



World Premiere of  
*Bitter Harvest*

December 2, 2005

Rohde | Moody  
Schumann

Zellerbach Hall, UC Berkeley

# BERKELEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

2005-2006 SEASON



KENT NAGANO, CONDUCTOR/MUSIC DIRECTOR

GEORGE THOMSON, ASSOCIATE CONDUCTOR

8 p.m., Friday, December 2, 2005

Zellerbach Hall

ROBERT SCHUMANN

Symphony No. 1 in B-flat Major, Opus 38 "Spring"

I. Andante un poco maestoso—Allegro molto vivace

II. Larghetto

III. Scherzo: Molto vivace

IV. Allegro animato e grazioso

— INTERMISSION —

KURT ROHDE  
*composer*

AMANDA MOODY  
*librettist*

***Bitter Harvest***

World Premiere, commissioned by the Berkeley Symphony Orchestra

Henrietta Davis, *soprano*, as Miss Daisy White

John Duykers, *tenor*, as Mr. Ruby Black

Troy Cook, *baritone*, as Agent Orange

Melissa Weaver, *director and dramaturge*

*Bitter Harvest credits continue on next page*

Jeremy Hamm, *lighting*

Lynne Morrow, *choral preparation*

Soprano	Alto	Tenor	Bass/Baritone
Kate Berenson	Elizabeth Henry	Eric Freeman	John Dalton Frederick
Becca Burrington	Kimberly Keeton	Benjamin Scott	Michael Grammer
Angela Doctor	Alexis Lane Jensen	Benjamin Taylor	Jim Hale
Katy Stephan	Peggy Rock		Thomas Mugglestone

Gregory Kuhn, *sound engineer*

Karen Ulrich, *technical assistant*

Jeremy Eastman, *technical assistant*

Mardi Hollowell, *production assistant*

Agricultural landscape images by Deborah O'Grady

Funding for *Bitter Harvest* provided by

Clarence Heller Foundation

East Bay Community Foundation

National Endowment for the Arts

San Francisco Bay Area Chapter American Composers Forum

Le Théâtre

Special Thanks to

Kent Devereaux • Paul Dresher

Dave Henson & Occidental Arts and Ecology Center • Jeff Langley  
Las Positas College's Theater Arts Department • Lloyd F. McKinney and Associates

Mike Renaldi • Stefan Roy • Charles and Lindsey Shere • Dan Smith

Mischa Steinbruck • Clark Suprynovicz • Nina Tepedino



Presentation bouquets are graciously provided by Jutta's Flowers.

Post-concert reception sponsored by



Tonight's concert will be broadcast on KALW 91.7 FM,  
Sunday, March 19, 2006 at 4 p.m.

The Berkeley Symphony Orchestra is a member of the American Symphony  
Orchestra League and the Association of California Symphony Orchestras.

No photographs or recordings of any part of tonight's performance may be made without the written  
consent of the management of the Berkeley Symphony. All programs subject to change.

## December Program Notes

### Symphony No. 1 in B-flat Major, Opus 38 “Spring”

#### ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810–56)

*Schumann required only four days to sketch out his first complete symphony in its entirety: January 23–26, 1841. He began writing out the full score the next day and finished on February 20. Felix Mendelssohn conducted the premiere of the work with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra on March 31 of the same year (Schumann had made a few revisions to the score during the rehearsal process). The work enjoyed a further 45 performances in various European cities even before the score appeared in print. First publication came in November, by Brietkopf & Härtel of Leipzig (parts only); the same firm published the score in January 1853. The symphony is scored for pairs each of flutes, oboes, clarinets, and bassoons; 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, triangle, 3 timpani, and strings. Duration ca. 31:30.*

**Note:** See page 15 for a synopsis of Schumann’s life and career.

During the first decade or so of his composing career, Schumann produced music almost exclusively for his own instrument, the piano. When, in early 1840, it started to become clear that the last of the obstacles standing in the way of his marriage to Clara Wieck were likely to be overcome, he largely abandoned the piano and rechanneled his energies into the art song. Indeed, 1840 has come to be labeled in Schumann’s biography as “The Year of the Song,” a year in which more than 160 songs flowed from his pen.

But soon after the wedding of Robert and Clara in September, the stream of songs dried up, to be replaced by a new passion: 1841 was to be known as “The Year of the Symphony.” Up to this point, Schumann had demonstrated his mastery of the miniature, but success in larger forms of composition had largely eluded him. This was not for lack of trying—his sketchbooks of the 1830s are littered with the husks of unfulfilled attempts at symphonic composition. But now two new influences led him to redouble his efforts.

The first of those influences was Clara. A year before their marriage, she had written in her diary:

... it would be best if he composed for orchestra; his imagination cannot find sufficient scope on the piano . . . His compositions are all orchestral in feeling . . . My highest wish is that he should compose for orchestra—that is his field! May I succeed in bringing him to it.

The second influence was actually a development that had been brewing for a year. In the winter of 1838–39 Schumann had made a journey to Vienna, to see whether it would be a suitable home for himself and Clara. A devoted fan of the music of Franz Schubert (who had died a decade earlier), Schumann paid a call on Schubert’s brother, Ferdinand, on New Year’s Day. When Schumann asked to see any unpublished works still in Ferdinand’s possession, the surviving Schubert showed him a dusty cabinet full of treasures. Among other works, Schumann

found the manuscript of an unknown symphony and, with Ferdinand’s permission, arranged for it to be sent to his friend Felix Mendelssohn, director of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. On March 21, 1839, Mendelssohn and his orchestra gave the first performance of the work now known as the “Great” C Major symphony. Schumann was unable to attend, but witnessed a rehearsal of the work in December of the same year. He wrote to Clara:

Clara, today I was in seventh heaven. A symphony of Franz Schubert was played in the rehearsal. It’s beyond description; the instruments are made to sound like human voices—ingenious beyond measure—and this instrumentation despite Beethoven—and this length, this heavenly length like a novel in four volumes, longer than [Beethoven’s] Ninth Symphony. I was totally happy, and wished only that you should be my wife and that I also could write such symphonies.

Within a year and a month of writing those words, both wishes would come true. Schumann and Clara were married in September of 1840, and on January 23 of 1841 he began a new Symphony in B-flat. He labored at a feverish pace, completing the work in less than a month. The spate of orchestral music continued with a three movement suite in E called “Overture, Scherzo and Finale” (April 12–May 6); a Fantasia in A minor for piano and orchestra, which would later become the first movement of Schumann’s Piano Concerto (May 12–20); a Symphony in D minor, now known as “No. 4” (May 30–September 9); a Symphony in C minor was sketched out in three days in September, but never completed.

In Schumann’s diary, he referred to

the new symphony in B-flat as the “Spring” Symphony, noting that its immediate inspiration came from a poem of that title by Adolph Böttger. Originally, Schumann headed each movement in his manuscript score with picturesque epigrams: “Beginning of Spring,” “Evening,” “Jolly Playmates,” “Spring Replete.” Before submitting the work for publication, however, he removed all extramusical references from the score, reflecting his profound ambivalence toward the notion of program music.

“Spring” is not, however, an inappropriate title for the work, invigorated as it is with “youthful energy,” as Clara put it. The slow introduction to the first movement opens with a brass fanfare, which is echoed by the orchestra. Suddenly, the harmony is wrenched violently to D minor, and B-flat is only regained through painful struggle. The tempo picks up, and the main part of the movement begins with a double-time version of the melody that opened the introduction. The telegraphic rhythm of this melody permeates the movement, providing vigorous forward momentum.

Formally, the development section is the most innovative part of the movement: a new lyrical theme in the minor mode is introduced, all the while accompanied by the rat-tat-ta-tat rhythmic motive. F major is reached, the dominant of B-flat, and normally the recapitulation would follow; but instead, Schumann chooses to repeat most of the development, now transposed down a fourth. At the end of this passage, the harmonic motion slows, a dominant pedal begins, and again we expect the recapitulation of the main theme. But surprise! the fanfare from the slow introduction returns, this time in a more expansive, even triumphant form. Once again, the harmonic rug is yanked out from under us as we plunge into D

minor, but only briefly. After what feels like a shocked silence, the orchestra catches its breath and continues with a normal recapitulation, as if nothing had happened. One more new theme is introduced in the coda, a chorale-style melody that also uses the rhythm of the opening fanfare. This quiet diversion gives the impression that the movement might have a subdued ending, but the brass rouses itself to bring the work (with the help of the triangle) to a festive conclusion.

The serene Larghetto is in a simple rondo form, meaning that the opening melody returns several times, alternating with contrasting episodes. Such a form can also be diagrammed thus: ABA'CA''. The prime marks indicate that the repetitions of A are not literal—it is varied in some way to provide further contrast. The principal melody of the movement is one of Schumann's loveliest, soaring in the first violins above gently pulsing chords in the second violins and violas. The first episode (B) has a bit of *Lawrence of Arabia* about it, and features the wind section. In the A' section, the melody has shifted to the cellos, accompanied by fluttering chords in the upper strings and quiet interjections from the winds. Episode C comes dangerously close to disturbing the air of decorum, but calm is restored by the beginning of A''. This final statement of the melody belongs to the oboes and horns, but the strings contribute a filigree of sound which is actually a highly decorated version of the tune; the texture is reminiscent of the slow movement of Beethoven's 9th Symphony.

A *pianissimo* coda brings the Larghetto to a close, but intruding upon this landscape are the brass—silent until now. Their ominous melody foreshadows the main theme of the following Scherzo. Further blurring the line between the two movements, the Larghetto ends on

an unstable chord, and is marked *attacca*, or "continue without pause." The principal melody of the Scherzo sounds grim indeed, in D minor, with heavy emphasis on downbeats, but Schumann balances the mood by providing two Trio sections of greatly contrasting character. Both Trios switch to the major mode (D major and B-flat major, respectively), and the first even changes from triple to duple meter. The second Trio is particularly "Scherzo-like" in the conventional sense, with scales skittering up and down and with its short-breathed phrase structure. A closing coda brings back fragments of the second Trio, and ends quietly, in mid-phrase. Schumann's contemporaries noted that the quiet, indecisive endings of the second and third movements helped to forestall the then-customary applause between movements.

The finale has many features in common with its sibling at the start of the symphony, but it is more straightforward and good-natured. Thus, it acts as a satisfying counterbalance and rounds off the work as a whole. Like the first movement, the finale also opens with brief introduction presenting a broad theme marked by a distinctive rhythmic pattern that will dominate the fabric of the movement. To quote John Daverio:

the same rhythmic cell informs the movement's introductory flourish, the string retorts of the transition, the second-subject chorale, the development's fugatos, the preface to the horn and flute cadenzas, and the apotheotic strains of the coda.

Through his skilful elaboration of basic material into a complex musical structure, Schumann demonstrates his mastery of composition on a large scale, and makes an impressive first venture into the world of the symphony.

©2005, Victor Gavenda

## **Bitter Harvest**

Oratorio for soprano, tenor, baritone, chamber orchestra, and chamber chorus

**KURT ROHDE, composer** (b. 1966)

**AMANDA MOODY, librettist**

*Kurt Rohde was born in New York City on March 20, 1966. Bitter Harvest was commissioned by Kent Nagano for tenor John Duykers and the Berkeley Symphony Orchestra in 2001. Rohde began work on the oratorio in 2002 and completed it in 2005. The oratorio is scored for 2 flutes (one doubling on piccolo, the other doubling on alto flute), oboe (doubling on English horn), 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, trumpet, bass trombone, 3 percussionists, upright piano tuned a quarter-tone below the orchestra, harp, strings (3 violins, 3 violas, 2 cellos, 2 double basses); soprano, tenor, and baritone soloists; and chamber chorus (4 sopranos, 4 altos, 4 tenors, and 4 basses). Duration ca. 70 minutes.*

### ***The librettist has provided the following comments***

**B**itter Harvest: An American Farmer's Oratorio is the culmination of a long collaboration, which first sparked among the members of Agape Performance Group. In 1997 APG mounted a 7-character solo work called *The Winchester Rosary* inspired by the crazy house-building-habit and ghosts of repeating-rifle heiress Sarah Winchester. In that piece, I wrote a character based on the U.S. Marshals' slaughter of a rural family at Ruby Ridge. She was a lone woman under siege, armed to the gills and rattling off terrified, terrifying didactic streams of bible verses, folk sayings, and propaganda-speak. Her name was Ruby. On opening night, the show proved too long, and Ruby's character was cut. But not before tenor John Duykers had seen her performed. Something in Ruby's situation struck a chord in him and, as a result, director/dramaturge Melissa Weaver and I began researching a piece about the militia movement and white supremacists. Duykers

took the raw concept to conductor Kent Nagano, and the idea to develop an oratorio for the Berkeley Symphony Orchestra emerged. Kurt Rohde was brought in to compose, and soon a new creative partnership was in full steam. The domestic terrorism of Timothy McVeigh, the rise of the American militia movement, the horror of Ruby Ridge, and Susan Faludi's book *Stiffed* were our leads. Then 9/11 happened. And our interest in white supremacy and militia groups evaporated. New York is my home town: terrorism, the raging feedback of the disenfranchised, was suddenly too proximate to objectify or even explore artistically.

Meanwhile, Duykers had come across a book, *Harvest of Rage* by Joel Dyer, filled with provocative insights into the steady decline in recent decades of American rural peoples, including farmers, and how their loss of identity and faith in country sometimes turned them toward violent and/or self-destructive action. Duykers grew up in the agrarian landscapes of Montana. Today, he and Ms. Weaver live and work an organic farm in Sebastopol, which provides fresh, vibrant produce to several local vegetable stands and restaurants, including Le Théâtre, right down the street from this very auditorium. The subject of the decline in small family farming—so close to their hearts—hit home. And gave me a new narrative focus in the form of a question:

How does a small family farmer, the salt of the earth, turn violent, becoming its very scourge?

"A violent uprooting, which takes away all normal props, breaks up our world, snatches us forever from places that are saturated in memories crucial to our identity and plunges us permanently in an alien environment, can make us feel that our very existence has been jeopardized."

—Karen Armstrong, *The Battle for God*

Given the subsequent unfolding of world affairs, a universal theme was dancing in our peripheral vision. Weaver and I decided to chase it into the rural American landscape.



photo by Moody/Weaver

We began by conducting field research in farming and ranching communities. While telephone interviews included working and retired farmers, as well as economists and academics in California and North Dakota, the most compelling conversations took place on-site with farmers, families, hired hands, and ranchers in Central California, New Mexico, Arizona, and Texas. Speaking to ranchers and farmers—listening to their accounts of struggling to adapt to developing technologies, to strategically adjust to the fluctuating world marketplace, their feelings of abandonment by their government—proved critical to the immediacy and authenticity of developing this work. There were so many factors working against these folks' success, starting with the avalanche of farm bank-foreclosures in the '70s and '80s, and the inexorable encroachment of big agribusiness that followed. Conflicts with environmentalists and the Bureau of Land Management, competition

for water rights, epidemic methamphetamine production and abuse, all compounded their hardships. Drought, locusts, and disease were easier to cope with than these man-made pestilences that have in turn caused countless untimely, stress-related deaths from heart failure, stroke, cancers, and suicide. Searching for the linchpin on which to turn a tragic plot, I had much too much to choose from.

Then Weaver heard farmer Percy Schmeiser lecture at Sonoma State University.

#### **The Battle with Monsanto:**

Percy Schmeiser has been fighting a years-long legal battle with corporate giant Monsanto, which alleges that he planted their Round-Up-Ready canola without paying their licensing fee. Schmeiser insists he never purposely grew their product. In fact, it is likely that the GMO plants in his fields were "volunteers" from seed blown in from a passing truck, a neighboring field, or dropped from the beak

of a bird. While the accusations, the lawsuit, and its ruinous expenses have been hard enough on the Schmeiser family, the most egregious outcome is that their heirloom seed has been forever corrupted by the GMO gene. They can never have it back. And neither can we, the consumers.

By 2003, 84 percent of canola crops were genetically engineered followed by 85 percent of soy crops in 2004, 75 percent of cotton and 45 percent of corn. For the licensing agreements to turn profits for companies like Monsanto, the age-old practice of seed-saving must be suppressed. Participating farmers sign contracts that force them to buy new GMO seed each year, rather than conserve and develop seed from the previous crop. Paper contracts posture and pose as if they themselves are facts, as though nature can be controlled by the stroke of a pen, but Schmeiser, and hundreds of other farmers in similar litigation, know otherwise. Nonetheless, the big seed companies persist in their investigations and prosecutions. And so far, they are winning.

"The result has been nothing less than an assault on the foundation of farming practices and traditions that have endured for centuries in this country and millennia throughout the world, including one of the oldest, the right to save and replant crop seed."

—*Center for Food Safety (CFS) 2005 report, Monsanto vs. Farmers*

#### **Coda:**

Mr. Schmeiser was kind enough to give me a personal interview, and I am glad to say that he is made of more resilient stuff than our oratorio's farmer. But the drama of his standoff with Monsanto—which has such far-reaching repercussions, not only for farmers, but for all of us—became the catalytic element of the oratorio. The ragged desperation of the original Ruby character evolved into the darkling psyche of Ruby Black, our farmer. His final straw, a GMO lawsuit brought against him by The Corporation. At stake is the time-honored

life-way of the small American family farmer, a dying population that has always been at the center of American identity. *Bitter Harvest, an American Farmer's Oratorio* is about one man's heartland battle. But at its core burns one of the great conflicts of our youthful century: every individual's right to self-determination, pitted against the steadily burgeoning, erosive powers of modern corporatism. Well, this land is our land. This food, our food. Perhaps the most important fight we can fight is not a battle overseas, but over what exactly this is, right here, on our own plates. And "to stick this thing out," as Percy Schmeiser says, "because we want to be free."

#### ***The composer has provided the following comments:***

The joy of Amanda Moody's libretto to *Bitter Harvest* is its clarity of intention. While the story incorporates numerous changes between past, present, and future, often without any warning or transition, the form of the story has a distinctly organic flow.

In many ways, the natural qualities of Moody's writing—her lyrical and colorful use of words and intensely dramatic juxtaposition of temporal setting—is a perfect fit for the type of music I compose: intricate textures, interlocking rhythms, fragmented melodic lines, hovering harmonies. The shape of Moody's libretto was perhaps the most demanding challenge for me. I was constantly faced with the need to evoke the changes in time. Ultimately, there were some basic devices, effects, and motives to give the impression of shifts in time. Orchestration details (tuned cowbells, upright piano tuned a quarter step lower than the rest of the orchestra, natural harmonics in the strings) are used to signal a shift, a bending or twist in time. These elements recur frequently and serve as structural components throughout. Often, the thematic music from an earlier scene will reappear later, serving to link an earlier idea to a related idea that comes later in the narrative.

There were also a number of decisions



photo by Deborah O'Grady

about which musical forms would best reflect the varied narrative forms Moody utilizes through the libretto. For instance, both *Tender Aria* and *Every Blessed Day* are modified verse songs, highlighting the refrains that are in the text. *Tom's Fire* is an extensive setting that is divided into large sections by the use of recitative. There is also a passacaglia, *The Devil Is in the Details*, that returns in reverse, in *The Final Call*. The ebb of the build and release of intensity of these two adjacent movements maps the flow of the text.

At the center of the oratorio are *Ruby's Aria* and *Miss White's Aria*. *Ruby's Aria* uses a refrain that flows seamlessly from one verse to the next, all in a simple tonal progression of rising fifths. When the climax of the aria is eventually reached, the music from the opening *Prelude* sounds, bringing back the intense loss that he has been experiencing for so much of his life.

The music in *Bitter Harvest* is strongly tonal or strongly nontonal, but the style is consistent, one that is purely a product of my "inner ear." *Miss White's Aria* is based on a blues tune by composer Beth Custer, introducing a completely different idiom. This aria approaches the emotional "core" of the work

by using a more familiar idiom, but then takes a departure. There are expectations one has when listening to the blues. By using this blues style, I hoped to bridge the two idioms (the more familiar blues and my less familiar personal style) and show that they are not as far apart as one might think. Similarly, Miss White's emotional turmoil is not that different from the torment Ruby is experiencing.

The music was composed between 2002 and 2005, at my home in San Francisco, at the University of California Santa Barbara, and at the American Academy in Berlin. Lasting nearly 70 minutes, *Bitter Harvest* is scored for a chamber orchestra, solo soprano (Miss White), tenor (Ruby Black), baritone (Agent Orange), and a chamber chorus.

The libretto is continuous, but I divided it into smaller sections that seemed to have natural delineations. These sections make up the seventeen movements of the work. Most often, the setting of a scene in a particular time frame was my basis for when a movement began and ended.

*Bitter Harvest* is dedicated with deep admiration and fondness to conductor Kent Nagano, tenor John Duykers, librettist Amanda Moody, dramaturge Melissa Weaver, and the entire Berkeley Symphony.

## BITTER HARVEST

The work is set in the present; time shifts in flashbacks to the past and forward into the future.

The setting is out in the fields; in the kitchen of a farmhouse in rural America; at a cemetery nearby; at the auction of the farm; in the office of the Farmers' Crisis Suicide Hotline; in the Corporate office; and in the surreal world of the spirit.

### CHARACTERS

**Mr. Ruby Black (tenor)**—an aged farmer, from a long line of farmers.

**Agent Orange (baritone)**—disguised as the Auctioneer; a young investigator for an agribusiness conglomerate, "The Corporation."

**Miss Daisy White (soprano)**—a social worker with the Farmers' Crisis Suicide Hotline.

**The Chorus**—Ruby's neighbors; agents and lawyers from The Corporation; and voices on an answering machine at the Farmers' Crisis Suicide Hotline.

### SYNOPSIS

#### 1 — Prelude (orchestra)

At dawn, desperate and at the edge of an abyss, having lost everything that was dear to him, a farmer, Ruby Black, prepares to die.

#### 2 — Tender Aria (tenor, chorus, orchestra)

At his wife's grave, Ruby recalls the simple things he's cared about. This melody recurs, throughout the piece, ultimately transformed in the final movement, *Every Blessed Day*.

#### 3 — Auction Music (soprano, tenor, baritone, chorus, orchestra)

Shortly after, Ruby's spirit observes the auction of his farm. The triumphant Auctioneer rouses the ambivalent neighbors. The excited and skittish auction music, with its wide leaps and popping percussion, recurs several times later.

#### 4 — Winter Session (soprano, tenor, orchestra)

One winter several seasons past, on the telephone, Miss Daisy White counsels Ruby through a difficult time. Inside, she feels conflicted; sympathetic to the farmer's plight, yet impatient with his complaining. Her questions remind Ruby of an earlier encounter with Agent Orange, the previous fall.

#### 5 — A Previous Fall (tenor, baritone, orchestra)

Ruby remembers how Agent Orange showed up on his door saying he'd bought a nearby farm and needed seed to prevent erosion. Ruby offers some of his family heirloom seed, puzzled that his visitor seems familiar.



photo by Deborah O'Grady

**6 — Music of Memory (soprano, tenor, baritone, chorus, orchestra)**

The telephone call to Miss White ends as time shifts forward to the auction. Ruby's ghost scoffs at the Auctioneer's unscrupulous tactics while his personal items are offered for sale. More memories are triggered in a flashback where Ruby first sees his once-green fields now withered brown from herbicide spray-bombed under the cover of night. Ruby recalls how, in combat, this same herbicide wreaked havoc in a jungle in Vietnam.

**7 — Flashback to Summer (soprano, tenor, baritone, orchestra)**

Ruby complains to Miss White on the Hotline about the spray-bombing of his fields, and recalls how Agent Orange came to his field one summer, on behalf of The Corporation, with a warrant and restraining order, and took crop samples away for testing. Ruby seems to know Orange from the past.

**8 — Falling Letters (tenor, baritone, chorus, orchestra)**

Ruby receives a letter from The Corporation filled with confusing legal language, saying that he has improperly grown their genetically-modified "Invention," and accusing him of patent infringement. Years are passing, and each successive letter demands an ever-increasing cash penalty. Ruby feels shocked and helpless.

**9 — The Auction Continues (baritone, orchestra)**

At the auction, more of Ruby's deceased wife's belongings are sold off. This brief movement transitions immediately into Ruby's Aria.

**10 — Ruby's Aria (soprano, tenor, orchestra)**

One winter, a few years ago, Ruby mourns his wife's passing. Their home is now silent and his loss overwhelms him; to make matters worse, he receives yet another letter from The Corporation. He phones Miss White on the Hotline and although initially impatient, she begins to share his grief.

**11 — Miss White's Aria (soprano, tenor, orchestra)**

As Miss White begins to empathize with Ruby's predicament, her anger grows. Frustrated and under great stress to "put out all the fires" her job requires, she begins to fear she is losing her mind.

Based on a blues tune by composer Beth Custer, this movement is at the center of the work.

**12 — Flower Music (soprano, tenor, baritone, orchestra)**

Tensions mount during the past summer as Ruby and Agent Orange survey the native "weeds." A rift widens between the old man of land and the young idealistic one as Agent Orange wheedles him and rips out plants in defense of his legal stance. Ruby begins to recognize him. The fluttering flower music in this truncated rondo becomes brutal when Agent Orange finally loses his temper.

**13 — Tom's Fire (soprano, tenor, baritone, chorus, orchestra)**

Past, present, and future intertwine as Ruby describes a horrific memory from his family's past. His torched fields remind him of a fire in this same place many years earlier, one that



photo by Deborah O'Grady

changed his and Boy's lives forever. Generations of farmers have felt this corporate pressure and Ruby's son, Tom, gave up. With this story, Ruby grows to understand and forgive his grandson's long-buried resentments.

This movement is broken into sections that are divided by brief recitatives, unmeasured instrumental accompaniment to a free, declaimed vocal line.

**14 — Return of Music of Memory (tenor, baritone, chorus, orchestra)**

It is yesterday, and Miss White reads a newspaper article detailing the recent court ruling against Ruby. She receives a letter from the government that says she has been laid off due to funding cuts. Ruby feels haunted by images of a wasted land, memories of war swirling amidst the vision of his blasted fields. The Auctioneer sells off more pieces of his life.

**15 — The Devil's in the Details (tenor, chorus, orchestra)**

The sun sets as Ruby has been ordered by the court to pay the enormous fines to The Corporation. He does not have the money. He is an enraged man without options and this desperation breeds an irrational violent outburst. This passacaglia begins calmly, building quickly to an intense climax.

**16 — The Final Call (soprano, tenor, baritone, chorus, orchestra)**

Later at midnight, Ruby frantically calls Miss White, his only friend, but no one is there and a recorded message explains why. Now mingled among the crowd, Miss White reads of Ruby's demise in the local paper. Wrapping it up, the Auctioneer orders the heirloom seed stock and combine destroyed. The passacaglia of the previous movement is played in reverse, following the opposite emotional contour.

**17 — Every Blessed Day (soprano, tenor, orchestra)**

Miss White visits the place where Ruby's spirit rests and she feels his presence. She begins to understand him. The verse song in the opening Tender Aria is repeated here, giving new meaning to the simple things in life.



photo by Deborah O'Grady