

## *I Will Be Earth*

*This song exists in three versions: SSA and Piano, SATB and Piano, Solo Voice and Piano. All three versions have generally the same form and content. Therefore, these comments pertain to all of them.*

*When viewing the poem by May Swenson, there appeared to be contrasting expressions of love. The opening lines, "I will be earth, you be the flower," are gentle. They complement each other. A cantabile style of music, in a "light" key, such as E Major, seemed in order.*

*The lines, "How be steady earth that's now a flood" imply the turbulent, passionate aspects of love. Therefore, rhythmic instability was created by switching the original 3/4 into 6/8, and then having the chorus sing in duplets over each three eighth-notes. This was "intentional rockiness."*

*In this turbulent section, the tonal center departs from E Major. A journey through the circle of fifths begins in m. 29: C–F–Bb–Eb–Ab, then to F Minor, far removed from the starting point. The journey continues with the movement of the bass line from mm. 43-47, bringing the music to E Minor for a forceful statement of the words "burn radiant love, born scorpion need." [One recalls that Scorpio is the astrological sign of passion.] This section reaches its climax in mm. 50-51, when the clashing tonalities of Bb Major and E Minor are superimposed.*

*A resolution to E Major brings a return of the opening material.*

*It is most important to note that the harmonic motion in the middle (contrasting, tumultuous) section was toward the Second Pole, Bb, the most remote key from E Major. E Major = peaceful love. Bb = passionate love. The direction toward the Second Pole is a technique commonly employed by this composer to create dissonance and tension. Similar harmonic organization will be found in many other works.*

*Also, one might notice the progression in mm. 21-4. In the key of E Major, this would be analyzed as: VII (lowered 7th step), VII–IV–I. This is considered to be a motion from the Subdominant of the Subdominant to the Subdominant to the Tonic – a progression typically found in folk music. This was chosen as part of the harmonic language of this song due to the simplicity (i.e., folk nature) of the text and its musical setting.*