INNOCENCE, EXPERIENCE, AND AMBIGUITY: AMERICAN COMPOSERS WRESTLING
WITH “IN JUST-” BY E. E. CUMMINGS (A FORMAL AND TEXTUAL ANALYSIS)

by

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Introduction

It takes courage to grow up and become who you really are. - E. E. Cummings

Poetry and music are inextricably linked. Just as a poet carefully manipulates text to create poetry in various lengths and styles, composers also seek to create a meaningful composition by crafting the musical elements. When writing a song, a composer must first find a suitable text, grapple with the poetic meaning, and finally decide on the structure of the composition (sometimes this means altering or omitting portions of the text). E. E. Cummings writes poetry in a nontraditional way, setting text with space and punctuation to create meaning and ambiguity. This study examines how five American composers create musical meaning from Cummings's poem “in Just-.”

Together, words and music can have a profound effect on the listener. There are scholars who dissect the text to extract an author's purpose. Whether the text is a short story, poem, or an epic tale, the words are meaningful and can influence the reader in ways an author might not expect. Musicologists, theorists, and performers will similarly dissect the written notes to extract a musical understanding that the composer sought to convey. Regardless if the composition is a symphony, requiem, or string quartet, music can create an emotional reaction during a performance. Both text and music are influential; however, when they are combined to create a song, there must be a marriage between the text and the music.\(^1\) A composer then becomes not

\(^1\) Dominick Argento in his book *Catalogue Raisonné as Memoir: A Composer's Life* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 80-81 discusses adding text to music. He states, “To me, it would be the height of absurdity to compose two or three hours of abstract music and then go back and stick words on every note, making up a story as one goes along. The words must come first, since the very tone, texture, color, and speed of the music are dependent on the text that it wants to underscore, interpret, or illustrate.”
just a musical craftsman, but also a poetic scholar as they seek to create a significant composition.²

This study begins with a brief biographical background of Cummings, followed by an in-depth textual and formal analysis of “in Just-.” A recording of Cummings's own public performance of the poem will be examined in a similar fashion. The next section of the paper will provide musical analyses of five settings of the poem composed by John Cage, John Duke, Dominick Argento, Priscilla McLean, and Blaise Ferrandino. Each of these five subsections will include brief background, an analysis of form, and commentary on text setting and affect.

² In an interview with Robert Sherman, composer Samuel Barber discusses the importance of finding the right text. Sherman asked Barber “Does the text matter, or is it a musical evocation of a mood?” Barber replied that “The text means a great deal to me. I read lots of poetry anyway, so I go through tons and tons of poems that could possibly be songs. It's very hard to find them – they are either too wordy, too introverted, or what have you.” Interview taken from Peter Dickinson's Samuel Barber Remembered: A Centenary Tribute (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2010), 40.
E. E. Cummings Biography

Edward Estlin (E.E.) Cummings (1894-1962) was born and raised in Cambridge Massachusetts, north of Harvard Yard where polite society included “good manners and tea parties.” Cummings was named after his father, Edward, a Harvard professor of sociology and a Unitarian minister. Edward was an active and strong influence in his children's lives, weekly displaying the power of intellectual communication while preaching, and attracting his parishioners with clever wordplay, puns, and slogans. Alongside Edward's linguistic influence was an early stimulation of art and literary appreciation provided by Cummings's mother, Rebecca. She was intimately involved in the education of her children Elizabeth and Estlin (as he was known during childhood). Rebecca taught them to read, keep journals, and draw at an early age, and as an avid journal writer herself, she recorded many events of Estlin's young life.

The Cummings children had an idyllic upbringing. In a manuscript account of their childhood, Elizabeth details their early playrooms, the outside gardens – where neighbors came to play jacks, marbles, hopscotch, and jump-rope – and the tree house, which their father built for them. She also discusses the genesis of the poem “in Just-,” when “[the] first and most exciting sign that spring had really come was the balloon man. First you heard his whistle in the distance;

3 Although Cummings would sign his name occasionally with the lower case “e.e. cummings,” Cummings scholar Norman Friedman addresses the capitalization issue in two separate articles published in Spring: The Journal of the E. E. Cummings Society. Following Friedman's personal desire that “the dismal lowercase custom will disappear from the face of the earth,” this study will only use the upper case. These articles are included in the bibliography.
5 Ibid.
7 Ibid., 16-17, 28.
then he would come walking down the street, carrying a basket full of balloons of all colors tugging at their strings.”

Estlin entered school as a shy child. He had a high level of reading comprehension and low arithmetic scores. However, he continued to learn at home, often combining literature and art: doodling images alongside his journal entries, drawing pictures based on novels, and illustrating short stories. The Cummings family encouraged creative output and was quite progressive for the time. His father specifically sent Estlin to Cambridge High and Latin School because the principal was an African-American woman. While there, Estlin prepared for acceptance into Harvard.

In 1915 he attended Harvard and spent the first three years living at home, which “encouraged his bookish habits and also cut him off from college life, including the club system with its societies.” During his years at Harvard, Cummings turned towards new art (like Cubist painting), bringing a creative outburst that was “congruent with his breaking away from the dominance of his father's views,” especially his suppressive ideas of sex. Cummings joined Harvard's Musical Society and was on the board of the Harvard Monthly, a literary magazine that published some of his earliest poems. He interacted with poets, socialists, and pacifists at the Monthly, which rivaled the journalism majors and student athletes who wrote for The Advocate.

9 Ibid., 21.
10 Kennedy, Dreams, 29.
11 Ibid., 32-33.
12 Norman, 33.
13 Ibid
14 Cowley, 182.
15 Kennedy, Dreams, 102-104.
16 Cowley, 182.
17 Ibid., 183.
In 1916, Cummings began to compile “Index 1916,” a series of new and unusual poems. He sorted them according to form. The largest section is an assortment of fifty-nine non-rhyming poems in various forms, and includes an early version of “in Just-.”

In just-Spring
When the world is mud-luscious
The queer old baloon-man
Whistles far and wee,
And Bill and Eddy come pranking

From marbles and from piracies,
And it's Springtime

When the world is puddle-wonderful
The little lame baloon-man whistles
Far and wee,
And Betty and Is'bel come dancing

From hop-scotch and still-pond and jump-rope,
For it's Springtime,
And the world is ooze-suave,

And the goat-footed baloon-man
Whistles
Far
And
Wee.

During his third year at Harvard, Cummings began to paint seriously, making contacts with prominent Modernists, such as sculptor Gaston Lachaise and Cubist painter Albert Gleizes. Although not remembered for his artwork, Cummings created over 1,600 oil and watercolor paintings, not including those sold during his career. His work as a Cubist artist and

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18 Kennedy, Dreams, 96-97.
19 Ibid.
21 Ibid., 13.
the influence of Ezra Pound's poetry led Cummings to publish eight poems in a new style.\textsuperscript{22} Inspired by Pound's use of modern diction and word arrangements (unconventionally beginning in the middle of the page without capitalization), Cummings experimented with spacing, capitalization, and the absence of punctuation to create ambiguity.\textsuperscript{23} As a result of his fragmented statements, juxtaposed words, distorted grammar, and visual images, some of his poems are not performed because they can only be understood by viewing the page.\textsuperscript{24}

In 1917, Cummings left Harvard and his friends, traveling to France to serve in the Norton-Harjes Ambulance Corps during World War I.\textsuperscript{25} After a month in Paris, he began work in the ambulance convoy stationed in a village outside Noyon.\textsuperscript{26} Within five months, Cummings and friend William Slater Brown were arrested and subsequently imprisoned because of anti-war and nonconformist attitudes, as well as suspicion of espionage.\textsuperscript{27} He drew upon his three-month experience in the prison camp to write one of his only stories, \textit{The Enormous Room} (1921).\textsuperscript{28}

Cummings finished his military service in 1919 and tried publishing his poems, but was not successful.\textsuperscript{29} Finally in 1922, publisher Thomas Seltzer accepted the manuscript \textit{Tulips & Chimneys}; however, the most experimental and shocking poems were omitted.\textsuperscript{30} Using only sixty-six of the original 152 poems submitted, Seltzer changed the ampersand to the word “and,”

\textsuperscript{22} Kennedy, \textit{Dreams}, 105. Cummings published these poems during his final year as editor for the \textit{Monthly}.
\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Ibid.}, 106-107.
\textsuperscript{25} Cowley, 184.
\textsuperscript{26} Norman, 78.
\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Ibid.}, 79.
\textsuperscript{28} Cowley, 184.
\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Ibid.}, ix.
and published the first volume of poems *Tulips and Chimneys* in 1923. The first section, *Tulips*, contains lyrical poetry, while *Chimneys* discusses the modern world. The *Tulips* section contains the finalized version of “in Just-.”

in Just-
spring when the world is mud-
luscious the little
lame balloonman

whistles far and wee

and eddieandbill come
running from marbles and
piracies and it's
spring

when the world is puddle-wonderful

the queer
old balloonman whistles
far and wee
and bettyandisbel come dancing

from hop-scotch and jump-rope and

it's
spring
and

the
goose-footed

balloonMan whistles
far
and
wee

---

Over the next forty years Cummings would publish a total of twelve volumes of poetry containing 770 poems. Yet his writing was not as popular as critics were severe; he was often criticized for his use of typography, realism, and the lowercase “i” as a first person pronoun. Cummings developed three principal styles that Kennedy describes as Apollonian, Satyric, and Hephaestian.

The first style expresses emotions directly and is more lyrical and mythical concerning the cycles of the world or human life like nature, birth, childhood, sexual fulfillment, death, and afterlife. The second style is darker, criticizing or mocking human behavior and is hostile toward society, discussing drunks, politicians, prostitutes, and fake artists. The last style is his most experimental, where he crafts, twists, and manipulates the words into pictorial examples on the page.

Cummings became a solitary and reclusive man, only choosing to read his poetry to make money. Although his public readings took him away from his work, Cummings began to perform in public forums and universities in 1952, which spread his fame as a poet. Cummings was meticulous with his readings: controlling staging, content, and interaction with the audience. His performance style was not flashy; he read slowly from a straight-backed chair, behind a desk that contained a lamp and microphone. His readings conveyed the nuances of his

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34 Cowley, 186.
35 Kennedy, Dreams, 125-126.
36 Ibid., 125.
37 Ibid., 125-126.
38 Ibid., 126.
40 Kennedy, Dreams, 445.
41 Ibid.
picture-poems, and the recordings of these readings convey Cummings's sing-song intonation.⁴³

For the next ten years until his death in 1962, Cummings continued to write and perform his poems even though he was partially crippled by arthritis.⁴⁴ One of the lyrical poems among his performance favorites was “in Just-.”⁴⁵

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⁴³ Kennedy, *Dreams*, 445-446.
⁴⁴ Crowley, 199.
Poetic Analysis

Text Setting

*Tulips* has twelve sections that move from musical to visual art themes. The first part includes “Epithalamion” (a song in honor of a bride or bridegroom), “Songs,” and “Chansons Innocentes” while the second part includes “Impressions,” “Portraits,” and “Post Impressions.” Buck proposes that these sections represent “the twelve months of the year: the fifth heading, 'Chansons Innocentes,' evokes the fifth month of the year, May, and contains a poem, the first one, ‘in Just-‘, which starts a rondo about spring.” “Chansons Innocentes” alludes to William Blake's *Songs of Innocence*, but the French heading evokes the long tradition of French *chanson* that began with *troubadours* and *trouvères*.

All three poems in “Chansons Innocentes” discuss the world of childhood and suggest an underlying threatening force that disrupts this innocence. The first poem of this section is “in Just-,” which expresses a child-like excitement of the coming of spring, announced by a balloonman whose whistle calls to the playing children. Formatted with a repetition of the arrival of spring and the reappearance of the balloonman, “in Just-“ is similar to rondo form in music. This repetition is split into three movements, built around the refrain of the balloonman's whistle. Cummings contrasts the emergence of spring and the balloonman, with the innocent

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47 Ibid.
48 Ibid., 137.
51 Buck, 139. Buck goes into greater detail of the different types of formal divisions and the relation to musical form, taking into account the visual organization of words, themes, and syntax.
52 Felheim, 11.
children at play. During the repetition, the poem discusses the transition from innocence to experience. The poem has deliberate spacing, inventive words, and sparse punctuation and capitalization, which gives the work meaningful layers and changes the reading tempo.

At the beginning, Cummings emphasizes the word “Just” through capitalization. “Just- / spring” could mean the timing of the narration, like the earliest days of spring when the earth begins to emphasize new life. “Just” can be interpreted as an adjective describing a time when spring brings justice. If one reorders the first three words to a normal order where capitalized words went to the beginning of the sentence, the poem would read “Just in spring,” which implies that the growth and transformation found in the poem can only happen during this brief season. Although the poet is very deliberate with capitalization, his emphasis and ordering of words creates ambiguity. Regardless of a “correct” interpretation of the meaning of “Just,” Cummings isolates the three opening words spatially. This slows the reading of the poem, allowing time for the reader to explore meaning while creating anticipation for what is to come.

As the poem progresses, the scene described gives a sense of both joy and foreboding. The whistling balloonman signals the return of spring. The children focus upon the the appealing balloons as they come “running from marbles” and “dancing from hop-scotch.” However, as the balloonman comes into focus, by virtue of word repetition, his image becomes more sinister.

53 Buck, 141.
54 Labriola, 41.
56 Kidder, 24.
58 Lane, 28.
59 Kidder, 24.
60 Labriola, 41.
At first glance he is “little” and “lame,” then “queer” and “old” in the second statement, and finally he is described as “goat-footed.” The adjective “queer” could be a slang for homosexuality or bisexuality. The goat-footed deformity signals that the balloonman might be more than he first appears. One can hypothesize that he is some sort of satyr, or perhaps Pan, the Greek god of springtime and fertility.

Although Marks imagines that the god Pan is “blessing the scene,” Kidder discusses that goats “conventionally emblemize lust, which is not a child-like quality.” In literature, Pan lives in the wilderness and plays his panpipe for dancing nymphs, hoping for adult interactions (who often reject him for his ugly appearance). Likewise, the balloonman's whistle calls the children from their games to interact with one another as adults. Lane hypothesizes that Cummings uses the goat-footed balloonman to epitomize fertility by bringing children together and ensuring “continued human springs.” Cummings uses this imagery to hint at the sexual awakening in the children.

The two uses of capitalization are significant moments in the poem, emphasizing the “Just” in the first line and “balloonMan” in the last few lines of the poem. One theory is that the “Man” emphasizes adulthood. The children have disappeared, and Cummings chooses not to include them again. Because capitalization occurs during the ballonMan's final repetition, Pan

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62 Labriola, 41.
63 Marks, 47. Kidder, 24.
64 Labriola, 41.
65 Kidder, 24.
66 Lane, 28.
67 Norman, 59.
68 Labriola, 42.
is revealed and consequently Cummings uses a proper-name capitalization to reinforce the god-like image.\textsuperscript{69} Where Felheim believes it is a pictorial reference to a Man standing up,\textsuperscript{70} Landles suggests that the “balloonMan” is phallic and erect.\textsuperscript{71} As with the capitalization of “Just,” the meaning of the capitalization of “Man” is ambiguous. Each is surrounded by white-space, giving the reader time to process the ambiguity.

Cummings's repetition of the ballonman's call “far and wee” to the children is a variation of the more common phrase “far and wide.”\textsuperscript{72} By replacing “wide” with “wee” Cummings creates a sense of traveling distance in space and time.\textsuperscript{73} The use of the word “wee” prolongs the vowel and with the spacing between words sounds like a shrill whistle that must travel to reach the playing children.\textsuperscript{74} “Wee” is also a child-like exclamatory word that displays excitement.\textsuperscript{75} Similar to the revelation of the balloonman, the whistle spatially transforms through repetition. The first movement around the whistle is horizontal, what Felheim describes as “liquid, pulled out.”\textsuperscript{76} The second statement is emphasized and isolated, as the space between words is equalized. The final use of far and wee is perhaps the most significant because it now becomes vertical and each word receives its own line, giving the reader plenty of time to hear the now diminishing whistle. Cummings uses space to contribute to meaning, as well as to produce timing patterns.\textsuperscript{77} The trailing away of this phrase could indicate the disappearing wonders of

\textsuperscript{69} Friedman, 59.
\textsuperscript{70} Felheim, 11.
\textsuperscript{71} Landles, 37.
\textsuperscript{72} Labriola., 43.
\textsuperscript{73} Buck, 147.
\textsuperscript{74} Labriola, 43.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{76} Felheim, 11.
adolescence as adulthood approaches.\textsuperscript{78} 

Although the poem has a dark theme, the surface detail written by Cummings offers lighthearted reminders of joy in springtime. The lack of spacing found in the pairs of children “eddieandbill” and “bettyanddisbel” show a rushing happiness that is reminiscent of children's run-on sentences.\textsuperscript{79} Cummings does not use spacing between the names, which compels the reader to rush through the words as a child might, increasing the tempo and building excitement. Even the misspelled “isbel,” similar to his early draft “Is'bel,” displays a child-like pronunciation of the name. Cummings visually creates a game-like circular movement around the balloonman in the second part of the poem.\textsuperscript{80} Labriola projects that the names of the children that Cummings chose create a rhyming pattern as they become interested in the opposite sex, creating the pairs “eddieandbetty” and “billandisbel.”\textsuperscript{81} 

Even though the poem anticipates puberty, the setting is the beginning of spring and Cummings's fabricated words create child-like excitement. The compound words “mud-luscious” and “puddle-wonderful” describe the world and convey happiness in the messy conditions that children enjoy.\textsuperscript{82} Spring also transforms throughout the poem, and the compound words can be reoriented to produce new relationships. Spring then goes from an adolescence's enjoyment of a “mud-puddle” to the “luscious-wonderful” season marked by growth and new life.\textsuperscript{83} When the children disappear from the last portion of the poem, so do the playful descriptions of the season, leaving the fully revealed balloonMan and his fading whistle. 

\textsuperscript{78} C. Steven Turner, “Cummings' In Just-,” \textit{The Explicator} XXIV, No 2 (October 1965): 18. 
\textsuperscript{79} Landles, 32. 
\textsuperscript{80} Felheim, 11. 
\textsuperscript{81} Labriola, 41. 
\textsuperscript{82} Kennedy, \textit{Cummings revisited}, 6. 
\textsuperscript{83} Labriola, 42.
Poetic Form

As previously stated, “in Just-” can be divided into a five-part musical rondo (ABABA), which evokes the seasonal cycle. Lane proposes that the A theme discusses springtime, the world, and the balloonman, while the contrasting B sections focus on the children and their games (see Figure 1 below). In the A sections, the spatial arrangements imply a slowing, while the tempo in the B section quickens. This change of pacing highlights the length and lethargy of the coming spring and the contrasting excitement of children.

Figure 1

“Lane’s Rondo”

A in Just- spring when the world is mud-luscious the little lame balloonman whistles far and wee

B and eddieandbill come running from marbles and piracies

A and it’s spring when the world is puddle-wonderful the queer old balloonman whistles far and wee

B and bettyandisbel come dancing from hop-scotch and jump-rope

A and it’s spring and the goat-footed balloonMan whistles far and wee

Figure 2

“Buck’s Rondo”

a in Just- spring

A b when the world is mud-luscious
c the little lame balloonman whistles far and wee

and

B eddieandbill come running from marbles and piracies

and

a(1) it’s spring

A(1) b(1) when the world is puddle-wonderful
c(1) the queer old balloonman whistles far and wee

and

B(1) bettyandisbel come dancing from hop-scotch and jump-rope

and

a(1) it’s spring

A(1) and

c(1) the goat-footed balloonMan whistles far and wee

In contrast, Buck expands the idea of a musical rondo, suggesting that the larger A theme can be broken into three smaller “phrases” and that the balloonman's whistle becomes a musical

84 Lane, 28.
85 Ibid.
“tonic,” or resting place. Buck uses the conjunction “and” to transition between themes and digressions.

Other readings of the poetic form use larger sections. The poem can divide into three sections (A A¹ ½A), when the sections begin with the topic of spring (see Figure 3). The A section includes 1) an announcement of spring, 2) description of the world, 3) report of the balloonman and his whistle, and 4) the children's response. The second section, A¹, contains the same elements with different details. The final section includes the announcement of spring and the balloonman (while the world and children vanish.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Three-Part Division</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in Just- spring when the world is mud-luscious the little lame balloonman whistles far and wee and eddie and bill come running from marbles and piracies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and it's spring when the world is puddle-wonderful the queer old balloonman whistles far and wee and betty and disbel come dancing from hop-scotch and jump-rope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and it's spring and the goat-footed balloonman whistles far and wee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3

86 Buck, 141. Buck goes into greater detail in the article, discussing the visual and organizational, thematic, musical, and syntactical levels. For the purposes of this research, the most basic Rondo form is used; however, there are a total of five charts in Buck's research.

87 Ibid., 141-142.
Another formal view considers Cummings's visual spatial arrangement. The stanzas do not always end with complete thoughts because the spacing sometimes interrupts the flow of the story. However, the poem can divide into two complete thoughts that align with the spacing and create the form $A, A'$ (or $B$), and a Tag. This form is interesting because the poetic line “when the world is puddle-wonderful” could serve three different purposes. The text could complete the first section, begin the second section, or elide the two sections (see Figures 4–6 below).

In the first reading of the poem in two parts, the A section begins and ends with a statement of spring, which creates the thematic flow: spring, world, balloonman, children, and spring. The second section, $A'$, begins with a statement of the world, followed by the balloonman, children, spring and tags a final reveal of the balloonMan. The tag is not its own separate section because it is structurally and spatially dependent on the second section. The
second section is considered A¹ because the first two sections closely relate to one another; the only exception is the beginnings of the sections. If Cummings had added another statement of spring before the “puddle-wonderful” world or used the “in Just- / spring” as an “introduction” to the poem, the forms would be parallel. This formal interpretation emphasizes the spring season because of its structurally important locations at the beginning and ending of sections, while the balloonman visually becomes subsumed in the season.

“Two-Part Division II” begins similarly to the previous two-part reading; however, the first section ends with the “puddle-wonderful” world. The second section, B, begins with a reveal of the balloonman, discusses the children, reiterates spring, and tags the final statement of the balloonMan. This section is labeled B because the focus shifts from the joyous spring season in A, and becomes more ominous as the second half follows the balloonman. The balloonman gains more importance because of his placement at the beginning and ending of the second section. The tag continues to be dependent on the B section structurally and spatially, but relates more closely because of the similar emphasis on the main character. The first section's concentration on spring creates the setting for the appearance of the balloonman who becomes the focal point for the rest of the poem.

A final reading of the poem in two parts has more fluidity because “when the world is puddle-wonderful” combines the two sections. This fluidity creates ambiguity since the elision could complete a thought or propel the poem forward. The two sections flow more linearly, which gives more flexibility in the textual interpretation as the two sections combine and remove any divisions.
Reading by E. E. Cummings

The first analysis is not a musical composition, but arises from a reading performance by the author. Cummings was interested in music and wrote about the musical qualities of speech. Consequently, his performance of “in Just-” has an almost musical quality and is very intentional, stemming from his meticulous rehearsals. This performance occurred more than thirty years after the poem was published. Cummings as a poet was spatially specific, while Cummings as a performer takes liberties in his interpretation of the poem. The greatest deviation from the oral performance and the visual poem is Cummings's use of space to regulate tempo.

Although he sometimes slows and pauses in response to the spatial arrangement, Cummings often ignores spacing to complete a thought. He takes twenty-one pauses between groups of words (see Table 1). The most significant pause lasts three seconds and is structurally important; occurring between a statement of spring and the “puddle-wonderful” world. If the listener takes this pause as a formal division, the performance parallels the “Two-Part Division I” (Figure 4) seen above.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lengths of Cummings's Pauses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

88 There is a recording of “in Just-” on the cassette “E. E. Cummings reads his Collected Poetry 1920-1940 & Prose” published in 1975, which will be referenced in this section.
89 Cohen, 218.
Table 2 below demonstrates tempo in the performance. Cummings uses the coordinating conjunction “and” as a propellent to keep the performance moving linearly. After a dramatic pause, he often begins the next thought with “and” for connection and momentum. This conjunction is also used within lines to discuss the children and their games, which Cummings performs quickly, building energy and intensity.

*Table 2. Pacing durations of phrases and pauses during Cummings’s performance*
Another note worthy mention of Cummings's drama is his emphasis on the morbid balloonman. Even if the poem does not spatially separate the balloonman from the other text, Cummings pauses, which prepares the audience for another description of the main character. Cummings especially lingers during the final revelation, separating words “goat” and “footed” even though there is no visual separation, emphasizing the god-like deformity.
Analytical Methodology

This study will approach the analysis of each song in two facets: form and text setting and affect. Each composition will be analyzed objectively in relation to form, comparing the composer's interpretation of poetic form with the six possibilities previously discussed (Figures 1-6). Compositional techniques such as texture, timbre, rhythm and meter, harmonic progression, thematic elements, tonal centers, and others will support and explain the formal analysis. The second part of the analysis will use these same compositional techniques to interpret the text setting and affect of each composer, acknowledging special stylistic techniques or word painting that could clarify a composer's interpretation of the poetic text.
Settings of “in Just-”

Song composers frequently use Cummings's poetry. Over 140 composers have created around 370 compositions that set about 170 poems.\textsuperscript{90} “in Just-” is one of the more popular lyrical poems, having been set at least seventeen times.\textsuperscript{91} This study discusses five American composers whose compositions span fifty years: John Cage's “in Just-” (1938); John Duke's “Just – Spring” (1949); Dominick Argento's “in Just-spring” (1951); Priscilla McLean's “in Just-spring” (1980); and Blaise Ferrandino's “Chanson Innocent: It's Spring!” (1981).

John Cage: “in Just-” (1938)

The oldest setting of “in Just-” is a composition by John Cage. This setting is the third movement in his 1938 song cycle \textit{Five Songs for Contralto (with piano accompaniment)}. Cage uses all five poems from Cummings “Chansons Innocentes,” but changes the ordering of the text. Compared to the other songs, “in Just-” is melodically and texturally striking. Cage uses a static 3-note melody and an antiphonal texture between voice and piano. The simple melody of “in Just-” allows the listener to focus on other parts of the composition, such as text, harmony, and rhythm.

\textit{Form}

Cage's “in Just-” divides into three sections (see Figure 7 below), which textually align with the “Three-Part Division” of the poem (Figure 3) discussed previously. Each section begins with the announcement of spring, and the first two sections close after discussing the children.

\textsuperscript{91} \textit{Ibid.}, 121.
and their games. Although Cage aligns the words with the three-part form, he musically contrasts the first two sections through his treatment of texture and harmony. Therefore, the composition is divided into three distinct parts (ABC). The final section prepares for closure and synthesizes the first two sections, rather than being a shortened repetition of the first section.

This piece is unique in his cycle, because of the antiphonal texture between the voice and piano. In the A section (mm. 1-26), the episodes that interplay between the voice and piano are of the same duration. For example, the piano begins with a duration of five eighth notes and the voice replies similarly. In the next piano entrance, the piano plays fourteen eighth notes and the voice echoes. As the song progresses, the duration of separate parts lengthen to a duration of eighteen and then twenty-three eighth notes (see Table 3 below).
Also unique to the first section are the piano's homophonic sonorities. Harmonically, Cage uses three main sets: (0, 1, 3), (0, 2, 5), and (0, 1, 6). The sets (0, 1, 3) and (0, 2, 5) complement each other because they share interval class two and interval class three. Because these two sets share commonality and are used frequently throughout the piece, Cage uses both to establish the “home” sonorities. The set (0, 1, 3) has structurally significant moments compared to (0, 2, 5) and is therefore the “head” sonority. In contrast (0, 1, 6) is a hybrid sonority, sharing an interval class one with (0, 1, 3) and an interval class five with (0, 2, 5).

In the first section (mm. 1-26), Cage uses all three common sonorities. The piece opens with (0, 1, 6), which quickly changes to (0, 1, 3) in the first measure. The “head” sonority continues through the first nine measures. In measure nine, Cage contrasts an antithetical set (0, 3, 7) to set up a cadential moment in measure ten. He then shifts sonorities to the hybrid (0, 1, 6) set in measures 10-17. The other “home” set (0, 2, 5) is introduced in measures 17-19, before returning to the “head” sonority (0, 1, 3) in measures 19-21. On the last beat of measure 21, Cage uses (0, 2, 5) to prepare for the next section.

In the second section (mm. 27-52) there is a change in the antiphonal relationships. As the piano progresses, the episodic durations decrease incrementally from twenty-three to five eighth notes. In contrast, the voice increases incrementally from five to twenty-three eighth notes (see

Table 3: Antiphonal interplay between piano and voice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration in Eighth notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the darker section of Table 2). During the first twenty-three beats of the piano (mm. 27-31), there is a notable measure of silence (measure 30) lasting five eighth notes.

During the B section, the piano changes to monophonic texture. The intervallic content for each measure alternates between sets (0, 2) and (0, 3) in measures 27-36. The (0, 2) and (0, 3) are subsets for the “home” sonorities because the sets use the shared interval class between (0, 1, 3) and (0, 2, 5). Measure forty briefly interrupts this alternation with an (0, 1) set, which is similar to the “head” sonority, before returning to (0, 2). In measure 47, the piano texture recalls the homophonic sonorities (0, 2, 5) from the A section; however, the B section has not ended because the voice has not completed the last statement of twenty-three eighth notes.

Cage uses measures fifty-three to sixty-two to bring closure and synthesize the two previous sections. The closure begins as early as measure forty-seven when Cage returns to the homophonic piano texture (from the A section), using the same rhythm as the first measure of the piece. When the piano enters again in measure fifty-three, the antiphonal interplay between piano and voice lasts the same duration, which recalls the first section. A graphic illustration of form can be seen in Table 4 below. The (0, 2, 5) sonority begins the final section until measure fifty-six when Cage returns to the “head” sonority (0, 1, 3). He does not end the piano on the (0, 1, 3); rather he uses (0, 1, 2), which is the only time this set appears in the piece. The (0, 1, 2) relates directly to the “head” set by using the same interval class one and two, except it is more compact. Interestingly, the melody uses the “head” set (0, 1, 3).
Text Setting and Affect

Cage's interpretation of the poem stylistically does not have the emotions that one typically associates with spring. The monotone vocal part and the isolation between performers create a sense of barrenness, especially when compared to the other songs in the cycle. Each performer is isolated; the only support for the vocal line is through the leftover overtones from the piano's pedal (which is held throughout the entire piece). The antiphonal texture in this piece allows the performers to create a musical dialogue. This dialogue between the piano and voice might be considered emblematic of spring and childhood innocence respectively.
Melodically, Cage uses three notes, A3, B3 (which is a pedal throughout most of the piece), and C4. In the first vocal measure, Cage quickly ascends from A3 to B3 on the word “Just.” This movement of the melody is striking because it is the first and only motion until the end of the piece. Cage uses linear motion to emphasize the word “Just,” much like Cummings did in the original poem. From the possible textual interpretations discussed earlier, “Just” is a word that is reminiscent of the beginning of spring. The stark accompaniment might represent the barrenness of the world as spring begins.

The piano opens with a rhythmic motive of an eighth note followed by two quarter notes. The voice replies in the next measure with the same rhythm. Throughout the first section, Cage often introduces a rhythmic pattern that the voice will echo. This rhythmic preparation and repetition provide unity. The rhythmic agreement between parts might also signify the agreement between spring (the piano) and innocence (the vocal line). Although the voice uses rhythmic motives from the piano, as the section continues, the two parts become more independent.

The rhythmic unity between the piano and voice changes in the second section. The voice continues the static monotone, no longer depending rhythmically on the piano. In this way, innocence begins to gain an identity not associated with springtime. The piano changes to a monophonic line and increases intensity. Cage's sweeping piano gestures descend from the treble clef to the bass before arcing dramatically upward to above the treble clef (mm. 27-19). The piece gains energy through the use of sixteenth notes (m. 34-35), which were not present in the first section. Cage uses both energy-enhancing techniques in combination (mm. 40-42) to build dramatically throughout the second section. Perhaps the rushing force in the piano displays the
vitality of springtime. The sweeping gestures are reminiscent of the sweeping wind that one might associate with the season.

Also new to the second section is the changing episodic interplay that was discussed earlier. This change can have special significance in the dialogue between spring and innocence as the piano durations decrease and the vocal durations increase. The conversation between springtime and innocence is transformative. Innocence is no longer dependent and begins to move forward. This movement is tentative at first (lasting a duration of five eighth notes), but gains experience and confidence (lasting twenty-three eighth notes) as the season progresses. The change of length between the antiphonal interplay also describes spring's transformation. At the beginning of the section, spring spans a duration of twenty-three eighth notes but will decrease to a duration of five at the end of the section when the piece turns to closure. Spring loses its vitality as the season (and piece) comes to an end.

The final section creates synthesis between the first two sections and prepares for closure. Rhythmically, the piano and voice begin to agree once more, but the relationship between the performers has changed. The ending piano “head” sonority is rearranged from mainly quartal and octaves (found in the first two sections) to secundal in the final piano statement. Melodically, the line finally ascends away from B3 to C4, moving significantly on the word “man,” the other word that Cummings capitalizes in the poem.

Because of the transformation process in the second section, spring and innocence are no longer identical to the opening section. Innocence has gained experience and the season is ending. Yet both parts nostalgically recall the beginning, when the season was new and
innocence still existed. During the passing springtime, innocence has grown up, melodically rising and becoming a “man,” abandoning its childish games of marbles and hop-scotch in the “puddle-wonderful” world. The brief spring season moves forward, walking together with the experienced man (goat-man) and leaving childhood behind.

John Duke: “Just-Spring” (1949)

John Woods Duke was a composer and pianist who studied composition at the Peabody Conservatory during the mid-1910s. He later traveled to Europe to study with Nadia Boulanger in the late 1920s. He was a professor for over forty years at Smith College, and is known for his song compositions. After briefly experimenting with modes in the 1930s, Duke settled into a neo-Romantic compositional style.92

Form

There are five distinct sections in Duke's setting of “Just-Spring” (ABCB'D). These sections begin with a motive presented in its complete form in the introduction. This motive has a distinct rhythm and melody, similar to the “nanny-nanny-boo-boo” taunt used by American children (see Figure 7 below). The full statement is not always used throughout the piece; sometimes Duke fragments and transposes the motive. These fragments are usually two sixteenth notes (a perfect fourth apart) followed by a major second descent to an eighth note (the D# - G# - F# below).

Duke's compositional form (see Figure 8 below) is a hybrid between “Lane's Rondo” (Figure 1) and the “Two-Part Division II” (Figure 5). The first section (mm. 1-22) textually aligns with the beginning section in “Lane's Rondo,” and includes a nine-measure introduction, the announcement of spring, description of the world, and the balloonman. The child-like motive signals the beginning of the next section.

**Duke's “Just-Spring”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>in Just-spring when the world is mud-luscious the little lame balloonman whistles far and wee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A</strong> (mm. 1-22)</td>
<td>and eddieandbill come running from marbles and piracies and it's spring when the world is puddle-wonderful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B</strong> (mm. 23-40)</td>
<td>the queer old balloonman whistles far and wee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B¹</strong> (mm. 54-64)</td>
<td>and bettyandisbel come dancing from hop-scotch and jump-rope and it's spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>D</strong> (mm. 65-81)</td>
<td>and the goat-footed balloonman whistles far and wee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second section (mm. 23-40) begins with a six-measure motivic interlude before depicting the children. Instead of ending with the children's games, as in “Lane's Rondo,” Duke
continues the thought and includes another statement of spring, ending the section with the line about the “puddle-wonderful” world. This ending is similar to “Two-Part Division II” where the division occurs between the world and the “queer old balloonman.”

In measure forty-one, the introductory material returns and is transposed down a minor second. The motivic material lasts for seven measures before describing the balloonman. Compared to the other sections, the third section is much shorter. When the motivic material returns, signaling the next section (mm. 52-53), it is now transposed and fragmented (see Figure 10). Duke layers this fragmented motivic statement with the vocal line instead of using it as an interlude. In this way, Duke elides sections three and four.

*Figure 10. Duke’s transposed and fragmented motive*

![Figure 10](image.png)

The fourth section (mm. 54-64) is also short, as Duke describes the children and announces spring. When the third and fourth section are elided to create a larger section, the number of measures is more balanced with the other sections. This sectional elision is similar to Cummings's spatial arrangement, which is seen in the second half of the poem:

the queer
old balloonman whistles
far and wee
and bettyandisbel come dancing

from hop-scotch and jump-rope and

it's
spring
and the goat-footed balloon Man whistles far and wee

Cummings does not separate the “queer old balloonman” from “bettyandisbel.” Perhaps Duke is using this model when he elides the third and fourth sections, setting the visual text more authentically. When Duke begins to describe “bettyandisbel” (m. 54), he recalls the similar melodic contour of “eddieandbill” (mm.28-29). These two sections are significant because it is the only example of repeated melodic material, which is why the section qualifies as \( B^1 \). In measures 62-64, Duke fragments and transposes the child-like motive to prepare for the final section.

The fifth section (mm. 65-81) is the most striking because of the abrupt textural change. Duke uses static motion in the accompaniment that slowly descends as the voice reveals the balloonman's deformity. This downward motion resolves to the opening tonality as Duke recalls the original motive. The motive is repeated four times; beginning with a fuller fragment and dwindling each consecutive time until one note in each measure recalls the opening minor third gesture.

**Text Setting and Affect**

Duke's textual progression aligns with his metamorphosis of the melodic motive. In the introduction he presents the motive in its entirety (mm. 2-4), supported harmonically with a first
inversion B-major chord. The motive is transformed (mm. 6-7) by lowering the D-sharp to D-natural while the harmony changes to a first inversion B-minor chord. This modal change modifies the motivic intervals from minor thirds and perfect fourths to major thirds and tritones. The modal shift could be used to foreshadow what will come textually. Although the poem may seem innocent (just as the opening motivic gesture is stated in a major modality), there are underlying currents that can quickly shift the focus to more ominous themes.

The sonority in measure ten sets up a new key by using a G dominant seventh chord. The dominant seventh sets up the vocal line for a cadence in C (mm.10-12). This cadential moment might reflect Cummings spatial separation of “in Just- / spring” from the description of the world. The section does not settle in the key of C since the bass strikes a low E and then moves with conjunct motion. In measures fourteen through twenty-one, the bass begins a chromatic descent from F to B-flat while the melody seems to be in a different key (possibly F or A-flat.) The melody finally reconciles with the bass in measure twenty-one. The B-flat in the melody sets up a cadential figure, becoming the dominant and moving to tonic E-flat in measure twenty-two. Duke soon moves away from E-flat, using the same pitch class, D-sharp, in the bass's first-inversion B-major chord. This initiates the return of the melodic motive and ushers in the new section (m. 23).

The linear movement in the bass might represent the progression of the season. Spring is not stagnant; it changes and grows, pushing forward as time passes. The progression of spring does not happen immediately; rather each element (like the grass or flowers) develops at its own pace. The independence of the voice and the bass line may represent this transformation and,
consequently, unity is fleeting (m. 21). This unity could signify the moment where spring's elements are in agreement. The flowers have bloomed and the sun is shining; however, these moments do not last, as the clouds are never far away.

The child-like motive (mm. 23-28) prepares for the entrance of “eddieandbill.” The bass begins another linear descent (E-flat, D, C, B-flat, and A) in measures twenty-eight to thirty-three. The descent underscores the topic of the children, breaking the linear motion after the children's games are mentioned. Perhaps Duke uses this descent to mimic the children's movement, as they “come running” and leave their games behind. Duke textually paints the word “piracies” with a somewhat villainous transformation of the melodic motive, which now includes a tritone (see Figure 11).

Figure 11. Duke's transformed motive with tritone accompaniment

After breaking the linear motion (m. 33), the bass ascends a perfect fourth before descending (D, C, B, A, G) in measures thirty-four through thirty-eight. This bass movement underscores the words “and it's spring when the world.” Similar to the first section, the bass's linear movement may signify spring's progression. In measures thirty-eight to forty, the bass moves through a circle of fourths (G, C, F, B-flat) in preparation for the third section. This disjunct motion underscores the words “is puddle-wonderful.” Perhaps the bass movement not
only to leads to a new key (B-flat), but also playfully “hops” from bass note to bass note as a child might jump from puddle to puddle.

Duke continues the new B-flat key from measures forty-one to forty-seven. This introduction prepares the audience for another statement of the balloonman. The bass skips down a major third and pedals on G-flat while the melody describes the main character. Because the first few sections had a very active bass line, these measures are striking. Spring’s erratic nature is no longer the focus; instead Duke emphasizes the balloonman with a static bass line. This bass movement (or lack thereof) could signify the timelessness of the balloonman, who will later be revealed as an avatar of Pan, god of fertility and spring. Pan is timeless and in control of the season, calling out with his panpipe, which Duke musically depicts with an ascending scale (mm. 50-51).

Duke elides sections three and four, using a fragmented motive underscored with a linear bass descent. Beginning on E-flat, the bass descends chromatically until measure fifty-six, where the pattern is broken on the B-natural. The descent underscores “bettyandisbel” as they come “dancing,” which could signify their movement away from their toys. Unlike the second section where the bass continues to descend when discussing the “piracies” of “eddieandbill,” Duke breaks the linear motion during “hop-scotch” and “jump-robe.” This disjunct movement might playfully highlight the jumping nature of these games.

The last statement of spring (mm. 59-64) is very active in the accompaniment. The right hand alternates between two chords that create tension and resolution, while the left hand plays the fragmented motive. This fragmentation is similar to the “piracies” fragment, because there is
a tritone between two voices. The accompaniment tension and resolution might signify spring's final temperamental statement before the balloonman steps into the spotlight.

The last section is striking because the activity in the accompaniment drastically slows. When revealed as “goat-footed,” the “balloonMan” seems to have finally conquered the erratic nature of spring. The use of longer durations creates a moment of timelessness and inevitability as the accompaniment, seemingly in stasis, is pulled inexorably downward. The balloonman whistles in the vocal line and commands spring to reply similarly. The cadence in the vocal line prolongs the dominant B-flat before resolving to tonic E-flat on the word “wee.” Again Duke uses this E-flat as the same pitch class D-sharp to play a fragment of the opening motive. The melodic motive slowly dissipates as spring becomes a memory and the season comes to an end.

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Figure 12. Duke’s text setting and affect

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Dominick Argento: “in Just-spring” (1951)

“In Just-spring” is the first work in Dominick Argento's cycle, *Songs about Spring*. The cycle was composed in 1950 and premiered in 1951 at the Peabody Conservatory. When *Songs about Spring* premiered, there were only three songs in the cycle; Argento added the final two songs in 1955. Concerning setting Cummings's poetry, Argento states,

[Cummings's] language and images are generally quite simple and not infrequently childlike. As a matter of fact, since most musical settings of Cummings's poems tend to disregard the typographical oddities of the page, their meaning is often more easily apprehended when sung than when read. And on the contrary, composers who have attempted to create an aural substitute for Cummings's eccentric visual layout (injecting sudden pauses, musical non sequiturs, *[sic]* and the like) have ended up making some poems virtually incomprehensible.

*Form*

Argento's setting can be divided into three parts $A A^1 \frac{1}{2} A$ (see Figure 8 below). Even though the composition aligns textually with “Two-Part Division II,” (Figure 5) each section begins with a “spring” motive in the accompaniment. Because of the returning motivic material, Argento's piece is similar to the “Three-Part Division” where the beginning of each section discusses spring (Figure 3). The first section (mm. 1-49) begins with a brief two-measure introduction before discussing spring, the world, the balloonman, and the children's response to the whistle. There is a brief eight-measure interlude, before another announcement of spring and a description of the world. This piano interlude uses new material and is part of the first section. The second section (mm. 50-91) begins with a seventeen-measure introduction, recalling motivic material from the first section. After the interlude, Argento describes the balloonman, children,

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93 Argento, 1.
95 *Ibid.*, 105
and springtime. The final section (mm. 92-119) also uses the “spring” motive in the piano interlude before revealing the balloonman.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>mm. 1-2</th>
<th>Introduction</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mm. 3-10</td>
<td>a in Just-spring when the world is mud-luscious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 11-18</td>
<td>b the little lame balloonman whistles far and wee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>c and eddieandbill come running from marbles and piracies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 19-27</td>
<td>Piano Interlude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 28-35</td>
<td>Piano Interlude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 36-49</td>
<td>d and it's spring when the world is puddle-wonderful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| mm. 50-66 | ½c & a Piano Interlude |
| A(1)      | b the queer old balloonman whistles far and wee |
| mm. 66-73 | c and bettyandisbel come dancing from hopscotch and jump-rope |
| mm. 73-83 | (d*) & a and it's spring |
| mm. 84-91 | a and the goat-footed balloonman whistles far and wee |

Figure 13: * indicates a version of the motive, not a true statement

In the first section (mm. 1-49), Argento introduces four motivic ideas derived from the melodic phrases (see Illustration 7). These motives correlate with the text: a) “spring” begins with the phrase “in Just-spring;” b) discusses the “little lame balloonman;” c) is the “children's” motive beginning with “eddieandbill;” and d) is the “world” motive, as “it's spring when the world is puddle-wonderful.”
Figure 14. Frequently recurring motives

Spring motive (a)

in Just - spring when the world is mud - lus - cious

Balloonman motive (b)

the lit - tle lame bal - loon - man whis - tles far and wee

Children's motive (c)

and ed - die-and - bill come run - ning from mar - bles

In measures 52-57, the piano interlude transitions to the next section by fragmenting the second half of the c motive “running from marbles.” Although Cummings does not textually include another statement of spring or the world, Argento recalls the a motive in the accompaniment. In this way, his composition is strophic. When the voice enters and describes a new aspect of the balloonman, the b motive returns, altering one note through octave displacement. The children return (m. 74) and the c motive is transposed down a minor second and uses a different ending. The statement of spring is the most transformed since it compresses the d motive, only slightly resembling the original through its ascending contour.

As the vocal line continues to ascend in measures 85-90, the top notes in the right-hand accompaniment use a transformed statement of the a motive. This layers both statements of spring d (in the melody) and a (in the piano accompaniment), eliding the ending of the second section and the beginning of the third. In this way, Argento recalls the opening statement of
Argento then uses the *b* motive as the balloonMan is revealed. As was the case earlier, the *b* motive is slightly altered with an octave displacement. Argento emphasizes the word “Man” by transposing the motive down a major second on this text.

**Text Setting and Affect**

Argento's setting of Cummings's poetry is more direct, because the composer uses motives and themes to present the “childlike” text. Springtime and childhood seem to be inextricably linked in Argento's piece. The “spring” and “children's” motive have similar openings, such as the ascending motion of whole steps and perfect intervals, and the neighboring figures (“when the world” and “running from” in Figure 14). In the first seven measures, Argento ties childhood and spring together by layering the two motives in the accompaniment. The upper line in the right hand supports the vocal line, while the inner “alto” line states the “children's” motive.

When Argento describes the world as “mud-luscious,” he accents the off-beats. By using syncopation, Argento seems to “pull” against the beat as mud pulls against someone's steps. Argento uses rhythm to introduce the main character in measure twelve. The rhythm changes when the balloonman enters and the voice creates a two-against-three syncopation with the accompaniment. Perhaps this emphasizes the aberrant nature of the new character in the midst of spring. Beneath the words “far and wee,” Argento outlines a major triad (perfect fifth up and minor third down), which sounds like a whistle.
After the mention of the balloonman, the scene focuses on the running children. Argento layers the “spring” motive with the vocal line about “eddieandbill.” This layering differs from the opening because the “spring” motive is now in the accompaniment; however, Argento still links the children and spring. Both motives have been transposed up a minor second, which might signify the forward progression of the season. Beneath the words “from marbles” is another outline of a major triad, and childhood now seems to be interconnected not only with spring, but also the balloonman's whistle. Argento emphasizes the children's games by using close voicing in the left-hand accompaniment to paint the cluster of “marbles” and uses a dissonant minor seventh piano tremolo under “piracies.”

After a large sweeping scalar passage, the piano rests on a polychord. The inactive rhythm in the accompaniment seems to suspend time while the voice sings about the “puddle-wonderful” world. Argento emphasizes the text by using a strict rhythm that is similar to the balloonman's rhythm; however, with the inactive accompaniment, the effect is different. The voice becomes almost recitative-like as the singer rejoices over the spring season and the wonders that it holds.

When the balloonman returns, the major triad “whistle” disappears, replaced by an ascending figure that was previously embedded in the “alto” line. The effect of the traveling whistle continues; however, the change from the child-like whistle to the now revealed ascending pattern is significant. Just as the balloonman slowly reveals himself, the ascending line moves to the top of the piano texture.
Childhood and spring begin to change. The “children's” motive is transposed down a minor second, and “spring's” texture doubles an octave. Argento emphasizes “jump-rope” with a melodic line that uses shorter durations and disjunct motion, which the accompaniment echoes. The melody does not linger or cadence on the last statement of spring, as the accompaniment pushes forward with the opening “spring” motive, eliding sections and creating energy for the final revelation of the balloonMan.

The final statement of the balloonMan is drawn out as Argento focuses on the “goat-footed” deformity. Argento transposes the “balloonman's” motive on the word “Man,” emphasizing this significant moment in the poem. The vocal line is silent for a full measure, which is the first time a rest interrupts the text in the middle of a statement. The spatial silence gives time for reflection of the main character's disfiguration. The accompaniment supports the whistle for the first time in the piece, traveling “far and wee” while the ascending pattern emerges at the top of the texture. This clear statement of the whistle slowly dies as the accompaniment resolves, signaling the end of the piece and perhaps the end of spring.

Priscilla McLean: “in Just-spring” (1980)

As a composer, Priscilla McLean specializes in electroacoustic music, often combining music with man-made or animal sounds. She is also a pianist, percussionist, virtuosic soprano, and instrument creator. McLean's setting of “in Just-spring” is the final movement in the song cycle Fantasies for Adults and Other Children, which uses prepared piano. The vocal line varies

between *Sprechstimme*, full-voice, recitatives, white tones, and other vocal effects (such as “oo” and “ah”) to present Cummings's text.

*Form*

McLean's composition divides into three parts, similar to the “Two-Part Division I” (see Figure 15 below). The first section (mm. 1-18) discusses spring, the world, the balloonman's whistle, the responding children, and another announcement of spring. The second section (mm. 19-36) uses the “puddle-wonderful” to begin the next section, similarly to Figure 4. The final section begins in the last half of measure thirty-six and continues to the end of the piece. This last section differs textually from “Two-Part Division I,” by beginning with the final announcement of spring like “Three-Part Division III” (Figure 3). This creates a hybrid between the “Two-Part Division III” and the “Three-Part Division.”

**McLean’s “in Just-spring”**

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>m. 1</td>
<td>(a)</td>
<td>in just spring</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 2-5</td>
<td>(b)</td>
<td>when the world is-sss mud-lllusicos the little lame balloonman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 5</td>
<td>(a)</td>
<td>oo-whistles far and wee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>mm. 6-7</td>
<td>(c) and eddie and bill</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 8</td>
<td>(b)</td>
<td>come running</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 9-13</td>
<td>(c)</td>
<td>from marbles and piracies ah-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 14-15</td>
<td>(b)</td>
<td>ah- and it's</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 16-18</td>
<td>(a)</td>
<td>spring ah—hmmm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 19-22</td>
<td>→</td>
<td>when the world is puddle-wonderful</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>mm. 23-31</td>
<td>(c)</td>
<td>the queer old balloonman whistles far and wee and Betty and Isabel come dancing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 32-36</td>
<td>←</td>
<td>from hop-scotch and jump-rope</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 36-39</td>
<td>(a)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>mm. 40-43</td>
<td>(b)</td>
<td>and it's spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 44</td>
<td>→</td>
<td>and the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 45-60</td>
<td>(c)</td>
<td>goat-footed balloonman whistles far and wee</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 15. Text is as indicated in score*
McLean sets the poem with four texturally distinct motives in the prepared piano accompaniment. The first motive $a$, or the “punctuation” motive, is a texturally sparse, brief sonority (usually an eighth- or sixteenth-note). The second motive is a “toggle,” where the left-hand accompaniment plays arpeggiated triplets, with the lowest note alternating between two notes (usually A-flat and G). The “ragtime” or $c$ motive uses a sixteenth- to eighth-note ascending figure that sounds like a ragtime piece played on an out-of-tune piano. During the ragtime revival of the 1950s, composers would often write for prepared piano, which recreated a honky-tonk sound. McLean's use of a recognizable popular song genre in the accompaniment is striking when juxtaposed with the other motives (that seem more texturally focused).

The first section (mm. 1-18) divides after the second pronouncement of spring and before the “puddle-wonderful world.” The motives alternate, $abacbcba$, and create smaller dividing arcs in the section. For example, the opening text discusses spring ($a$), the world and balloonman ($b$), and the calling whistle ($a$). The two $a$ sections are brief, each lasting less than a measure, while the $b$ motive is the longest. This form creates an ascending arc. Conversely, the second arc ($cbc$) focuses on the $c$ motive, while the $b$ motive interjects for one measure. The $b$ motive returns (m. 14) and $a$ closes this section with the longest consecutive use of “punctuation” (see top section of Table 5)

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At a more global level, the first section creates a larger arc if the more important durational motives are highlighted. This arc would look like *abcba* (see bottom of Table 5), which opens with the *a* “punctuation,” then focuses on *b* “toggle” for four measures. The second *a* statement becomes transitional for the “ragtime” *c* motive. The *c* motive sounds for eight measures (because the one-measure *b* motive becomes subsumed in the section). The *b* motive returns for two measures and then the three-measure *a* motive closes the section.

Table 5

McLean's Motivic Movement (First Section)

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>a</em></td>
<td><em>b</em></td>
<td><em>a</em></td>
<td><em>c</em></td>
<td><em>b</em></td>
<td><em>c</em></td>
<td><em>b</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 1</td>
<td>mm. 2-5</td>
<td>mm. 6-7</td>
<td>m. 8</td>
<td>mm. 9-13</td>
<td>mm. 14-15</td>
<td>mm. 16-18</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The second section (mm. 19-36) of the song begins in measure nineteen with the words “when the world is puddle-wonderful.” Measures nineteen to twenty-two begin to transition into the “ragtime” motive (transitions are denoted in Figure 15 with arrows). Beginning in measure twenty-three, the “ragtime” has emerged and continues for nine measures while discussing the balloonman and the dancing children. McLean then transitions for four measures before beginning the final section. The last section (mm. 36-60) closes the piece by recalling the

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98 McLean alters Cummings's text, adding the missing syllable into the name “isbel” creating “Betty and Isabel.”
opening “punctuation” and “toggle.” The “toggle” becomes used as transition back to the “ragtime,” which is now fully realized and closes the piece.

Text Setting and Affect

Although the piano timbre changes by adding chains and other objects, the voice also timbrally portrays the text dramatically and unconventionally. The melodic line opens by speaking the text. Perhaps McLean uses this technique to clearly portray the scene, as the piano builds energy with the fast paced “toggle” motive. This “toggle” could signify the energy of springtime. The first singing phrase occurs with the balloonman's whistle, as the voice slides between pitches while the whistle travels “far and wee.” The voice could be seen as painting the traveling whistle that glides through the air. After the whistle has disappeared, the children respond as fragments of the “ragtime” motive appear in the accompaniment. The syncopated rhythms might highlight childhood nostalgia by using a song form from the past. The “ragtime” fragments are interrupted by the quick-moving “toggle” motive as the children “come running.”

The voice interjects an “ah-” after the children run from their games. McLean directs the melody to create a “slow uneven trill” of a major second. Perhaps this interjection is a dramatic display of overexcited children who run squealing down the road, while creating a breathless and uneven stream of sound. Another vocal exclamation occurs four measures later after a declaration of spring. This “ah-” is different, as the voice begins in an upper register and then freely descends in the manner of a recitative. The voice seems to joyously exclaim and languidly enjoy the brief spring season.
The second section begins with another spoken statement of the world as the “ragtime” motive is slowly revealed. When the voice introduces the balloonman for a second time, the “ragtime” motive is readily apparent. The voice seems to realize the new aspects of the main character, as the directive is to sing slightly sharp and with a “nasally” tone. In juxtaposition to the nasal performance, the singer is directed to sing the whistle in a childish voice while the motive continues to gain energy. Using lilting rhythms and disjunct movement, the voice depicts the “dancing” children who come from “hop-scotch” and “jump-robe.” As the children move, McLean again employs the uneven vocal trill.

The final statement of spring is underscored with the “toggle” that transitions into the “rag” when the voice mentions the “goat-footed” balloonman. This “rag” motive will continue until the end of the piece, eventually descending in a linear fashion. This statement of the motive is the longest and fully realized. The tinkling “ragtime” and the balloonman are revealed in a similar fashion. At the beginning of the piece, the balloonman does not receive special attention, just as the motivic fragments are hidden within the tremolo texture. As the balloonman garners attention, the motive likewise gains importance. When the balloonman finally comes into focus, the motive becomes fully realized as both the motive and main character emerge from the background into the light.

The voice seems to realize the malady of the main character as the final statement of the “balloonman” is directed to sing with a “wobble.” The whistle is then performed with a trill. Before, this trill was only used in reference to the children. Perhaps the children remain present musically while disappearing from the text. The trilling whistle slowly ascends while the
duration of “far” is stretched out in recitative fashion, steadily climbing upward on the word “wee.” As the final words decrescendo and die away, the piano spirals out of the “rag” motive and slowly descends. The balloonman, therefore, has been fully revealed and sent a final call to the children, patiently awaiting a response.


Ferrandino's “Chanson Innocent: It's Spring!” is the first movement of a song cycle Age. This song cycle uses text from multiple authors and is written for voice, piano, and double bass. Ferrandino is unique in his use of the text, as he repeats and omits certain phrases of Cummings's original text.

Form

Ferrandino's piece divides into two main sections (see Figure 16 below). Textually, the composition aligns with the “Two-Part Division III” (Figure 6). The first section (mm. 1-52) begins with an introduction, then discusses spring and the world, next the balloonman's whistle and the children's reactions, and finally the announcement of spring to the world. The phrase “when the world is puddle-wonderful” repeats to provide closure for the first section and transition into the next. This creates an elision, similar to the “Two-Part Division III.” The second section (mm. 60-114) begins with a description of the balloonman and his whistle. Ferrandino then focuses on the children, emphasizing the games of “hop-scotch” and “jump-rope” by repeating these lines. After nine repeated attempts of “and it's,” the voice ends with a final announcement of spring. The piano and bass close the song. Unlike the form of the text
demonstrated in Figure 6, Ferrandino omits the “Tag,” choosing to end his composition focusing on spring, instead of the grotesque balloonMan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ferrandino’s “It's Spring!”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A</strong> mm. 1-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 21-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 30-43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 44-52</td>
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<tr>
<td>mm. 53-59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 60-74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 75-102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 103-114</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 16: Text is as indicated in score*

Ferrandino uses four distinct motivic elements throughout the piece to create progression. The *a* motive is an arcing triplet figure in the piano. The right hand plays a linear ascent that peaks, and then descends while the left hand simultaneously mirrors this motion. The *b* motive is a grace-note figure. The grace-note ascends a minor second to an eighth note, which leaps up a perfect fourth to another eighth note, and drops down a ninth. The *c* motive is timbral as the bass alone accompanies the vocal part using minor second and perfect fifth intervals. The *d* motive is a musical quote of “chopsticks,” which is a simple child-like song.
Besides motives, Ferrandino uses meter and texture to create progression and break the larger sections into smaller fragments. The first twenty measures introduce the first two motives and meters. The introduction begins in 3/8, using 2/8 to transition from the opening a motive. When the second motive begins in measure eleven, the 3/8 meter returns. Ferrandino then alternates 3/8 and 2/8 until measure fifteen, which uses 3/8 to transition to the first vocal statement (Figure 17).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Meter</th>
<th>Motive/Texture</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-8</td>
<td>3/8</td>
<td>a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-10</td>
<td>2/8</td>
<td>a →</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-12</td>
<td>3/8</td>
<td>b</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-14</td>
<td>2/8</td>
<td>monophony</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-21</td>
<td>3/8</td>
<td>a →</td>
<td>in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>2/8</td>
<td>sparse</td>
<td>just</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23-24</td>
<td>3/8</td>
<td>sparse</td>
<td>spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>4/8</td>
<td>sparse</td>
<td>when the world is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-29</td>
<td>2/8</td>
<td>triads/clusters</td>
<td>mud-lusicious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>4/8</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>the little lame balloonman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-38</td>
<td>3/8</td>
<td>c &amp; a</td>
<td>whistles far and wee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>2/8</td>
<td>d</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-43</td>
<td>3/8</td>
<td>d →</td>
<td>and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44-49</td>
<td>2/8</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>eddie and bill come running from</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>4/8</td>
<td>b →</td>
<td>marbles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-53</td>
<td>4/4</td>
<td>parallel fifths/support in accompaniment</td>
<td>piracies and it's spring when the world is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>2/4</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>puddle-wonderful spring when the world is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-57</td>
<td>4/4</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>puddle-wonderful, the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>2/4</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>puddle-wonderful spring when the world is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59-64</td>
<td>4/4</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>puddle-wonderful, the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-66</td>
<td>5/4</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>queer old balloonman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67-68</td>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>whistles far and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69-71</td>
<td>3/8</td>
<td>c →</td>
<td>wee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72-73</td>
<td>2/8</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74</td>
<td>4/8</td>
<td>a →</td>
<td>and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75-94</td>
<td>2/8</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>betty and isbel come dancing from hop-scotch and jump-rope, come dancing from hop-scotch and jump-rope, from hop-scotch and jump-rope and it's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95-100</td>
<td>3/8</td>
<td>b &amp; c</td>
<td>and it's, and it's, and it's, and it's, and it's, and it's, and it's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101-102</td>
<td>6/8</td>
<td>no accompaniment</td>
<td>and it's s-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>103-107</td>
<td>3/8</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>pring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108</td>
<td>2/8</td>
<td>monophony</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>109-113</td>
<td>3/8</td>
<td>a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 17: Ferrandino's use of multi-meter and texture.
When the voice enters, the meter continues to alternate and the accompaniment becomes texturally sparse. Ferrandino then introduces 4/8 meter when describing the world (m. 25). This new meter signals the beginning of a smaller section where new textures and meters are introduced. The accompaniment changes to triadic figures and cluster chords while the meter alternates between 4/8 and 2/8. In measure thirty-one, the timbre changes to the solo bass accompaniment. The opening 3/8 reappears along with the a motive, recalling the introductory material. In measure thirty-nine, a fragmented version of “chopsticks” in 2/8 interrupts the a motive. The “chopsticks” return in measure forty-one for a more complete statement, which is used to transition to the next smaller section.

Beginning in measure forty-four, Ferrandino uses the b motive in 2/8 and 4/8 meter. This section is brief and transitions to a new meter 4/4. The accompaniment uses conjunct motion and parallel perfect fifths that “arrive” in measure fifty-three on the word “spring.” This arrival is also the turning point, as the accompaniment begins to support the melodic line with tremolos and the left hand uses an alternating bass accompaniment.

The transitional measures between the two large sections (mm. 53-64) use simple meter that alternates between duple and quadruple (2/4 and 4/4 respectively). The transition also explores more triadic harmonies before moving to the next section with the bass solo (motive c). The bass solo begins in measure sixty, with a new tempo marking (lethargically), and continues for five measures before the voice begins. Measure sixty-four is significant because it marks the Golden Mean of the piece in time and eighth-notes; this measure signals the beginning of the end as the voice prepares to sing its final statements about the balloonman, the children, and spring.
This measure is the springboard that propels the piece forward, building energy to the climax and then slowly unraveling to the end.

When the second section begins in measure sixty-five, it is striking because Ferrandino applies a new meter (5/4). These two measures are the only irregular-meteric measures in the piece and discuss the “queer old balloonman.” He then introduces 3/4 before returning to the opening 3/8 and 2/8 meter. The 3/8 meter returns on the word “wee” and texturally begins to transition to the opening a motive. After measure seventy-one, Ferrandino does not use the opening 3/8 for twenty-four measures, which creates a desire for the return of this meter and subsequent closure.

Beginning in measure seventy-five, the b motive is used in stretto, building energy as the meter stays in 2/8 for twenty measures. Finally in measure ninety-five, the meter returns to 3/8 and Ferrandino begins to accelerate the tempo, layer the c motive in the piano with the b motive in the bass, while repeating “and it's” in the voice. All of these factors create intensity and lead to the grand pause in measure 100. Measure 101 denies closure as the voice performs without accompaniment in a new meter (6/8) and tempo (molto vivace). Closure is finally accomplished in measure 103, when the piano returns with the opening motive and meters. In the final measures of the piece, the bass enters as well.

Ferrandino progresses through the composition by beginning with the “home” alternating meters: 3/8 and 2/8. He deviates from the opening by introducing the “other” alternating meters, 4/8 and 2/8. The transitional section uses simple-duple and simple-quadruple meter. The second section begins with an irregular meter (which acts like an augmentation of the opening meters)
before returning to the “home” alternating meters. After briefly stating the 3/8, Ferrandino denies the opening meter (and closure) by keeping the same 2/8 meter for an extended period of time. When the 3/8 returns, it does not signify closure because the song accelerates forward, building in intensity until the melody peaks. Only after the peak does closure occur, when the opening meters and motives return.

*Text Setting and Affect*

As previously discussed, Ferrandino's use of motives often coincide with specific parts in the text. The mirrored triplet figure \((a)\) is used throughout the piece in conjunction with the balloonman's whistle. The fast-paced mirrored arcs create energy, much like the swirling wind. This “wind” figure is significant because it is the first sound of the piece, although it is not yet associated with the balloonman.

The second statement occurs after the “queer old balloonman” whistles and is interrupted with a fragmented “chopsticks” motive, which prepares for the children's entrance. The use of the musical quote “chopsticks” could create nostalgia as one might associate the song with beginner piano lessons. After the motivic interruption, the wind continues for a measure before “chopsticks” is stated more fully. The movement between motives might portray the whistle as it first reaches its destination (wind), the children stopping to listen (the interruption), the whistle stating its purpose (wind), and the children responding (fuller “chopsticks” motive).
The third statement of the wind appears in an ascending sequence (which outlines a B-flat-minor-chord) and does not include the left-hand mirrored motion. This statement is the most transformed as it transitions to the playing children. Ferrandino builds energy during this last section and the whistling wind returns in the final measures of the piece. When the whistle occurs a final time, it returns as in the beginning. Retrospectively, the balloonman's whistle seems to be floating through the air from the beginning, calling to childhood and perhaps continuing to call after the song ends.

Ferrandino presents the grace-note figure, $b$, in the introduction. The disjunct motion coupled with the grace-note creates a lilting gesture and coincides with the “running” and “dancing” children. Perhaps he wanted to portray the carefree innocence of children as they skip and run, unhindered by adulthood's responsibilities. Similar to the whistling wind, this innocence appears at the beginning of the piece before there is a correlation between the children and the figure. Ferrandino transposes the second statement and alters the interval slightly when “eddieandbill come running.”

The third statement is the most different, as the section with “bettyandisbel” builds energy. Unique to this statement is the movement of each consecutive figure. The first three figures are related with fifths and mediant relationships ($C – G – B$-flat). Ferrandino then moves chromatically ($A – G$-flat) and through the mediant ($E$) before finally pedaling a tritone away ($B$-flat) for three figures. This traveling figure builds energy to the climax, but it might also represent the traveling nature of “bettyandisbel” as they leave their “jump-rope” and “hop-scatch.” When combined with the disjunct ascending melodic line, this section is representative
of excited childhood. After the climax, the figure disappears from the piece and the children are no longer referenced. Ferrandino might be signifying that childhood is ending as this song closes and progresses through the *Age* cycle. Childhood innocence disappears as experience and adolescence approach.

In contrast to the lighthearted poem of spring is the balloonman. Ferrandino highlights this character with a timbral change, where the bass accompanies the voice alone. The bass line is disjunct and rhythmically inconsistent, using syncopation, which might portray the balloonman as clunky and uneven. The ungainly bass line paints the descriptors “little,” “lame,” “queer,” and “old.”

The first setting of the balloonman does not seem as significant as the reappearance. During the second statement, Ferrandino uses an irregular meter (5/4) that only appears in these two measures (mm. 65-66). This revelation of the “queer old balloonman” is prepared with a longer bass solo, occurring right after the Golden Mean, and is durationally one of the longest two measures of the piece. Ferrandino gives the balloonman the spotlight, allowing the listener time to reflect on this morbid character. However, the final reveal of the “goat-footed” deformity is missing from the piece since Ferrandino chooses to focus on springtime instead of the god Pan. Interestingly, the bass does not independently return after the climax. This could signify the dependence of the balloonman on spring; as spring comes to an end, the balloonman leaves the scene.
Spring seems to be the focal point of the song and Ferrandino highlights each recurring statement in different ways. In the first instance of spring, the vocal line slides up an octave from “Just” to “spring.” Spring is further emphasized as the highest note in the melody for the first phrase. The composer playfully paints the “mud-luscious” world with triadic sonorities with added notes and cluster chords. The dissonance and close voicing of the sonorities might signify jumping or walking through the mud as one remembers the days when playing in the mud was still an acceptable, albeit messy, practice.

The transitional “spring when the world is puddle-wonderful” (mm. 52-60) is melodically episodic, the meter changes to simple time, the accompaniment texture becomes more active, and the melody highlights the word “spring” (mm. 53 and 57) by becoming the highest notes in each episode. The use of simple meter during the second statement of spring is very striking and allows the section to “unfold” as the voice rejoices in the season. The final statement of spring is prepared by the “dancing” children. Ferrandino directs the music to become “gradually more excited” as the voice repeats fragments of the full phrase. The tempo begins to accelerate and the composer indicates that the final “and it's” is supposed to be “stammering to get the words out (like a child).” With the repeated phrases, the ascent of the melody, the layered motives and faster tempo, the melody builds until it seems to explode the final statement of spring, which is the highest melodic note in the entire piece.
Comparisons and Conclusions

Some of Cummings's poetry may seem “childlike” or “simplistic,” yet there are layered meanings that give his poetry depth. This depth often arises from his unconventional ways of “setting” the text. As was previously discussed, “in Just-” may at first seem like a simple poem about the joys of springtime; however, the spatial “picture-poem” creates ambiguity and hints at deeper and sometimes darker themes.

On one hand, the poem can be read from a child's point of view. The season is spring, which is reinforced with repetition of spring-like images. Cummings creates playful words such as “mud-luscious” and “puddle-wonderful” to describe the view of the world through a child's eyes. During springtime pairs of playing children come “running” and “dancing” as they move through the poem. The names of the children are elided, spatially building energy as “eddieandbill” and “bettyandisbel” visually represent the way a child might explain with whom they are playing. The oddly spelled word “isbel” suggests a child's truncated pronunciation of “Isabel.” The balloonman, who is also associated with spring, is the bringer of toys. His whistle floats through the air signaling his arrival, and the children intuitively know that spring has arrived.

Cummings's use of space and capitalization creates deeper meaning through ambiguity. The poem is not just about innocence, but the transformation of innocence through experience. Spring must always come to an end and anything that might be associated with springtime must end as well. The capitalization of “Just” signals that this transformation can only take place during spring. Although spring repeats three times, the last statement of the season is not
accompanied by the child-like descriptions of the world. The fleeting spring and perhaps the world itself have, at this point, lost their child-like qualities. The descriptions of the world have disappeared and the children are gone. The children do not return after they leave their childish games behind.

As spring loses the focus on innocence, the “balloonMan” is finally revealed. The balloonman has always been a strange character, described as “queer” and “lame,” yet it is not until the final revelation that his true nature is exposed. Besides “Just,” the only other capitalized word is “Man” during the last appearance of the balloonman, and Cummings uses the visual spacing to stretch and slow the reading speed. The “balloonMan” becomes much more than the bringer of toys, he is the Pan, god of fertility. Only retrospectively does the reader realize that spring itself is not the focal point. The topic is Pan, who brings, along with the balloons, experience. When he calls, innocence drops what it is doing to answer the inevitable whistle, sounding childhood's end.

*Cummings*

When Cummings performs this poem, he does not always follow the pacing suggested by the visual alignment. Instead, he pauses dramatically and finishes a complete thought to capture the essence of the poem. Cummings breaks the poem into two main sections, each beginning with spring or a child-like description of the world. In this way, Cummings seems to highlight innocence. He performs the conjunction “and” to build energy and connect statements. Yet he takes time in drawing out the descriptions of the balloonman. By pausing before each statement
of the main character, he emphasizes the dark undertones of the poem, not wanting the audience to miss the important figure. Cummings highlights the final moments with the “balloonMan” by pausing between “goat” and “footed” even though the poem, as presented on the page, connects the two words. The poet seems to willingly wait for the audience to digest the information and understand the importance and hidden meaning in the performance.

**Composers and Form**

Three composers — Cage, McLean, and Ferrandino — focus on spring and innocence by beginning important structural moments with springtime text. By beginning sections with an emphasis on the lighthearted nature of spring or the world, these composers use the more childlike or direct approach to interpreting the poem. Each divide their compositions into three parts.

Cage's composition, in ABC form, begins each section with a discussion of spring, closely matching the “Three-Part Division,” which begins each section similarly (see Appendix A). The ratios of the length of each section in Cage's composition is 42:42:16 and closely align with the syllable ratio of “Three-Part Division,” which is 41:42:17.

McLean's piece is also in ABC form. She begins each section with a discussion of spring, the “puddle-wonderful” world, and a final announcement of spring. Textually, the sectional division does not align with one poetic form; instead her sections create a hybrid of the “Three-Part Division” and “Two-Part Division I.” The lengths of her sections create a unique ratio of 30:30:40.
Ferrandino also focuses on springtime, although his sections begin with spring, transition with the “puddle-wonderful” world, and then the last section begins with the balloonman. These sections textually align with the “Two-Part Division III.” The transition between the two parts creates a more linear thought. The ratio of Ferrandino's sections are 46:6:48, which is extremely similar to the sectional ratio 44:10:46 found in “Two-Part Division III.” Although Ferrandino's last section begins with the balloonman, his composition focuses upon springtime. He omits the last statement of the “balloonMan,” ending his piece with an announcement of spring. Repeated text replaces the omitted text, allowing for the aforementioned formal balance.

One of the composers focuses on the main character instead of spring. By beginning sections with the balloonman, Duke highlights the more sinister aspect of the poem. Duke's composition divides into a five part rondo (ABCB¹A): spring, children, balloonman, children, balloonman. This sectional division is similar to “Lane's Rondo”; however, it does not textually align because “Lane's Rondo” alternates between the children and spring. Because Duke chooses to focus on the balloonman instead of spring, his composition is a hybrid between the rondo and “Two-Part Division II” (which begins with spring before focusing on the main character). The ratio of Duke's sections are 27:22:16:14:21, but he elides the third and fourth section, creating balance between four main sections (27:22:31:21). By eliding these specific sections (balloonman and children), the balloonman is still the focal point and the children gain less importance, becoming more “attached” to the main character.
The Argento setting is different since his formal setting balances the balloonman and spring. Argento's composition is in three parts (A A\textsuperscript{1} \frac{1}{2}A) and the ratio between these sections is 41:35:24. Textually the sections begin with spring before focusing on the two reappearances of the balloonman, similar to “Two-Part Division II.” Although he focuses textually on the balloonman, he melodically begins each section with a “spring” motive in the accompaniment. The accompaniment creates a strophic composition, each new section announcing spring with a motive before the text can begin with the balloonman. In this way the balloonman seems to depend on the season of spring. Argento's focus on both springtime and the main character is reminiscent of Cummings's performance, where the poet would focus on spring at the beginning of each section, while emphasizing the balloonman with a dramatic pause.

*Composers and Text Setting and Affect*

Although each composer approached the formal setting in different ways to emphasize either spring or the balloonman, all had to wrestle with the layered meanings of Cummings's poem. Each composition is stylistically different, yet each composer must wrestle with specific words to create meaning in their songs. Even if the composers chose to focus on the more direct approach to the poem by focusing on spring, the loss of innocence is a theme that could not be ignored. Innocence is introduced in the beginning of the piece (usually through a motive) and is transformed or developed in the later sections as innocence moves towards experience.
Innocence and Springtime

Cage begins with rhythmic imitation between the voice and the piano. This antiphonal interplay acts as a conversation between innocence and spring. The imitation displays an agreement between spring and innocence at the beginning. The beginning of springtime is emphasized as the melody ascends on the word “Just.” However, as the song (and the season) progresses, each part gains independence and the rhythmic imitation slowly fades. Cage depicts the spring wind with sweeping piano gestures and increased rhythmic intensity by using sixteenth notes.

Duke uses a child-like motive that is fully stated at the beginning of the piece. This “nanny-nanny-boo-boo” theme is almost always present throughout the composition, even if it is transposed or fragmented. In the introduction, Duke foreshadows the transformation of spring and innocence as the first few full statements of the motive shift from major to minor. He also explores the “puddle-wonderful” world with disjunct bass motion reminiscent of a child jumping through the puddles. The child-like movement is usually displayed with a linear bass line that shows the energy of running children. He paints the “piracies” game with tritones and the “hop-scotch and jump-rope” with disjunct motion.

Argento links children and spring. Both of these motives use similar contours, which display an association between spring and childhood innocence. Argento often layers these motives, further associating children with spring. When the vocal line announces spring, the accompaniment plays the “children's” motive and when the voice sings about the children, the accompaniment uses the “spring” motive. Argento explores the “mud-luscious” world by
rhythmically pulling against the beat, as mud pulls against a person's steps. He also playfully depicts the children's games by using cluster chords in association with “marbles,” tritones with “piracies,” and “hop-scotch and jump-rope” with disjunct motion.

McLean displays innocence and springtime through her energetic “toggle” motive. In contrast to the “punctuation” motive, the “toggle” pushes the piece forward, showing the vitality and motion of the brief season of spring. This motive appears later as a transition to the “ragtime” motive, which is associated with the balloonman. McLean paints the child-like statement with uneven vocal trills to display an out of breath running child and disjunct motion to show the games of “bettyandisbel.”

Ferrandino uses a lilting “grace-note” figure to describe the children's movement as they come “running” and “dancing” through the composition. Disjunct motion emphasizes the games “hop-scotch” and “jump-rope.” The musical “chopsticks” quote displays the innocence of the children. He further describes springtime by creating a triplet “wind” motive that travels through the composition as the whistling wind floats through the season. The world is “mud-luscious” as he textually paints the squishy earth with cluster chords.

**Experience and the Balloonman**

The child-like motives in the beginning of the compositions transform and create a sense of nostalgia at the end of the songs. The children disappear from the text and the balloonman gains the attention. At first, the balloonman quietly waits in the background, almost unnoticed, while composers hint at the strange man. Near the end of the compositions, the balloonman takes
a more prominent role, even if he is omitted the last time. At the end of the compositions, the listener is left with a sense of nostalgia as one recalls the beginning of spring. Innocence and springtime is fleeting. Experience is transformative leaving behind memories.

In the second section of Cage's composition, the voice and piano become independent as the texture changes and experience occurs. During this section springtime's (piano) episodes decrease in length, signifying the end of springtime. While time passes and spring comes to a close, innocence (the vocal line) gains experience as the episodes increase in length. When the final section returns, so does the rhythmic imitation, albeit with altered sonorities. Springtime and innocence have been reconciled, yet experience has been gained and both springtime and innocence has transformed. Cage acknowledges the change has occurred by emphasizing the “Man” of the “balloonMan” with ascending motion in the melody. Childhood innocence has become an adult “Man.” Both spring and the adult recall the opening material, but they cannot return to where they once were because of experience.

Duke's child-like motive changes harmonically, which displays the progress from innocence to experience. The very active bass line represents spring and the last statement of spring alternates between tension and release, preparing for the final statement of the “balloonMan.” Duke focuses more on the balloonman by texturally singling him out. The active bass line, which represented spring and the children's movement, becomes static when the balloonman enters the scene. When the balloonman appears the second time, Duke creates a pedaled bass line, suspending the motion to focus on the main character. During the final statement of the “balloonMan,” Duke changes the texture by drastically slowing the
accompaniment (using longer durations), which is very striking when compared to the busy last statement of spring. During the “suspended” accompaniment, the focus shifts to Pan. The only recollection of childhood innocence is the fragmented child-like motive that slowly dissipates during the last few measures of the piece.

Although Argento focuses on spring, he never lingers or cadences on children or the season, as he always pushes forward towards the final statement of the balloonman. In this way, he shows how springtime and innocence do not stop or pause; rather, the world and its inhabitants are always changing and growing. One cannot avoid experience since it is linked with the turning of the earth. Argento reveals an inner ascending figure each time the balloonman is discussed as well as changes the rhythm of the melodic line. By bringing an inner line to the top of the texture, isolating the “balloonMan” with a vocal rest, and emphasizing “Man” with a motivic transposition, Argento focuses on the main character. The balloonman gradually gains importance and the composer reveals the character alongside the ascending gesture. The ascending gesture, representing the whistle, slowly resolves and the piece comes to an end as does the spring season.

McLean focuses less on the child-like motives in the second half of her piece as childhood becomes linked with the balloonman. The uneven vocal trills, which previously represented the children become associated with the balloonman's whistle. Also at the beginning of the piece, McLean uses the “ragtime” motive to represent the balloonman. At first she uses a fragmented motive hidden in the texture beneath right-hand tremolos. During the second discussion of the balloonman, the “ragtime” motive is clearer and expanded. The springtime
“toggle” transitions to a full statement of the “ragtime” motive during the final statement of the “balloonMan.” Springtime figuratively “gives up” to the main character. By using a nostalgic musical genre, McLean ties the balloonman and the past together, and, as the balloonman slowly emerges from the texture of the poem, the “ragtime” also emerges from the texture of the composition.

Although Ferrandino omits the last statement of the “balloonMan,” he does emphasize the strange character through a timbral, clunky bass line. The second statement of the main character is augmented with an irregular meter, as Ferrandino highlights the “old” character who does not seem to fit within a season that is full of vitality and vigor. As Ferrandino focuses more on springtime and innocence, even those are transformed as the playful grace-note and chopsticks figure disappear when the children leave their games. Childhood is temporary and Ferrandino displays this aspect as the piece ends and the next section of his Age cycle begins. The piece ends with the windy whistle of springtime that also disappears as even the cyclical spring season must leave for a while.

Setting poetry rich in meaning can create a challenge for composers because they must sift through ambiguities and overlapping themes to create clarity and meaning. The composers must grapple with the bipolarity of innocence/spring and experience/nostalgia. Through the antiphonal interplay, Cage emphasizes the loss of innocence. Duke focuses upon the balloonman and his effect on childhood innocence through the transformation of his child-like motive. Argento continually recalls springtime through the accompaniment, even though the words
discuss the balloonman. McLean reveals the main character through the emerging nostalgic ragtime motive. Ferrandino avoids the “goat-footed ballonMan” altogether, instead choosing to focus on the spring season.

Although these composers create a playful nod towards childhood, they themselves have long since gained experience and only nostalgically remember the innocence of “puddle-wonderful” and “mud-luscious” days. Like the children in the poem, everyone must courageously abandon their toys, walk hand-in-hand with experience, and leave childhood behind.
APPENDIX A
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A (mm. 1-26)</th>
<th>B (mm. 27-52) “and it's spring”</th>
<th>C (mm. 53-62) “and it's spring”</th>
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<td>Cage</td>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A (mm. 1-22)</th>
<th>B (mm. 23-40) “eddieandbill”</th>
<th>C (mm. 41-53) “queer”</th>
<th>B' (mm. 54-64) “bettyandisbel”</th>
<th>D (mm. 65-81) “goat-footed”</th>
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<th>A' (mm. 50-91) “queer”</th>
<th>½A (mm. 92-119) “goat-footed”</th>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A (mm. 1-18)</th>
<th>B (mm. 19-36) “world is puddle”</th>
<th>C (mm. 36-60) “and it's spring”</th>
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<td>McLean</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A (mm. 1-52)</th>
<th>→ (mm. 53-59) “spring … world is puddle”</th>
<th>B (mm. 60-114) “queer”</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ferrandino</td>
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*Formal divisions on an equalized scale*
Divisions of the poem based upon syllable ratios.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Rondo:</th>
<th>“in Just-spring”</th>
<th>“and eddieandbill”</th>
<th>“and it's spring”</th>
<th>“and bettyandisbel”</th>
<th>“and it's spring”</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Three-Part:</td>
<td></td>
<td>“in Just-spring”</td>
<td>“and it's spring”</td>
<td>“and it's spring”</td>
<td>“and it's spring”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-Part I:</td>
<td>“in Just-spring”</td>
<td></td>
<td>“when the world is puddle”</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Tag) “the goat-footed”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two-Part II:</td>
<td>“in Just-spring”</td>
<td></td>
<td>“the queer”</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Tag) “the goat-footed”</td>
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<td>Two-Part III:</td>
<td>“in Just-spring”</td>
<td>“when the world is puddle”</td>
<td>“the queer”</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Tag) “the goat-footed”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

SCORES
3. in Just-

John Cage

J = 152

in Just spring

Hold pedal throughout:

when the world is mud-luscious

the little lame balloon man whistles for and wee
and ed-die and bill come running from marbles

and pis-cig

and it's spring
when the world is puddle wonderful

the queer old balloon man whistles far and wee
and bet-ty and is-bel come danc-ing from

hop-scotch and jump-rope and its spring

...calando...

and the goat-foot-ed bal-loon man whis-tles far and wee

gradually release pedel...
Just - Spring

c.e. cummings*
(1894-1962)

Joyous ($j=116$)

in just spring when the

*Poem copyright 1923, 1951 c.e. cummings.

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world is mudluscious the little lame ba-
loon man whistles far and
wee
and eddie and hill
come running from marbles and
piracies
and it's spring

when the world is pud-ile-won-der-ful

poco rit.  a tempo

non legato  a tempo
the queer old balloon man whistles

far and wee:

and betty-and-isabel come dancing from hop-scotch and
jump-ropes and it's spring

and the goat-footed balloon man

whistles far and wee

PPP PPP
III. in Just-spring
original key

Leggero e gioioso (\( \text{j.} = 112 \text{ ca.} \))

semprre stacc.

11

the little lame balloon man whistles far and wee and

20

ed-die-and-bill come running from marbles and piracies

28

incalzando

\( \text{a tempo} \)
f possible
and it's spring
when the world is puddle
wonderful

p

the queer

staccato
crescendo

old balloon man
whistles far and wee
and betty and

8vo

crescendo

mf

marc.

is bel come dancing from hop scotch
and jump rope

loc.

poco a poco crescendo
motto cresceando

and it's spring.

and the goat-footed balloon.

Man whistles far and wees.

dim. ancora  

lunghissima
* - close "5" after glissando up, then Apollo's sound, then explode on "Spring"
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VITA

Kayleen Cox was born October, 16, 1989, in Colorado to Kenneth and Melinda Cox. She is a 2008 graduate of Haxtun High School in Haxtun, Colorado. In 2012, she graduated summa cum laude from Wayland Baptist University in Plainview, Texas with a Bachelor of Arts degree in music. While at Wayland, Kayleen traveled internationally with the premiere choral ensemble.

In August, 2012, she enrolled for graduate study at Texas Christian University. While working on her degree, she performed with the vocal jazz group, is a member of the Texas Society for Music Theory and Pi Kappa Lambda. Her research interests include American 20th Century songs. She currently teaches piano lessons.
ABSTRACT

Poetry and music are inextricably linked. Together, words and music can have a profound effect on the listener. Just as a poet carefully manipulates text to create poetry in various lengths and styles, composers also seek to create a meaningful composition by crafting musical elements. When text and music are combined to create a song, there must be a marriage between the text and the music. A composer then becomes not just a musical craftsman, but a poetic scholar as they seek to create a significant composition.

E. E. Cummings writes poetry in a nontraditional way, setting text with space and punctuation to create meaning and ambiguity. This study examines how five American composers create musical meaning from Cummings's poem “in Just-.” Included in this thesis is a brief biographical background of Cummings, followed by an in-depth textual and formal analysis of “in Just-.” A recording of Cummings's own public performance of the poem is examined in a similar fashion. The next section of the paper provides musical analyses of five settings of the poem composed by John Cage, John Duke, Dominick Argento, Priscilla McLean, and Blaise Ferrandino. Each of these five subsections includes brief background, an analysis of form, and commentary on text setting and affect.