song, which is in many ways more static than the music of the narration, but which does feature some development.

The B section of this movement begins at m. 9, and is signaled by a return to the original tempo, as well as a harmonic shift. The soprano concludes her wordless song with a final “ah,” but this time in a new harmonic environment, as she sings a $G\sharp$, which is the only pc we have not yet heard in the movement. Meanwhile, the percussion sounds a variation of the (0,1,6) drone it played in the previous section, but this time on the pitches $C\sharp$, $G$, and $D$.

Soon the music shifts as the remnants of the antique song vanish. As the music of the alto flute and percussion changes, Lorca’s text finally enters. Not only is the instrumental music distinct from anything we have heard so far but the soprano’s music is also quite different. For its pronouncement of Lorca’s words, the soprano’s melody is much freer than it was in the section of the antique song. Rather than embellishing a few selected tones, as in the A section, the soprano sings the aggregate in this B section as she utters Lorca’s text for the first time. The alto flute and percussion also feature much more chromatically-oriented melodic material in this B section, the music of the poem.

Following one complete statement of Lorca’s text, the A’ section begins. Here, we return to limited pitch materials, as well as to gradually developing motives. The head motive of the first section that is the trademark of the antique song also returns here. It is this section that I

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interpret differently than De Dobay, choosing to view the A’ section as ending in m. 19. This
division is most consistent with the interpretation of this movement as two distinct musics, one
for the antique song and one for the narrator.

The B’ section begins at the percussion pickup to m. 20. Here again, as in the B section,
the soprano is singing Lorca’s text, this time repeating several words and phrases. While the
soprano does not repeat any of the pitch material from the B section exactly, there are definite
references back to this section that connect the two. Additionally, there is a focus on pc sets
drawn from 3-1 (0,1,2) and 3-5 (0,1,6) in both of these sections.

The final A” section (which acts as a sort of coda) recalls once more the opening of the
movement by sounding a version of the head motive. The percussion repeats its drone-like
function, but this time it is expanded to a (0,1,6,7) tetrachord, and is slightly freer in the variation
of its material. This tetrachord (E4, B4, F5, and B♭3) is an expansion of the (0,1,6) drone from
the opening A section (B♭ added). The expansion of this drone communicates a sense of
progression in the movement, telling the listener that the piece has indeed developed over the
course of the movement. The alto flute also makes use of limited pitch materials, playing quasi-
improvisatory motives on the pitches A, D♯, G, G♯, and C♯ (SC 5-15, (0,1,2,6,8)). The antique
song has developed slightly, but it has not lost its characteristic use of limited materials, which
remains constant throughout the work.

¿De dónde vienes, amor, mi niño?

We will now turn to an analysis of “¿De dónde vienes, amor, mi niño?” from Ancient
Voices of Children. The centerpiece of AVC, this movement acts as a microcosm of the cycle as a
whole by presenting the life-cycle, which is also contained in the overall form of AVC. Perhaps
the first thing one notices about “De dónde vienes” is that the score is made up of small musical
fragments structured in a circle. Being the greater part of the movement, this section of the piece is given the label “Dance of the Sacred Life-Cycle,” a designation that holds the key to understanding the movement (as well as the song cycle as a whole), as discussed below. But let me now turn to the form of the piece and an exploration of its musical content. This will help set up my later arguments about the poetic meaning of the cycle and how it manifests itself musically.

“De dónde vienes” begins with a soprano vocalise that echoes the primitivism of the first movement’s opening. Instead of words, the soprano utters various ritualistic-sounding phonemes, including “ka-i-o,” “ta-i-o-ka,” and more, emphasizing in particular “k”-sounds, as opposed to the more vowel-centric vocalise of the opening movement. The vocalise concludes with a flourish from the harp and electric piano accompanied by percussion (the first time we hear these instruments in the movement) as the soprano cries out “¡mi niño!” [my child] (the first time we hear actual words).

This ushers in the “Dance of the Sacred Life-Cycle,” which begins at A1 (see Example 3 on page 48), moving clockwise around the circle to B1, C1, etc., then around the circle for a second (using A2, B2, etc.) and part of a third (using A3, B3, etc.) time. Meanwhile, the percussionists repeat an ostinato figure. When the “life-cycle” concludes, the percussionists play the ostinato a final time, then all of the musicians play the last partial measure of music at the bottom of the score, which brings back the phonemes of the vocalise.

The text of this movement is given below:

¿De dónde vienes, amor, mi niño? From where do you come, my love, my child?
De la cresta del duro frío. From the ridge of hard frost.
¿Qué necesitas, amor, mi niño? What do you need, my love, my child?
La tibia tela de tu vestido. The warm cloth of your dress.
¡Que se agiten las ramas al sol Let the branches ruffle in the sun
y salten las fuentes alrededor!
and the fountains leap all around!

En el patio ladro el perro,
In the courtyard a dog barks,
en los árboles canta el viento.
in the trees the wind sings.
Los bueyes mugen al boyero
The oxen low to the ox-herd
y la luna me riza los cabellos.
and the moon curls my hair.

¿Qué pides, niño, desde tan lejos?
What do you ask for, my child, from so far away?
Los blancos montes que hay en tu pecho.
The white mountains of your breast.

¡Que se agiten las ramas al sol
Let the branches ruffle in the sun
y salten las fuentes alrededor!
and the fountains leap all around!

Te diré, niño mío, que sí,
I’ll tell you, my child, yes,
tronchada y rota soy para ti.
I am torn and broken for you.

¡Cómo me duele esta cintura
How painful is this waist
donde tendrás primera cuna!
where you will have your first cradles!

¿Cuándo, mi niño, vas a venir?
When, my child, will you come?
Cuando tu carne huela a jazmín.
When your flesh smells of jasmine-flowers.

¡Que se agiten las ramas al sol
Let the branches ruffle in the sun
y salten las fuentes alrededor!
and the fountains leap all around! 49

Poetic Meaning

To understand the text, we must explore its greater context within Lorca’s work, which
will shed light on my reading of this movement. While Crumb usually sets entire poems or
selected fragments from them, this movement’s text comes from Lorca’s play Yerma, named
after its protagonist. The word “yerma” in Spanish means “barren,” and it is the plight of an
infertile woman that Lorca portrays in this play. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, Lorca was
fascinated with the idea of infertility from a young age, when thoughts of his father’s first wife’s
infertility and early death haunted him. In Yerma, he explored the life of a Spanish woman who
was infertile at a time in which that state was seen as a significant blow to a woman’s self-
esteeem.

49. Text and translation from: Crumb, Ancient Voices of Children.
Example 3. "Dance of the Sacred Life-Cycle" from "¿De dónde vienes, amor, mi niño?"
At the opening of *Yerma*, Lorca presents a couple, Juan and Yerma, who have been married for several years, but are still without children, to Yerma’s sorrow. Yerma encounters several other women in the course of the play, including ones that already have children, ones that are pregnant, and two whose situations shock Yerma—one has a child, but does not care for it, and the other is without child and content in the situation. Eventually, Juan and Yerma become unhappy. By the end of the play, Yerma discovers that Juan never wanted to have children, and in a fit of passion, she murders him. Thus, the play ends tragically, with Yerma destroying any chance she ever had to bear children.

The specific portion of *Yerma* Crumb sets is from the first scene of Act I in which Yerma stays home while Juan goes to work in the olive groves. While he is gone, Yerma sings and speaks to the unborn child she wants yet does not have. The portion of text Crumb sets is from this song, and the fact that it is actually sung by Yerma makes its use in a musical setting even more interesting. There is no indication in the play what sort of music Yerma is singing, so in some ways this movement can be seen as Crumb’s interpretation of what Yerma’s music ought to sound like in this section.

In his setting, Crumb follows Lorca’s indications for there to be two distinct characters involved in this part of the scene. He distinguishes them by writing the part of the mother for soprano and the part of the child for boy soprano. They carry on a conversation, part sung, part spoken, which is interspersed with instrumental melodies, while the percussion ostinato continues underneath.

The Life-Cycle

The five songs and two dance interludes of *AVC* cover several different stages of the life-cycle, and all of the texts describe various situations involving children. The first movement
describes the rather fantastic situation of a little boy looking for his voice, which is currently in the possession of a cricket. This fanciful story anthropomorphizes (albeit briefly) this cricket, thereby representing the imagination and creativity of childhood. It is a story that could almost function as a fairy tale or lullaby. By contrast, the second movement features the speaker’s appreciation and love for childhood, as he compares his experience with nature to his experience with children, concluding by saying that he “[loses himself] in the heart of certain children.” Childhood is pure and to be admired and embraced. The third movement takes on a more somber tone when interpreted in relation to Yerma, as I have already described. The mother addresses her unborn child, who, in Yerma’s case, will remain forever unborn. The fourth movement continues with this strain of sorrow, setting just two lines of text: “Each afternoon in Granada, a child dies each afternoon.”\textsuperscript{50} The cycle concludes with the nostalgic “Balada de la placeta,” which expresses a desire to return to the innocence of childhood.

By presenting perspectives on childhood from different stages of life, Crumb is communicating the life-cycle. He chooses texts that span childhood and adulthood, and even juxtaposes these in the final movement with the key phrase that inspired the cycle, “to ask Christ the Lord to give me back my ancient soul of a child.”\textsuperscript{51}

Similarly, the central movement of AVC contains a “life-cycle.” Crumb follows the structure of the poem to fashion this cycle. The A sections feature the soprano posing questions in \textit{Sprechstimme}, with the boy soprano answering in a similar style. The B section contains an oboe solo. Following this in section C is a sung soprano refrain (here, Crumb breaks from the original poetry by bringing this portion of text back several times throughout), with mandolin, harp, and electric piano. The D section features spoken selections of text, by the boy soprano the

\textsuperscript{50} Todas las tardes en Granada, todas las tardes se muere un niño.

\textsuperscript{51} Para pedirle a Cristo Señor que me devuleva mi alma antigua de niño.

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first time through the cycle and the soprano the second time. The final segment of the life-cycle is section E, in which the electric piano’s capability of extended performance techniques is taken advantage of with fingernail glissandi, clusters, and the like. By having this life-cycle progress while the percussionists play their ostinato, Crumb juxtaposes the events of an individual life—in this case, sorrowful ones—with the unceasing, unchanging rhythm of life. No matter what happens in the conversation between the mother and her unborn child, the percussion ostinato remains the same.

Crumb indicates in the score that the soprano should sing the opening vocalise into the piano. When the life-cycle begins, she is instructed to turn back to face the audience. This is a technique that Crumb uses several times in his music, including other sections of *AVC* (such as the vocalise which begins the first movement). There are timbral consequences to this action, as the soprano’s voice will cause the strings of the piano to vibrate sympathetically. Though subtle, the amplification of the piano will pick up these vibrations and they will help to reinforce the ancient, haunting atmosphere of this ritualistic section. However, there are also theatrical reasons guiding Crumb’s choices: the phonemes of the opening vocalise are intended to evoke the atmosphere of the piece, not, like the sung and spoken parts of the life-cycle, to communicate specific actions or emotions to us. Additionally, the turning away of the soprano for the vocalise serves to distance the audience even further from what she is expressing—not only can we not understand the “language” she is speaking, but she is not even addressing us. By changing the position of the soprano like this, Crumb creates even more distance between the ancient quality of the vocalise and the more present quality of the life-cycle, and between the ritualistic nature of the vocalise and the more civilized quality of the life-cycle.
Moving forward thirty-eight years, I shall now turn to an analysis of “Danza,” the third movement of Crumb’s latest Lorca cycle, *The Ghosts of Alhambra*. In this section, I shall demonstrate how Crumb uses T2 and T3 moves at deeper structural levels to guide the surface-level chromaticism, as well as how he communicates Lorca’s text by creating two distinct kinds of music, one for the dancing gypsy women of the poem, and one for the narrator. After I consider the background of this work, I will examine the text and its pictorial elements before turning to an exploration of the way in which Crumb sets this text. I will also discuss coloristic and temporal issues as they relate to Crumb’s use of symmetry at different structural levels.

“Danza” is of particular interest as a work written early in Lorca’s career, but late in Crumb’s. Lorca was just twenty-three years old when he wrote the collection *Poema del cante jondo* [Poem of the deep song] (from which all of the texts for *The Ghosts of Alhambra* were taken), in 1921. On the other hand, Crumb was seventy-nine years old when the cycle was written in 2008.

It was this Andalusian genre of *cante jondo* that inspired Lorca to write *Poema del cante jondo*. These poems are filled with elemental and primitive imagery, and there are many gypsy and musical themes contained in them, including the poem “Danza” that is set here.

“Danza” is in many ways different from other Lorca pieces Crumb has written in the past. The music is more traditional, with its Spanish-sounding guitar accompaniment and its strophic form. In addition to sounding much less avant-garde than many of Crumb’s other Lorca cycles, it also has a greater sense of forward motion than is typical of these works. Yet, there are other Crumb works that share a connection with this movement. The frenetic, almost perpetual motion suggested by “Danza” calls to mind “The Magic Circle of Infinity” from *Makrokosmos I* as well
as “¿De dónde vienes, amor, mi niño?” from AVC. These movements each have the sensation of forward motion because they are connected to the theme of time. “The Magic Circle of Infinity” has a feeling of timelessness in that it repeats the same music in a circle over and over. We only hear it a few times, but one imagines that it could go on forever. “De dónde vienes” sets a Lorca poem that deals with maternity, and Crumb’s setting explores the passage of time from the perspective of the mother (this central movement of AVC, with its “Dance of the Sacred Life-Cycle,” may also be seen as a microcosm of the entire song cycle in its treatment of different stages of life). For “Danza,” while there are surface reasons why the frenetic motion of the music relates to the text, there is also a connection at a deeper level to the passing of time that explains why Crumb gives this movement such a sense of pushing forward. Although the Lorca poem does not feature much action on the surface, there are subtle implications of the passage of time, and the way Crumb sets the poem communicates the textual progression through daylight, sunset, darkness, and sunrise, before returning back to daylight at the repeated first stanza.

Analysis

We shall now consider “Danza” and the ways in which Crumb communicates the text through symmetrical means and through the use of chromaticism at the surface, with whole-tone and octatonic material generated by T2 and T3 moves, respectively, at deeper levels of structure. First, I will examine the Lorca poem and the coloristic and temporal symbolism it contains. Next, I will explore Crumb’s musical setting, and the ways in which he uses symmetry and T2 and T3 moves to create two distinct musical voices to illuminate Lorca’s text. I will progress through both the textual and the musical analysis chronologically, as the passage of time is an important structural component of the work.
“Danza” features a more limited use of materials than found in many of Crumb’s other Lorca works. The textures Crumb uses throughout these cycles tend to be sparse, and “Danza” is no exception, but the strophic nature of this movement limits the material even further. The baritone sings Sprechstimme throughout, and each of the five stanzas of text uttered has the same contour (the slight differences that do exist in the baritone part are due to variations in the natural rhythm of the text). The percussion content for each stanza is also similar. Most of the contrasting material in this movement (as well as all of the real pitch content) is in the guitar part. Crumb does use his music to serve the text, as in all the Lorca cycles, but it is in a subtler way than we have seen before. He employs subtle shifts between verses, and while these shifts may seem insignificant at first hearing, Crumb uses them to communicate the shifts in poetic meaning in each stanza of Lorca’s text.

The movement is in strophic form, appropriate to the structure of Lorca’s poetry. In this movement, unlike some of Crumb’s other settings (such as the four books of Madrigals), he sets the entire poem. He does, however, take the liberty of repeating the first stanza at the conclusion of the work. In doing so, Crumb sets up a framework in which he can use an arch form. He frequently uses this formal type in his music; it is a tangible representation of his fascination with symmetry.

The arch form in “Danza” exists both textually and musically. Lorca’s words contain a great deal of coloristic imagery, and Crumb’s repetition of the first stanza after the fourth causes these images to follow the arch form. The first stanza refers to gypsy dancers clothed in white; the second mentions “paper roses and jasmine,” evoking a warm, red and purple color; the third contains images of “mother-of-pearl” and “burnt darkness,” juxtaposing the white we have already seen with a darker and more intense color; the final stanza of poetry mentions purple
shadows; finally, Crumb repeats the first stanza in full, returning to the white-clad gypsies of the poem’s opening lines.

Thus, through the course of the poem, we progress from white to red and purple to white and black to purple to white, forming an arch form. As I will demonstrate, these colors also connect to specific times of day. Figure 2 illustrates the arch form and the coloristic and temporal symbolism it contains:

![Arch Form Diagram](image)

Figure 2. The arch form in “Danza” and its coloristic and temporal symbolism (x represents the guitar interludes and each V corresponds to one of the verses).

Let us now consider the complete text of the poem and its meaning. The Spanish text and English translation are supplied here:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>En la noche del huerto</td>
<td>In the night of the garden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seis gitanas</td>
<td>Six gypsy women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vestidas de blanco</td>
<td>Dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bailan</td>
<td>In white</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>En la noche del huerto</td>
<td>In the night of the garden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coronadas</td>
<td>Crowned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Con rosas de papel</td>
<td>With paper roses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y biznegas.</td>
<td>And jasmine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>En la noche del huerto</td>
<td>In the night of the garden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sus dientes de nácar</td>
<td>Their teeth—mother-of-pearl—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escriben la sombra</td>
<td>Inscribe the burnt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quemada.</td>
<td>Darkness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y en la noche del huerto</td>
<td>And in the night of the garden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sus sombras se alargan</td>
<td>Their shadows grow long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y llegan hasta el cielo</td>
<td>And purple</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

55
Moradas. As they reach the sky.  

Crumb has expressed the view that the six gypsy women of the first stanza represent the six strings of a guitar, a reading that makes sense when one considers Lorca’s deep love for music and the great amount of musical imagery in *Poema del cante jondo*. Lorca appeals to the sense of sight here by including the color white. While at the surface this refers to the color of the gypsies’ clothing, at a deeper level, it represents daylight—at this point in the narrative, even though the text mentions night, there is still some sunlight. This will not last long, as throughout the poem, Lorca will maintain this connection of color to time of day, communicating the passage of time through gradual shifts in color.

In the second stanza, Lorca continues his description of the gypsy women. While the first stanza spoke about their white garments, here we discover that they are also wearing crowns made out of paper roses and jasmine. The original Spanish word “biznagas” likely refers to an Andalusian tradition of street vendors selling fresh jasmine blossoms attached to dried thistle stems. This results in a burst of jasmine blossoms and fits in with the crafted nature of the paper roses better than regular jasmine. Regardless, though, the gypsy women are crowned with flowers that evoke the colors red and purple, as well as the strong scent of fresh jasmine. Lorca is again appealing to the senses with his description of bright and aromatic flowers atop the gypsies’ heads. At a deeper temporal level, this reddish-purple color represents sunset, as the sun is now setting in the narrative.

The third stanza is the most poetically intense of the four stanzas. Its language is fiercer—Lorca is talking about teeth and “burnt darkness.” Whereas in the other stanzas the

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53. Interview by author.
verbs used describe temporary action such as gypsies dancing or shadows growing, here the
action that is taking place is \textit{inscribing}, which has a permanence not found in the other stanzas.
Furthermore, Lorca introduces darker colors here, as the poetic scene is finally enveloped in
night.

The fourth and final stanza of Lorca’s poem returns to the purple color of the second.
Darkness has passed, and the narrative continues with the gypsies now dancing as the sun rises
once more. The language here is much more ephemeral, an apt depiction of the fleeting nature of
a sunrise, and the poem closes with the shadows of the gypsy women growing as the sun
ascends.

Having explored the coloristic and temporal meaning in Lorca’s poetry, I shall now turn
to an examination of each section of music in order to better understand the techniques Crumb
uses to illuminate the text. There are two types of music in this piece, one associated with the
guitar interludes (x) and the other in which the stanzas of poetry are set (V1, V2, V3, V4). In
making these sections distinct from each other, Crumb sets them apart as different characters in
the drama that is unfolding within the poem. The guitar interludes represent the gypsy women
who are dancing for the duration of the poem, while the baritone communicates the atmosphere
of the scene as he narrates the events that are taking place.

Crumb uses T2 and T3 moves as generative elements for the two different kinds of music
in this work. While chromaticism reigns on the surface, at a deeper structural level, Crumb uses
whole tones and minor thirds to drive the music (see Examples 4 and 5). In the guitar interludes,
Crumb uses T2 moves to set up a whole-tone framework; in the narrator’s verses that set stanzas
of poetry, however, Crumb employs T3 moves to provide an octatonic framework. By
emphasizing T2 and T3 shifts like this, in addition to the differences that exist on the surface,
Example 4. Example of a guitar interlude from "Danza" (Reh. 15:5) (The guitar interludes consist of a set of two 7-1 serpentine figures. Each interlude is a T2 transposition of the last one; furthermore, since the two serpentine figures of each individual interlude are related by a T6 transposition, the initial pitches for all of the figures in all of the interludes form a whole-tone collection.)
Example 5. V2 of "Danza" showing T3 moves (Reh. 14).
Crumb is bringing greater contrast to the gypsies’ music of the guitar interludes and the narrator’s music of the verses.

We will now explore the guitar interludes in more depth. They feature chromaticism on the surface (each figure is a chromatic septachord). At a deeper level of structure, however, there is a whole-tone framework guiding this surface chromaticism (see Figure 3). The starting pitches for each chromatic figure begin on one of the notes of the whole-tone scale that contains B, and there is an emphasis on T6 and T2 moves. The starting pitch for each complete interlude uses T2 transformations to sound a nearly complete ascending whole-tone scale throughout the course of the movement (the pitches of this scale are circled in the figure). Grouped in twos according to the movements they surround, these guitar interludes sound the symmetrical tetrachord \([0,2,6,8]\) at a deeper structural level, as indicated by brackets in Figure 3. This symmetrical tetrachord is prominent throughout Crumb’s music and demonstrates his proclivity for symmetry.\(^{54}\)

![Figure 3](image)

Figure 3. The progression of the guitar’s serpentine figurations, with attention drawn to T2 and T6 moves that form a whole-tone framework at a deeper structural level, as well as to \([0,2,6,8]\) motives.

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\(^{54}\) This and other symmetrical tetrachords are discussed in Bass, “Sets, Scales, and Symmetries: The Pitch-Structural Basis of George Crumb’s ‘Makrokosmos’ I and II,”: 1–20.
Representing the dancing gypsy women, these guitar interludes feature chromatic serpentine motion that calls to mind an exotic, whirling type of folk dance that one might imagine a gypsy doing. The musical content of the guitar remains fairly constant throughout the work; the only changes are in overall direction (whether each figure has a net movement up or down) and starting pitch. This is an appropriate setting for the gypsies, as they do not change in the poem—they remain constant, it is their atmosphere that changes, which is the function of the narrator’s music to convey.

In the narrator’s music for the first stanza of text, Crumb uses nearly chromatic tetrachords in the guitar part. These include those drawn from SCs 4-2 (0,1,2,4) and 4-7 (0,1,4,5). These tetrachords set the stage for the narration, representing especially the white color that is evoked in the poetry. As we shall soon see, the sets used here are not as rich in color or as intense as the other stanzas. That being said, they represent the white of the gypsies’ garments and of the sunlight, and are the standard to which the alterations of the other stanzas will be compared.

Musically speaking, Crumb’s setting for the second stanza of poetry is only slightly different from that of the first stanza. Here, he alternates pc sets drawn from SCs 5-2 (0,1,2,3,5) and 4-4 (0,1,2,5), also nearly chromatic. There is also a prominent focus on minor sevenths (the guitar sounds several of them as dyads) as well as movement by minor thirds. Figure 4 illustrates the movement by minor thirds that occurs between the four m7 dyads in the second stanza. The intensity of this stanza is increased by the guitar’s first use of chords. This enhances the musical color of the piece, and corresponds to Lorca’s poetic coloring of this stanza in red and purple with the paper roses and biznagas.
The third stanza is certainly the most poetically intense of the four, as has already been discussed, and the use of chromatic tetrachords at three different transpositional levels makes it the most musically intense as well. While this is a subtle shift from the previous material, it is the only time in the narrator’s music that Crumb uses a truly chromatic set, which sets this central verse apart. There is still a clear musical connection to the first stanza, which befits the textual reference to the mother-of-pearl color of the teeth, but there is also a newfound intensity that aptly communicates the dark colors that Lorca is evoking with his description of the “burnt darkness.”

The fourth and final stanza of text corresponds to the second stanza in the arch form of the music. The guitar part here is appropriately, then, a T3 transposition of the content of the second stanza. The relationship between the two stanzas and the prominence of the minor-third interval is demonstrated in Figure 5. Textually, Lorca has returned yet again to the color purple, and both the imagery and the music subside in intensity from their third stanza material as the sun begins to rise over the dancing gypsies.
Figure 5. Connections between the second and fourth stanzas and the prominent use of T3 moves.

Crumb’s inclusion of the repeated first stanza at the end of the movement completes the arch form by returning textually to the color white and musically to the same 4-2 and 4-7 tetrachords previously sounded. This is significant because it corresponds to the return of daylight in the narrative of the poem. Here again we see the gypsies dancing in white just as they have been the whole time, but by now we have also seen the passage of time through sunset, darkness, and sunrise before the arrival back at the daylight of the first stanza.

The importance of the minor third in the music that sets Lorca’s stanzas cannot be overstated. While there is surface-level chromaticism in both sections, by emphasizing the difference between the T2 and T3 moves at deeper structural levels in these passages, Crumb is contrasting the dancing gypsies, whose action remains constant throughout the movement, with the ever-changing atmosphere that the narrator communicates. In addition to illustrating the coloristic shifts that take place in the movement, Figure 6 depicts the prominence of T3 transformations in the verses of “Danza” by looking at the pc collections that are set in each verse:
Crumb closes the movement with the serpentine guitar figures that have been present both at the beginning of the piece and between every stanza of text. For the first time, though, he does not include two full figures, but rather follows the first figure with two abbreviated phrases that are each chromatic trichords (see Example 6). These are similar enough to the original serpentine figures to sound as if they are related, and they still fit into both the surface-level chromaticism and the deeper whole-tone framework, but they are different than the usual figurations in contour and in length. These abbreviated iterations finish the piece suddenly as the typical guitar interlude unravels or unwinds. It is as if now that the sun has risen again, the gypsy dance that takes place “in the night of the garden” must wind itself to a close.
Example 6. End of "Danza" showing partial figures at the end.

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Chapter 5: Conclusion

Although it is too soon to tell what music from the twentieth- and twenty-first-centuries will endure, Crumb’s work has already left its mark on history. Several of his compositions, such as *Ancient Voices of Children*, *Vox Balaenae*, and *Black Angels* have already become iconic works in the modern repertoire. His music has achieved these heights of popularity because of its rich spiritual appeal. As the analyses in this thesis (as well as in many other pieces of literatures on Crumb) have demonstrated, Crumb’s music has great musical depth and substance. His use of three- and four-note cells to indicate larger pitch collections, his penchant for symmetry, and his unique use of timbral effects all contribute to the mystical sonic world Crumb creates in his music, and these are all worthy of exploration, but there is also something distinctly human in his compositions. This quality—which perhaps is best described by the term “duende”—is what makes Crumb’s music so appealing. More than simply being well-organized collections of pitches, forms, and timbres, his works are created with such a high level of musical and spiritual intuition that a performance of a Crumb work demands the audience’s eyes, intellect, and emotions, not just their ears.

The genius of Crumb’s work is found in this humanistic aspect, which, although incorporating prominent trichords and tetrachords, extended performance techniques, and symmetrical forms, takes these components to a higher level. For example, Crumb’s timbral innovations are not cheap effects used merely for their novelty; rather, they contribute to the larger atmosphere that Crumb creates with his music. In my interview with Crumb, we discussed what he calls “university music,” which he described as being “separated from all the mystery in the universe” and “just . . . a collection of notes.”\(^{55}\) Crumb’s compositions are on the opposite end

\(^{55}\) Interview by author.
of the spectrum from this “university music.” Indeed, it is the mysteries of the universe that motivate him to compose, and each piece he writes attempts to shed a little more light on these mysteries. In the Lorca cycles I have written about in this thesis, we have seen him communicate to his audience about children, nature, antiquity, death, and more. As I have already mentioned, Crumb believes that he has a West Virginian acoustic due to his early life there. But the echoing of West Virginia’s hills is not the only part of his history that he puts in his music. Crumb’s music has humanistic appeal, because it is literally his music—every piece communicates something about his life, his personality, his views on the universe, or something else about him.

In the Lorca cycles, Crumb uses his music to illuminate the poetic meaning of the texts, but the final product contains elements of Crumb’s personality as well as that of Lorca. While this thesis has focused specifically on four movements from these cycles, I have demonstrated some of the ways in which Crumb sets Lorca’s poetry so compellingly. Due to the importance of Lorca’s poetic meaning to Crumb, these cycles establish a “collaboration” between Lorca and Crumb that achieves its potency because of the kindred artistic spirit that they share. Crumb uses the harmonic, timbral, textural, and theatrical elements of his music to create a sonic world that matches the poetic intensity of Lorca’s writings.

_Ancient Voices of Children_ is one of the best examples of the popularity of Crumb’s music. Even forty-two years after its composition, it is still seen as one of the most iconic works of its time, and it is performed frequently. In addition, it has been the subject of several analytical studies. Yet while this demonstrates the popularity Crumb’s music has found in the classical music world of his time, there still remain significant gaps in the literature about his works. Much of the research on Crumb thus far has focused on the early Lorca cycles, _Black Angels_, and the first two books of _Makrokosmos_, so there are many other works for which the field of
research is wide open. But even for a work like *Ancient Voices of Children*, which has been one of Crumb’s most frequently written about and performed works, there remains much to be explored. For example, while I have investigated this work’s third movement in this thesis, the rest of the cycle lacks a thorough examination of the ways in which Crumb uses different components of his music to illuminate Lorca’s texts. Furthermore, Crumb is still composing, and his new compositions are just as worthy of theoretical and musicological study as his older music.

Fortunately, since Crumb’s music appeals so deeply to the intellect as well as to the emotions, it seems likely that his music will endure both in the concert hall and in the scholarly world. The spiritual intensity and humanistic elements of his music make it fresh with each new listening, so that even the early Lorca cycles that were written nearly half a century ago still have new depths of meaning to be discovered. Most importantly, these works will remain relevant because of their “duende,” which will continue to speak to audiences no matter what decade they in which are performed or analyzed.
Selected Bibliography


