

# American III

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## Question 1

José García Villa's style, as described by both the JSTOR Daily Article<sup>1</sup> and by the Encyclopedia of World Biography,<sup>2</sup> is delicate, yet forceful, and innovative. He invented the comma poem, and was hugely influential in the development of the form. Among his other innovations is the “reversed consonance” rhyme scheme, which has a distinct sound and rhythm as compared to other, more conventional rhyme patterns. I find that both of the poems “Moonlight’s Watermelon” and “Have Come, Am Here”, are striking in their directness and clarity. The comma usage throughout “Moonlight’s Watermelon” is compliant with the style guideline by the encyclopedia articles, but the “reversed consonance” rhyming scheme is not used in either poem - or, if it is, it is *very* well hidden.

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1. H.M.A. Leow, “José García Villa, an American Poet Ahead of His Time,” *JSTOR Daily*, 2024, accessed November 19, 2025, <https://daily.jstor.org/jose-garcia-villa-an-american-poet-ahead-of-his-time/>.

2. Encyclopedia of World Biography, *Villa, José García*, 2024, accessed October 25, 2025, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/villa-jose-garcia>.

## Question 2

What strikes me about Barber's earlier work is that, while still portraying some of the very open intimacy of his later works, the harmonic language is so wildly different it's a little jarring. Both "The Daisies" and the Op. 13 songs (written both before his Excursions Op. 20, the earliest piano work I have studied) are relatively straightforward, tonal, and functional in harmony. Amusing, too, is the rhythmic playfulness; Barber's work, to me, is characterised by a shifting meter and lots of dramatic pauses and moments of rhythmic uncertainty. This sort of playfulness, while still present, is much less apparent in the earlier songs. Curiously, I think his melodic content remains - shall we say? - *Barber-esque*. The focus on pentatonic and diatonic movement, simple intervals, and consonant leaps is present in both the earlier songs and in the Op. 45 songs (that I listened to), as well as reflected in the respective Op.20 Excursions and Op.46 Ballade.

## Question 3

This recital group might seem odd. I did not immediately see the Hundley song as one perfect for marriage, but instead one perfect for a funeral - that is, sung for a love that is lost. In that vein, I have chosen three songs for their sound before their text - and in one case an extramusical context.

1. Gary Bachlund\* - Warm Summer Sun
2. Laitman - The Apple Orchard
3. Hundley - Arise My Love

I understand that we have not talked about Gary Bachlund and his art song in this class. Indeed, I'm not sure his work is well regarded or popularly sung at all. I found him as a composer by accident, the same way I found composer Dan Forrest by accident. Dan Forrest has an SATB setting of the same text - Warm Summer Sun, by Mark Twain - titled "Good Night, Dear Heart", written explicitly in dedication for a child of his friend lost to miscarriage. Dan Forrest's setting sounds strikingly similar to Hundley's "Arise My Love" - and I contend that I would prefer Forrest's setting arranged for Solo Voice (singing the Soprano line) and Piano (playing the other voice parts) in this recital group instead of the Bachlund song. I found the Bachlund setting on Lieder [dot] net while searching if there were other songs with the same text - I only found the Bachlund. It is beautiful, and I think the addition of

this song and text is, to me, important to hold in discourse with “Arise My Love”, hence my addition of a song not on our list to this recital group.

## **Question 4**

I don't think I know of a composer for whom I would be less surprised to be smoking out of a cigarette holder. He has written *so* much beautiful, expansive music for the piano, all of it heavily inspired by ragtime and the jazz-classical fusions of the early-mid 20th century - in some ways, reminiscent of the work of Gulda and Kapustin and Gershwin. The song amor, I would say, while not as evidently ragtime, is still firmly placed in this intersection of jazz and western classical music in the early 20th century. The simplicity and attractiveness of the melody is so hard to not fall in love with - like a lot of his piano works. Should I get to programme this piece, I would love to put behind - sort of an “encore” to - MacDowell’s “From an Old Garden”.

## Question 5

- Laitman
  - I was aware of Lori Laitman before this class but, having never read her website, I was very ill-informed of her musical career and voice. I am absolutely enamored by her “informal biography”, and quite taken by the concept of a composer who “accidentally” became a composer. This background lends a sort of earnest intimacy and levity to her work for me.
  - I also just found out that she completed Ludlow Act 2 AND I MUST FIND RECORDINGS FROM IT.
- Scott Wheeler
  - I have not listened to much of Scott Wheeler, so I didn’t have much of an idea of him as a composer. I have been, for a while, interested in hearing “Democracy” - I listened to some selections while reading his website, and I have to admit that I am thoroughly intrigued. I do quite like the inclusion of a performance calendar, so I can immediately know when and where his music is to be performed. His confidence terrifies me - on his “contact” page, there is a button that IMMEDIATELY TAKES YOU TO EMAIL “SCOTTWHEELER24@GMAIL.COM”. Ignoring the very ca-

sual naming of his email address - and that it goes to a gmail address and is not forwarding from [user]@scottwheeler.org - having an email address be opened to the public rather than having contact setup through a web form of some sort is inconceivable for me.

## References

- Leow, H.M.A. “José García Villa, an American Poet Ahead of His Time.” *JSTOR Daily*, 2024. Accessed November 19, 2025. <https://daily.jstor.org/jose-garcia-villa-an-american-poet-ahead-of-his-time/>.
- World Biography, Encyclopedia of. *Villa, José García*, 2024. Accessed October 25, 2025. <https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/villa-jose-garcia>.