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# An introduction to American song composer Daron Aric Hagen (b.1961) and his miniature folk opera: Dear Youth

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AN INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN SONG COMPOSER  
DARON ARIC HAGEN (b.1961)  
AND HIS MINIATURE FOLK OPERA:  
*DEAR YOUTH*

A Written Document

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
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in

The School of Music

by  
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	ii
ABSTRACT .....	iv
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION AND BIOGRAPHY .....	1
Endnotes .....	6
2 <i>DEAR YOUTH: A MINIATURE FOLK OPERA</i> .....	8
Approach to Composition .....	8
<i>Dear Youth: A Miniature Folk Opera</i> .....	12
Song # 1 The Bonnie Blue Flag .....	14
Song # 2 I Stop Again .....	16
Song # 3 The Picture Graved Into My Heart .....	19
Song # 4 The Trouble Was Tom... ..	22
Song # 5 The Lord Knows... ..	23
Song # 6 O, for Such a Dream .....	25
Song # 7 Christmas Night .....	27
Song # 8 ...Silently Dispersing .....	29
Endnotes .....	31
3 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS .....	33
SOURCES CONSULTED .....	35
APPENDIXES	
A LIST OF PUBLISHED VOCAL WORKS.....	37
B LETTER OF PERMISSION.....	39
VITA .....	40

## ABSTRACT

American composer Daron Aric Hagen (b.1961) is emerging as one of America's brightest young composers of the twenty-first century. Ned Rorem, the champion of American art song, believes Hagen to be a composer of great ability and skill.

This study deals with the miniature folk opera *Dear Youth* (1990) which is composed of eight songs for soprano, piano, and flute. The songs are "The Bonnie Blue Flag" (Ketchum), "I Stop Again" (Ropes), "The Picture Graved Into My Heart" (Ropes), "The Trouble Was Tom..." (Anonymous), "The Lord Knows" (Smith), "O, for Such a Dream" (Smith), "Christmas Night" (Ingram), and "...Silently Dispersing" (Chesnut). Individual study of each song has been approached from a performer's perspective as prepared for a lecture/recital.

Information and observations presented for each song include: range, tessitura, meter signature, expression and tempo indications, dynamic range, length, biographical information about the writers, origins of the texts to aid the performer in the process of developing character sketches, and insights for interpretation and performance.

Although this document deals only with *Dear Youth*, the composer has written and published numerous cycles and individual art songs to explore. Hagen's works require an artist with great text sensitivity as well as discipline to adhere to musical markings within the score.

Conclusions drawn from the study include the following: (1) Hagen's song composition is driven solely by the text. (2) His vocal writing is always lyrical, though contemporary and at times dissonant. (3) While Hagen makes certain demands on the musicianship of the singer, his vocal requirements are realistic and natural. (4) Finally, a wide variety of dynamic intensities and emotional colors are required for an artistic performance of this repertoire.

An appendix of Hagen's published vocal works (songs, chamber music, and opera), coupled with names and addresses of the publishers has been included.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION AND BIOGRAPHY

In the April 1993 issue of *Opera News*, Ned Rorem stated the following about American composer Daron Aric Hagen:

Daron has skill to burn, and the skill to hide his skill. No listener, crude or crafty, will find his music either arty or labored. And he knows when to stop--a basic lesson in theater...to say that he is a remarkable musician is to underrate him. Daron *is* music.<sup>1</sup>

Daron Hagen has amassed an impressive catalog of works including symphonies, concertos, choral arrangements, keyboard pieces, opera, vocal chamber music and art songs. Although Hagen is relatively unknown for his vocal repertoire, many critics, music scholars, and professional singers have already taken note of this gifted composer. The purpose of this document is to familiarize teachers and singers with Daron Hagen and specifically his miniature folk opera *Dear Youth*.

Daron Hagen was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, November 4, 1961. He grew up in a household which he describes as typically middle-class, but not uncultured. While growing up, Hagen remembers the local classical radio station always playing in the background. As a result, classical music became familiar to him and fed his interest. His mother, Gwen, was the most nurturing element in his musical development, as Hagen recalls:

My mother was a sculptor, painter, and writer (Hagen later set some of her journal entries to song). She was an extraordinary person. Besides these other things, she was also a violinist in college. Up until I was eight or nine she was at home all the time writing and sculpting. We would talk about all sorts of things, like ‘Why do flowers open?’<sup>2</sup>

Hagen's father, Earl, an attorney for the American Bar Association, decided to open a private law practice, which created a financial strain on the family. Because of this situation, Gwen Hagen felt compelled to return to work, setting aside her painting and sculpting. In numerous interviews, Daron Hagen commented that he felt he was living his life the way his mother would liked to have lived hers.

Hagen began formal musical training with piano lessons at age nine. His first teacher was a Polish immigrant and Holocaust survivor named Adam Klecewski. Looking back on his early studies, Hagen says:

The only thing I remember, other than the fact that he slapped my knuckles with a pen when I made mistakes, is that I had perfect pitch--he sat me backwards on the piano bench and had me identify pitches as he played them. Ironically this changed to relative pitch as I became 'more' trained as a musician.<sup>3</sup>

Hagen discontinued lessons because he was not practicing, but at age fourteen after seeing *The Sting*, a movie featuring the music of Scott Joplin, he resumed his piano studies.

About this time, Hagen also began to write and compose. His first effort was a rock musical called "Together" which he staged with his friends. Since Hagen knew nothing about orchestration, his friends who made up the nine piece orchestra, notated their parts as he dictated from the piano. He said about that experience, "It was like a dream come true to have the orchestra teach me how to do it."<sup>4</sup> At the age of fifteen, Hagen composed an orchestral piece called *Suite for a Lonely City*, which he conducted in a school concert. His mother sent a copy of the score and tape to Leonard Bernstein, along with a letter asking Bernstein's advice about how to help her son develop his obvious talent. Hagen recalled: "Of course Maestro Bernstein loved it

because it sounded just like *On the Waterfront*! Not intentionally, but I was so smitten with his music I couldn't help using some of it subconsciously.”<sup>5</sup>

Maestro Bernstein suggested Hagen audition for David Diamond at The Juilliard School. Hagen, at age sixteen, followed Bernstein's advice. The Juilliard panel consisted of composers David Diamond and Elliot Carter, who seemed surprised that someone with such rudimentary musical skills could have written such an orchestral piece as *Suite For a Lonely City*. Diamond advised the young composer to return home, sharpen his knowledge of music theory and audition again. To improve those skills, Hagen attended The University of Wisconsin, Madison, from 1979-1981. During his studies there, he became engaged to his high school sweetheart. Prompted by his fiancée's mother, Hagen sent his materials to The Curtis Institute. She read the school had recently appointed Ned Rorem to re-energize their composition department. At the invitation of Rorem, Hagen enrolled at The Curtis Institute.

Although talented, Hagen had never considered a career in composition. However, those thoughts began to change when his composition *Prayer for Peace* was heard by *Philadelphia Inquirer* music critic, Daniel Webster. Webster recommended *Prayer for Peace* to the associate conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra, William Smith. At nineteen, his composition was played by the Philadelphia Orchestra. It was the first time a Curtis student's composition had been performed by the orchestra since Samuel Barber. “That's when I realized I had a chance to make a living as a composer of serious concert music,” remarked Hagen.<sup>6</sup> Hagen studied with Ned Rorem from 1981 until 1983. From Rorem, he learned the art of composing small forms, including song.

In 1984 Daron Hagen was accepted to The Juilliard School. There he studied with David Diamond and Joseph Schwantner. As he had learned the small forms from Rorem, he now undertook

the larger symphonic forms with Diamond. After completing his studies at Juilliard in 1987, Hagen moved to Europe where he decided he could live cheaply and compose more easily. While in Europe, he received a commission from the American Society of Composers and Publishers (ASCAP), whose division director of serious music persuaded him to move back to the United States where there were many lucrative and creative opportunities.

Little did Hagen know his career was heading in a direction in which he thought he had no interest, that of being a teacher. While at a reading of one of his pieces with the St. Louis Symphony, he met Joan Tower, current composer in residence and also a member of the faculty at Bard College in upstate New York. After a long car ride, providing opportunity for a lengthy discussion, Hagen was persuaded by Tower to accept a position at Bard College. He recalled:

Now I had zero interest in teaching, I wanted to be a professional composer, living off the fairly gotten gain of my work. I was not practical at all!<sup>7</sup>

During Hagen's tenure at Bard College from 1988-1997, he concurrently served on the faculties of New York University (1988-1989), the City College of New York (1993-1994,1997), and The Curtis Institute of Music (1996-1998). Reflecting upon his academic teaching, Hagen admitted:

Teaching at Curtis at the end was fun, but I realized it was also a way to keep from facing up to my big personal challenge, which was to go without an umbilical cord.<sup>8</sup>

When his marriage to his high school sweetheart ended, Hagen determined this was his chance to live as a freelance composer, pianist, and conductor.

I'm doing what I dreamed of doing when I was 15, but didn't think was possible. Of course, I have no health insurance, no savings and

I live from gig to gig, but I'm leading an honorable freelance musician's life. It makes me happy and humble, because when I pass a homeless guy on the street, the fact is, 'there but for two months paying work go I,' and that grounds me.<sup>9</sup>

Although no longer permanently affiliated with a college or university, Hagen continues to appear as an artist in residence or visiting master artist with such institutions as:

- The Curtis Institute of Music, Visiting Master Artist, 2000, 1999, 1997
- University of Nevada Las Vegas, Artist in Residence, 2000
- Pittsburgh University, 2000
- Miami University (Oxford, Ohio), Composer in Residence, 1999
- University of Maine, Bangor, Visiting Artist, 1999
- Midwest Regional Band and Orchestra Conductor's Clinic, 1999
- Princeton University, 1999
- University of Texas, Austin, Visiting Composer, 1999
- Ohio State University, 1999
- Baylor University, Artist in Residence, 1998
- Tanglewood Music Festival, 1997

Not only is Daron Hagen in demand at schools of music across the country, he has also been the recipient of numerous honors, awards, and fellowships including:

- ASCAP Standard Panel Awards, 2002 (annually since 1988)
- Opera America/Reader's Digest Production Award for *Shining Brow*, 1997
- Virginia Center for the Creative Arts Residencies, 1998, 97, 91, 90, 89, 87
- Yaddo Professional Residencies, Corporation Member since 1994

- Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Residency (Bellagio, Italy), 1993
- Kennedy Center Friedheim Awards, Second Prize, 1990
- Tanglewood Music Center Fellowship, 1985
- Charles Ives Scholarship, American Academy of Arts and Letters, 1983

His already prestigious list of commissions includes:

- The New York Philharmonic
- Philadelphia Orchestra
- Brooklyn Philharmonic
- Madison Opera
- The King's Singers
- The Curtis Institute of Music
- Denver Chamber Orchestra
- The Juilliard Dance Division
- Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra

#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Ned Rorem, "Learning With Daron," *Opera News*, 10 April 1993, 29.

<sup>2</sup> James Reel, "A Conversation with Composer Daron Hagen," *Fanfare*, September/October 1998, On-line Access <http://daronhagen.com/perspective.html>, 3 of 26.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER 2

### *DEAR YOUTH: A MINIATURE FOLK OPERA*

#### Approach to Composition

All music arises from the human voice--that's why art song to me is the most exquisite form.

Daron Hagen

“Daron Hagen’s lists of works include items in nearly every medium, but it is his vocal music which abounds. This is of no surprise from a former student of Ned Rorem, who has always affirmed that no one is going to provide us with an American art song repertory unless we do it ourselves; never presume to repeat a word in singing that the poet has not repeated on the page, and always compose with the principle of economy uppermost in your mind.”<sup>1</sup> These are the observations of columnist Russell Platt, who writes for such publications as *The New Yorker* and *Opera News*. A long time friend of Hagen, Platt wrote the liner notes for ARSIS’ audio release of *The Art Songs of Daron Hagen*. In those notes Platt explains Hagen’s compositional approach to vocal music:

Like most of the important song composers of the Western tradition, Hagen is a gifted pianist, and if his piano parts can range from a Schubertian simplicity to a Straussian lushness, they always keep the singer’s role first and foremost—the words are always clear. The good Gallic values of freshness, clarity, and consistently elegant craftsmanship—starting arguably in Gounod and continuing forth through Poulenc and Rorem—find their mark in Hagen too, but are mixed with limited elements of American jazz and music theater that betray him as a child of the suburban 1970’s. The absorption of these materials doubtless helped along Hagen’s gift for economy, while his superb general musicianship insured that they would not limit his curiosity or range. This deeply American mixture shows that Hagen can’t quite enjoy his French sexiness to the full but

must temper it with a certain Protestant value, hard to pin down but impossible to ignore, seen not only in the choice of texts but also in the piano parts.<sup>2</sup>

The writer had an opportunity to talk with Daron Hagen on December 5, 2001, at the Century Club in Manhattan. During this conversation, the writer asked Hagen whom he considered to be the greatest influence on his compositional style. He responded, “That’s easy, Lenny Bernstein! Lenny thought the theater was his place and intuited that it was mine as well. I consider myself a theater composer.”<sup>3</sup>

Hagen’s love for language and the voice links him closely to Bernstein. Hagen went on to explain that Bernstein was onto something important to the future of American opera, the ‘musicalization of American English.’ This is important because it allows the singer to move seamlessly from spoken dialogue to *parlando* to *arioso* and back again. Discussing his fervor for language and music, Hagen told writer James Reel in his interview for *Fanfare* magazine:

I’m naturally drawn to the combination of words and music. I wanted to be a writer when I was a teenager. I’m fascinated by language. One of the reasons that I work so much with Paul Muldoon, the Irish poet, is that his words and his language inspire me to write good music. I love voices and I like singers, and along with the intersection of loving music and words and singers, I adore the process of composing and going through the production of musical theater. There is the communion of people coming together to commit to undertaking a work of art that is larger than any of us.<sup>4</sup>

Since the repertory portion of this document deals with *Dear Youth*, it is necessary to address a misconception about the work. During the interview Mr. Hagen requested the writer identify *Dear Youth* as a miniature folk opera not a song cycle. ECS Publishing, a division of E. C. Schirmer Music Company, Inc., erroneously published the piece in 1993 as a song cycle.

Since Hagen entitled *Dear Youth* a miniature folk opera, the writer asked him to define this form. He described it as follows: “A miniature folk opera utilizes recitatives followed by

arias; it consists of monologues for the singer, who portrays actual characters; although it does not have a plot, per se, it has emotional trajectory.”<sup>5</sup> In the liner notes for the Spring 2002 ARSIS Audio release of Hagen’s opera *Bandanna: World Premier Recording*, Hagen shares his insight on how to write an opera, the differences between opera and art song, and his compositional philosophy about both. Hagen writes:

Art songs (and even cycles) are not miniature operas, though the best ones contain all the elements of both opera and seduction--compressed into the time it takes to, well, sing them. The best song composers manifest this arc in the sensible physical demands they place on the singer’s instrument, making the song ‘feel good’ to sing. An opera is a mural; an art song is an exquisite miniature, requiring the tiniest of brush strokes.

Less is more when writing song. More is more when writing opera, whose composer must think about ten minutes the way a song composer thinks about ten seconds. A song composer decides what a poem is about and sets it--implying stasis--in a finely crafted, arguably decorative musical context. An opera composer decides what a scene is about and may discard the words entirely if the music proves to move the story along better alone.

Opera is about the intersection of drama and music. Art songs are about the intersection between music and poetry. Great art song composers aren’t necessarily capable of writing viable operas, any more than Billy Joel’s talent for song writing prepares him for a career as a symphonic composer. Art songs and instrumental music may be dramatic, but operas must be dramatic lest they become oratorios.

Art songs are the closest music comes to being the equivalent of a snapshot. Operas are as close as so-called high-culture music comes to being the equivalent of a motion picture. The longer an art song composer can sustain a desired mood, the more perfect a setting in which the listener can experience that text, while an opera composer must ruthlessly ration such moments of stasis, knowing that he’ll have to pay for them by generating energy elsewhere in the score. The words to the undeniably ravishing *Nessun dorma* are nearly as far-fetched as the opera’s story. Calaf sings in a frozen moment, and we don’t really care about him; it is a great art song masquerading as an aria, while Schubert’s devastating *Erkönig* appears to be a story told by the singer about a father and ailing son on horseback but is in fact one of the greatest operatic duets ever written under the guise of an art song. By the time it is over, we care desperately about the child’s fate.<sup>6</sup>

In Carol Kimball's book *Song: A Guide to Style and Literature*, Hagen is quoted as saying his songs require singers of particular skill, "those who respect the text, have excellent diction, and know how to act."<sup>7</sup> Hagen shared with the writer his taste in singers, preferring those who were not afraid to make an 'ugly sound' when called for and those who allow themselves to perform with complete abandon. Kimball also explains that Hagen's choices of texts are wide-ranging and include many verses of Paul Muldoon, as well as Whitman, Tennyson, Blake, Browning, and Dickinson.

Although Hagen's songs can be dramatic, haunting, intense, and humorous, simplicity is the hallmark of his musical style. Hagen believes it is easy to be clever, hard to be simple, and he is at his best when he keeps things simple. Frequently, reviewers have referred to Hagen's simple approach as a Francophilian influence, concise and economical. However, Hagen states he is not aware of this particular influence when composing.

Because Hagen has written approximately 300 songs to date, he explains the craft of composing song is no longer an issue for him. A final thought about the composer's approach to text setting and song composition is summed up quite well by Hagen in his conversation with James Reel for *Fanfare*:

When it comes to setting texts to music, I look at the text, I hear it, I feel it, and I just write it. There's never a question of how I get a particular sound. An interviewer asked Eric Clapton recently if he ever thinks about technique; he sat down with his guitar, improvised something and said, 'That's how I feel right now; I feel it, and then I play it.' That was candid, a sincere sort of musician-answer. And that's where we all aspire to be. Ned had me writing two art songs a week for three years, whether I had a good, bad, or indifferent reaction to the poem he'd assign. I set a lot of poetry back then that I probably never would have encountered if he hadn't assigned it to me. Setting something to music that you don't like is a terrific technical challenge. I was lucky; I happened to relish the challenge. Some of Ned's students simply refused.<sup>8</sup>

*Dear Youth: A Miniature Folk Opera*

In 1989 Daron Hagen was commissioned by the trio Sonus of Baltimore to compose a piece for soprano, flute, and piano. Hagen, who is a Civil War buff, chose the topic, the “Lost Cause.” Ned Rorem once told Hagen if he ever wrote a piece about war, it would always be played because there will always be war. After considering a composition on war poems by Walt Whitman, Hagen decided to set excerpts of poems and letters by American women of the era who were directly and indirectly involved. Hagen located the individual texts at the New York Public Library in the Irma and Paul Milstein Division of United States History, Local History, and Genealogy. During the writer’s interview, Hagen explained how he composed the work at the Virginia Center for the Arts in Sweetbriar, which is only a short distance from some of the largest battles of the Civil War. He composed the work in a two-week period, approximately one movement every two days. *Dear Youth* premiered March 10, 1991, at Dumbarton Methodist Church in Baltimore. Hagen told the writer he considers its more significant premiere to be a week or so later in a United States military hangar in New Port News, Virginia, for the families of those who were deployed in the Gulf War. It is poignant that *Dear Youth* was composed in 1990 in response to the Gulf War and more poignant still to revisit its beginnings during America’s newest struggle.

Hagen says this work is about women for women. He stated that women went about the business of life and explained that these excerpts exemplify life and war’s stark reality upon it. These perspectives represent women of varying classes from the North and South and the devastating effect war imposes.

In many ways *Dear Youth* resembles the simplicity of a parlor piece, in which the family participates. However, Hagen's musical settings of the texts bring to *Dear Youth* a kaleidoscope of colors which results in a work of genuine humanity and poignancy. Hagen, who has always been interested in writing, explains the art of finding poetry in people's words and haloing them with 'musicalization' requires the composer to have an eye for what makes ordinary prose literature. As Hagen read through the collections there would be a sentence, paragraph, or incomplete thought that would move him and inspire a musical idea. Thus, these excerpts are brief glimpses into the lives of Civil War women.

Hagen's structure for the opera is not cyclical, meaning it is not end-oriented. The first piece (The Bonnie Blue Flag) is a strophic recruitment song. The second and third (I Stop Again... and The Picture Graved Into My Heart) are paired deliberately, as are the fifth and sixth (The Lord Knows and O, for Such a Dream). Each pair is a prelude and aria linked by common authors. The fourth song (The Trouble Was Tom...) is an intermezzo which is a scherzo in form. The seventh (Christmas Night) is a nocturne. The eighth (...Silently Dispersing) is a subdued yet powerful finale redeveloping the material of the first song. Daron Hagen sees this mini-drama as an extended dramatic monologue.

The writer approaches the individual study of each song/movement from a performer's perspective, as prepared for a lecture/recital. The information and observations presented for the songs will include: range, tessitura, meter signature, expression and tempo indications, dynamic range, length, biographical information about the writers, origins of the texts to aid the performer in the process of developing character sketches, and insights for interpretation and performance.

SONG #1: The Bonnie Blue Flag

RANGE: C4-Bb5

TESSITURA: G4-E4

METER SIGNATURE: 7/4

EXPRESSION AND TEMPO INDICATIONS: With dignity and sweep (quarter note =54)

DYNAMIC RANGE: *pianissimo-fortissimo*

LENGTH: 12 measures;1 minute and 28 seconds

TEXT: Poem by Annie Chambers Ketchum

War songs of the South were part of the history of the “Lost Cause,” and Mrs. Ketchum’s lyrics reflect the passionate sincerity of the South in the time they were written. Mrs. Ketchum was born in Scott County, Kentucky, in 1824. Her family was in the newspaper business and her educational advantages were of the highest quality. She married twice, losing her second husband, Leo, on the fatal field of Shiloh. She was a well-known writer of her day, and of her abilities as a poet, the *Lexington Press* wrote:

Mrs. Ketchum’s Christmas ballad ‘Benny’ has become a household song in all lands, and alone would immortalize her, but her later poems bear evidence that she has been an earnest and enthusiastic student. ‘Semper Fidelis,’ in the October 1873 edition of *Harper’s Magazine*, is pronounced one of the most finished productions of American literature.<sup>9</sup>



The first recorded use of the “Bonnie Blue” flag dates to 1810 when the West Florida Dragoons seized the capitol in Baton Rouge under the lone star flag. Three days later the president of the West Florida Convention signed a declaration of independence and the flag became a symbol of the new republic. Signifying this rebellion, the flag was used by the Republic of Texas from 1836 to 1839. On January 9, 1861, a convention of the people of Mississippi adopted an Ordinance of Secession. With this announcement the “Bonnie Blue” flag was raised over the capitol in Jackson. Harry Macarthy, an Irish comedian who witnessed these events, was so inspired that he wrote a song entitled, “The Bonnie Blue Flag,” which became the second most popular patriotic song of the Confederacy. Interestingly, Hagen had considered setting the most popular song of the war, “The Battle Hymn of the Republic,” but settled on the lesser known “Bonnie Blue.” The Confederate government did not choose this flag as its symbol, but the people did and lone star flags were flown in some form in five of the southern states that adopted new flags in 1861.

#### INSIGHTS FOR INTERPRETATION AND PERFORMANCE:

This twelve bar *aria* is set with a hazy ‘Ivesian’ type accompaniment consisting of two six-measure strophes which Hagen refers to as a ‘rabble-rousing’ recruitment song. “The Bonnie Blue Flag” is a trio for piano, flute and soprano. The movement is dramatically driven by the dynamics. The piano and flute begin *pianissimo* and *crescendo* with each passing bar. As the voice enters on the pick-up to measure three, all parts are marked *mezzo-piano* and *crescendo* to *fortissimo* at measure six, meeting the text ‘ringing battle cry.’ Immediately the trio returns to a dynamic of *pianissimo*. For the second

stroph, the six-measure *crescendo* is strongest on the word ‘rally,’ a *fortissimo* high B flat, and the apogee of the entire opera. Throughout, the piano employs arpeggiation and descending thirds while the flute utilizes a dotted militaristic rhythm. Hagen uses wide intervals in the vocal line to express the emotion of the text. “Bonnie Blue” could have been considered a popular ballad in the 1860's. There is a simple folk quality (patriotic and sentimental) which reflects the style of recruitment songs of the era. At times the tessitura can make the text difficult to enunciate; however, it is deliverable with a clear and dental approach. Although the accompaniment provides a misty and subdued quality, the singer must not allow it to dampen the spirited delivery of the recruitment song.

SONG #2: I STOP AGAIN

RANGE: D4-F5

TESSITURA: E4-E5

METER SIGNATURE: 4/4

EXPRESSION AND TEMPO INDICATIONS: *Lento/Intimately*

DYNAMIC RANGE: *piano-fortissimo*

LENGTH: 15 measures; 1 minute and 17 seconds

TEXT: Letter by Hannah Ropes

Hannah Anderson Ropes was born in 1809 in New Gloucester, Maine. Her family was among New England’s early settlers. She married William Ropes and gave birth to four children, two of whom lived to adulthood. When her husband abandoned her, Ropes was forced to become self-reliant. In Lynda L. Ludlow’s *A Vast Army of Women:*

*Maine's Uncounted Forces in the American Civil War*, the author explains how Ropes expressed radical tendencies through her religious convictions and her passionate opposition to slavery. Demonstrating this independent spirit, Ropes volunteered to serve as a nurse when her son, Edward, enlisted. Only a decade before, female nurses had been held in a class with prostitutes. She was assigned as head nurse of the Union Hotel Hospital in Washington, D.C. where she worked with Louisa May Alcott. Nurse Ropes actively decried the appalling conditions of the hospital and when she received no help from the surgeon-in-charge, she bravely contacted Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton. He listened and fired the chief surgeon. Her assertive actions would help bring about reforms which would eventually civilize military medical care. During the war, Ropes frequently corresponded with her children, Alice and Edward. Later, these letters were published. In January 1863, Ropes and Alcott died from typhoid pneumonia. Within Ropes' diary and her correspondence, one can find a woman's perspective of the Civil War and see the emergence of women in the field of nursing.

SOURCE OF TEXT:

According to John R. Brumgardt, editor of *The Civil War Nurse: The Diary and Letters of Hannah Ropes*, the text "I Stop Again" is an excerpt from a letter dated October 6, 1862. Ropes writes to her daughter Alice, who is living back home in Maine.

The song text appears in italics:

Dear Alice,

...I literally have no time to myself, and write at a running pace--for instance, in writing the above, I have got up to attend to a man who has just had his leg taken off--he is reduced in strength, and it always is a good deal of a job to

bring a weak man safe out from the effect of the chloroform. The doctors say give all the brandy they will take, but be sure and keep them awake.

Today we send off fifty men. Not half of them are able to go, but that is of no account to one head surgeon, who cares no more for a private than for a dog. Dr. Hays was a prince of a youth; but he would marry and go away. We upon the whole have had goodish men to rule over us. Still between surgeons, stewards, nurses and waiters, the poor men in all the hospitals barely escape with life or clothes or money.

The wars on James River are nothing compared with the fights I have with the stewards. We now have our fourth, as big a villain as ever walked unhung. I have entered a complaint to the Surgeon General but I don't suppose it will do any good at all. But at any rate I shall have nothing to do with him. I ordered him out of my room, and don't speak to him now. The men have not had enough to eat for a week--this morning, one slice of bread to each man! As soon as I found it out, I took a half bushel of apples and went into the court and told the men if I could have my way they should have more than enough, and I hoped the steward would go hungry sometimes. They gathered round me as thick as chickens and ate their apples. It was all I have from a barrel sent me. Tell the country people to dry all the apples they can for the soldiers.

*...I have stopped again, Alice, to close the eyes of a gentle German boy who has no one in this country to mourn for him. His parents live in the father land, and all the record there will be is a number on his grave.*

I hear nothing from Ned {Edward} and very little war news. Everything is hush here and the wants of the soldiers fill all minds with whom I come in contact. I hope you will be very happy at Mrs. Barnard's. I think you the best of company, and I am not surprised that she is of that opinion too.

Your Mother<sup>10</sup>

#### INSIGHTS FOR INTERPRETATION AND PERFORMANCE:

“I Stop Again” is an intimate duet for soprano and flute, which reflects the close relationship between Hannah Ropes and her daughter, Alice. Remembering Ropes as a pioneer of female nurses and noting her example of great courage and conviction strengthen the delivery of her words. The piece begins with a desolate four-note motive played by the flute which is taken up the staff by the voice and flute together, thereby giving the last three words, ‘on his grave,’ a harmonic tension which equals Ropes’

frustration. The vocal line is exposed, a primary concern throughout the opera, thus the singer must be deliberate and careful to deliver the text in a way that is dramatically clear. As Hagen does when setting the texts, the singer should read them as prose and find their musical rhythms. Dynamically, the singer must not *crescendo* too soon, but arrive at *fortissimo* only on those last three words. This *parlando* style prelude moves seamlessly into the lyrical *aria* “I Stop Again;” the flute is instructed to ‘continue without pause.’ A smooth transition will allow the monologue to continue, maintaining the tension already stirred.

SONG #3: THE PICTURE GRAVED INTO MY HEART

RANGE: C#4-G5

TESSITURA: F4-F5

METER SIGNATURE: 4/4, 2/2, 3/2, 2/2, 3/2, 4/4

EXPRESSION AND TEMPO INDICATIONS: 4/4 *Lento moderato* (quarter note = ca. 63)

2/2 Twice as Fast (quarter note = half note)

DYNAMIC RANGE: *pianississimo-fortissimo*

LENGTH: 52 measures; 2 minutes and 32 seconds

TEXT: Diary entry by Hannah Ropes

SOURCE OF TEXT:

This entry ended Ropes’ hospital journal. She soon became a patient in Union Hospital where she would succumb to typhoid pneumonia. The italicized excerpt Hagen

uses is from an entry dated December 27, 1862. Louisa May Alcott and Hannah Ropes had been attending a fatally wounded soldier, Ropes recalls:

...There he lay, his broad chest heaving with obstinate breath, but the face as composed in its manly beauty, as though he were taking natural rest in sleep. The dignity of the man, considering the circumstances, was wonderful. In a room with a dozen others, a stony sort of room, close into the street, without one pleasant, attractive quality--it seemed as if he, in his individual force of purpose, must have revolted. But no, he did not--he was content to wait. And yet I do not think he was unconscious of people thrown down about him from the same battlefield, or the disorder of the room. Feeling this, the matron took every care of his bed, for he was a man, having his own views, a brave soldier who took up arms, having evidently counted the cost. And here he lies. Eight o'clock in the evening, the gas burning brightly. A man with one arm lying tenderly watching him on one side, and one with a fearful wound through the thighs on the other, who at last turns his face away, covering it with his blanket. Two hours before, Lewie had reached his right hand into Miss Alcott's lap and firmly grasped her wrist. He could not talk but a word at a time. The matron is left alone when the breath ceases--she, still watching with loving sympathy and a farther reaching consciousness of this process through which he is passing, keeps close by with her hand on his forehead, as though she would cross palms with the angels commissioned to take her work out of her hands.

*The hair at length smoothed, a lock cut from it to go to his mother, and the limbs straightened. The wondrous manly beauty of the whole person so impresses her that she sends the attendant to call Miss Alcott back. Even the attendant forgets the superstition of the early training he received, on the far source of the Kennebec, and admired God's work in this now deserted tenement. The matron, with busy fingers, says, "Frank, you are honored as never before by working hand to hand with those who receive this man, to do for him what you and I cannot." The good of the other patients demands that he be removed from the room and the matron, kissing him and saying, "Good by," turns to the other men to prevent if possible the ill effects of a false view of the orderly fact just past. Thus two of the last wounded closed their lives within the hospital, one a few hours after being brought in, the other this evening, after ten days sojourn with us. Two hands, small, thin and white, tremulous, reaching after things invisible, have laid in mine hour after hour today; two eyes like live coals roll, gleam, recede in terror behind their own pupils, or soften to tears before mine; two cheeks, purple with fever, a sweet mouth and beardless chin, teeth a girl might envy, and a wide fair brow, from which light brown hair, dank and curlless, falls away--this is the picture graved into the heart, fused with anxious pity! A face one hates to leave, knowing the physical danger of the lithe young creature whose crown it is.<sup>11</sup>*

## INSIGHTS FOR INTERPRETATION AND PERFORMANCE:

The four-note motive of the previous prelude persists into the opening accompaniment of “The Picture Graved Into My Heart,” which Hagen says reflects Ropes’ tone of voice. It is simple yet strong and unwavering. Notably, Russell Platt explains: “The accompaniment is a quote from ‘Oh, I’m A Good Ole Rebel’ to the tune of ‘Joe Bowers,’ a popular ballad from the 1860's; its strains in the flute and piano start out in strict canon form but free up once the melodic shapes become established.”<sup>12</sup> The vocal line has a lyrical and peaceful quality as she speaks of the soldier. There is a two against three juxtaposition between the voice and accompaniment, perhaps representing the struggle between Ropes’ heart and mind as she attempts to make sense of this pointless waste of youth. In the middle section, the tempo doubles (measure 17) as single melodic lines in the piano become rich chordal harmonies. These harmonies support the vocal line as Ropes describes the handsome features of the mortally wounded youth and reflect her pain, sympathy, and admiration for him. A dramatic climax is reached by the singer and flute as they join in unison ascension (measures 36-38). Moving together in octaves, the rhythmic treatment of the text gives added emphasis to each word. Though no *rallentando* appears in the score, Hagen achieves this effect (*rallentando*) by slowing the rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic movement. The vocal line decays as the flute disappears on an ascending motive, quickly returning to the peaceful *lento* tempo as in the beginning. This *aria* calls upon the singer’s complete palette of colors, heft, and dramatic abilities. A full *legato* line must be sustained throughout to equal the heaviness of Ropes’ heart and state of mind.

The attitude of Ropes' words and thus Hagen's setting of them can best be explained by an entry made during the last six months of Louisa May Alcott's life. In

*Louisa May Alcott: Her Life, Letters and Journals*, Alcott wrote:

The sight of stretchers, each with legless, armless, or desperately wounded occupants, admonished me that I was there to work, not to wonder or to weep; so I corked my feelings.<sup>13</sup>

SONG #4: THE TROUBLE WAS TOM...

RANGE: C4-F5

TESSITURA: G4-D5

METER SIGNATURE: 7/8, 8/8, 7/8, 8/8, 7/8, 8/8, 3/4, 7/8, 8/8, 7/8, 8/8, 6/8

EXPRESSION AND TEMPO INDICATIONS: *Presto*/breathlessly with bounce

DYNAMIC RANGE: *pianissimo-fortissimo*

LENGTH: 28 measures; 42 seconds

TEXT: Folk Tale as told by Daron Hagen's Grandmother

SOURCE OF TEXT:

The writer asked Hagen where he found this humorous and anonymous text. He explained with a good laugh that he knew who had said these words. Hagen had been visiting his Grandmother in a nursing home when she began to tell of Tom's set of circumstances. Tom, who lived around 1885 in Black River Falls, Wisconsin, had the misfortune of being in love with the 'wrong sister.' Hagen was so amused and fascinated by this love triangle, he returned with his tape recorder and asked her to explain Tom's troubles once more. Hagen believes folk stories like this are the sheer essence of life.

## INSIGHTS FOR INTERPRETATION AND PERFORMANCE:

This intermezzo, which is a *scherzo* in form, provides some needed comic relief. Hagen uses a Bernstein-like style of mixed meter to tell this amusing tale of three people inconveniently in love with one another. Incidentally, this composition was a Christmas present to Bernstein from Hagen. Hagen's markings *presto* and 'breathless bounce' give it a light hearted and 'gossipy' tone. Hagen says he actually prefers a piccolo to the flute because it is funnier and more annoying. The piccolo and voice prattle back and forth like two old spinsters. Because there are so many meter changes, this song can be musically difficult for less experienced musicians. As usual, Hagen's markings meticulously describe his concept for phrasing the text, thereby creating an opportunity for a refreshing and sparkling moment.

SONG #5: THE LORD KNOWS

RANGE: D4-G5

TESSITURA: G4-G5

METER SIGNATURE: 8/4, 4/4, 6/4, 2/4, 6/4, 4/4, 7/4, 2/4, 8/4, 5/4, 4/4

EXPRESSION AND TEMPO INDICATIONS: Freely effusive, gently, *morendo*, intimately, broadly, *smorzando*, *diminuendo*

DYNAMIC RANGE: *forte-pianissimo*

LENGTH: 13 measures; 1 minute and 2 seconds

TEXT: Letter by Ann Smith

In the book *Who Only Stand and Wait: Civil War Letters of David and Ann Smith 1863-1865*, edited by Helene C. Phelan, the reader peers into the lives of David Smith, a

volunteer soldier from Steuben County, New York, and his wife, Ann. Through their letters, a greater understanding is gained about common folk from the North and how they dealt with the reality of separation brought about by the war.

#### SOURCE OF TEXT:

Because songs five and six are excerpted from the same letter, dated August 16, 1864, the writer will treat both texts together. Ann Smith writes to her husband, David:

...I have just been reading in a paper that the Republicans are talking of holding a convention at Buffalo the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September for the purpose of nominating a presidential candidate who will unite the party. I think if they can get one who will unite the party it will be the best thing they can do, for split as they are I believe the Democrats will carry the election. *The Lord knows best what will end this terrible strife and I pray he will guide the people accordingly. I am almost getting reckless sometimes I think if you were out I wouldn't care what they did. Is not that most too selfish? At least I hope they will be able to do as will cause the least bloodshed.* [Song #6 begins] *I dreamed last night that you were home. I was outdoors and went to the door and called you out to look at something. It was cold weather and moonlight--You had on a large sacque coat and you opened it and put it round me and we walked together but I don't know how far we went. O, for such a dream to come to pass. Will it, can it ever be? O, if I could only feel in reality the real security which I felt in that dream, but alas it was only a dream and has fled to leave the reality of absence still continued and to be endured yet another year. And now there are to be thousands more dragged from their homes. I tell you I have never been heard to murmur except what I have written to you, but I am heartily sick and tired of this state of things. I don't know if this will be very cheering to you, but write me a good long letter. I will try to be more cheerful next time. Please don't write bad words for the children may be old enough some day to want to read some of your letters and it would not be a good example. I never thought of that til the other day when I was reading your letter and then I thought I would mention it.*<sup>14</sup>

#### INSIGHTS FOR INTERPRETATION AND PERFORMANCE:

The fifth is a *parlando* style prelude introducing the sixth, and together they are a dramatic counterweight to the pair of Ropes' settings heard earlier. "The Lord Knows" is

the only *a cappella* setting in the opera. Hagen chooses this format because the speaker is alone both physically and emotionally. Ann Smith struggles to reconcile her anger and selfishness, and turns to God as she grapples with these painful circumstances. The thirteen-measure prelude has eleven meter changes and seven expressive vocal markings. The constant change ‘musicalizes’ the speaker’s pattern of speech. Although Hagen has indicated ‘freely effusive,’ adhering to the rhythm enables the singer and listener to experience Ann Smith’s mental processes. “The Lord Knows” is clearly an operatic recitative, since the emotional action is laid out before the audience. This is the first monologue to begin *forte* and it fluctuates dynamically with the speaker’s emotions. In thirteen measures, Hagen once again sets the text to music by imitating the natural rhythm and flow of the letter.

Because the piece is *a cappella*, the difficulty lies in keeping the chromatic and dramatic vocal line in tune. Large vocal leaps characterize Smith’s emotional outbursts, while step-wise phrases express her inward reflection. Hagen has scored the piece to ‘continue without pause.’ The singer’s final note of B4 must tune perfectly with the flute as it enters on a high B5 of “O, for Such a Dream.” This perfect unison achieves a beautiful dream-like transition.

SONG #6: O, FOR SUCH A DREAM

RANGE: D4-F5

TESSITURA: E4-E5

METER SIGNATURE: 2/2, 3/2, 2/2

EXPRESSION AND TEMPO INDICATIONS: *Allegretto*/Simply, Relaxed/Slightly Slower

DYNAMIC RANGE: *pianissimo-forte*

LENGTH: 64 measures; 3 minutes and 10 seconds

TEXT: Letter by Ann Smith

SOURCE OF TEXT: See excerpt for Song #5

INSIGHTS FOR INTERPRETATION AND PERFORMANCE:

“O, for Such a Dream” is the most touching and lengthy *aria* in the opera. It begins simply. Some reviewers suggest that Ann Smith is accompanying herself and David, her absent husband, is the voice of the flute. Hagen allows the tender text to shine by underlying it with a simple broken chord accompaniment where each voice expresses its own melodic material yet is interwoven one with another. Overall, the harmonies are basic as she recounts her dream. They become increasingly intense rhythmically and harmonically as the speaker pours out her most intimate feelings. The flute’s pulse quickens during these expressions. The phrases, ‘the reality of absence’ and ‘but alas it was only a dream,’ are marked by the return of musical ideas which were expressed at the outset. “O, for Such a Dream” has several expansive moments for which the singer must prepare. One in particular is found at measure 54; Hagen clearly indicates ‘no breath!’ due to the phrasing of the text. Hagen directs the flute at measure 57 to ‘warm the tone’ and the piano at measure 60 to play ‘atop the keys, a glassy tone.’ These tonal markings should be observed by the voice as well. Hagen epitomizes terms such as ‘folk-like,’ ‘mood-setting,’ and ‘text-painting’ in this musical scenario. The heartbreaking text requires the singer to use a variety of tone colors to achieve the emotions inherent in it.

SONG #7: CHRISTMAS NIGHT

RANGE: C#4-F5

TESSITURA: D4-C5

METER SIGNATURE: 3/4, 7/8, 3/4, 7/8, 3/4

EXPRESSION AND TEMPO INDICATIONS: Freely effusive (quarter note = ca. 66)

DYNAMIC RANGE: piano-forte

LENGTH: 32 measures; 2 minutes

TEXT: Letter by Martha Ingram

*The Civil War Letters of George W. and Martha F. Ingram 1861-1865* was compiled by their grandson Henry L. Ingram. The Ingram letters give a perspective of the rural South during the Civil War. It is clear through their correspondence that the Ingrams were deeply in love.

SOURCE OF TEXT:

It is helpful to review a portion of the letter dated December 25, 1862, to get a sense of their situation, education, and relationship. Interestingly, out of this lengthy letter Hagen excerpted only three sentences, which appear italicized. Mrs. Ingram writes to her husband, George:

Dear Husband

I received yore verry kinde letter by Doctor McKinney. This letter gave me more real pleasure than I have enjoyed since you left home. I am truly glad to hear that you are so fat and are looking so well. It makes me verry proud when I can ad won drop of pleasure to yore cup of hapiness and comfort. Oh if you could only come home. It seames that my hapiness would be complete as far as this world is conserved. *I hope this awful war will soon close and wee will be happy wonse more.* I fear the Yankees are trying to lull the South with their long yorns about intervening while they are making evvery preperation to fite a long and

tedious war. So far as I am able to see there is no more prospect of peace now than there was twelve months ago tho I am no profit and cannot tell what good luck there is ahead. I will hope for the best if the worst comes. *This is Christmas night and I am all alone and lonely.* Ma and the little boys have gon to bed. *There is nothing to be heard except the cheerful little cricket and the fearsome bark of the watchful dog...*

...I would claim yore Christmas gift and I would tell you what it must be-- won kiss imprinted from yore lips on mine. But I fear you are getting tiard of this...<sup>15</sup>

#### INSIGHTS FOR INTERPRETATION AND PERFORMANCE:

Daron Hagen has explained that texts have a musical style of their own, and his job is to find music which cooperates and enhances the emotional expression of those texts. Martha Ingram appears poverty stricken and somewhat illiterate in her letter, (which contains colloquial grammar and spellings). By constantly changing keys, Hagen writes a vocal line that tends to sound out of tune, thereby reflecting her poverty and loneliness. The flute part marked ‘flexibly’ begins with a triplet motive, which imitates the ‘che[e]rful little cricket’ followed by a slithery melodic line depicting the ‘watchful dog.’



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The flute and voice answer one another in conversation. The flute line is chromatic, but Hagen is practical in providing the singer with the pitch from the flute for each entrance. Hagen's Lutheran roots are visible as the opening vocal line quotes the hymn "Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence" to suggest the holiness of the day. The vocal line has several leaps to the lower range which requires a strong vocal mix. At the end of "Christmas Night," Hagen directs the flute to *morendo* the last phrase, ending with a *fermata* over a quarter rest which is to last five seconds. He then segues directly into "...Silently Dispersing."

SONG #8: ...SILENTLY DISPERSING

RANGE: C4-F#5

TESSITURA: D4-D5

METER SIGNATURE: 3/2

EXPRESSION AND TEMPO INDICATIONS: Trance-like/free (quarter note = ca. 54)

DYNAMIC RANGE: *pianississimo-forte*

LENGTH: 24 measures; 1 minute and 56 seconds

TEXT: Letter by Mary Boykin Chesnut

Mrs. Chesnut's diary gives the reader an aristocratic account of the war. The wife of a Confederate senator, she was a woman of great literary knowledge who enjoyed a reputation as a brilliant conversationalist. In her book, *Mary Boykin Chesnut: A Biography*, Elisabeth Muhlenfeld explains Chesnut was not timid in expressing her opinions socially or politically. Muhlenfeld writes:

From the beginning of the secession, she recognized the depth of the political and social upheaval in which her region was engaged, and so she felt herself qualified by education, social position, and native intelligence to report what she observed. Following the war and the loss of the Chesnut fortune, she was able to assess the war and the society it had devastated.<sup>16</sup>

SOURCE OF TEXT: Diary Entry, March 30, 1865

...then Wilmot De Saussure came in. "I am here to consult with General Chesnut. He and I always think alike." Then he added emphatically--"Slavery is stronger than ever."

"If you think so, you will soon find that for once you and General Chesnut do not think alike. He has held that slavery was a thing of the past, this many a year."

I said to General Preston, "*I pass my days--and my nights, partly--at this window. I am sure our army is silently dispersing. Men are going the wrong way all the time. They slip by now with no songs nor shouts. They have given the thing up. See for yourself! Look! The streets were thronged with soldiers, and then they were empty again; but the marching now is without tap of drum...*"<sup>17</sup>

INSIGHTS FOR INTERPRETATION AND PERFORMANCE:

The flute motive from "Christmas Night" is transformed into a melodic expression reminiscent of the piano's arpeggios in "The Bonnie Blue Flag." Simultaneously, the piano quotes the descending thirds of the 'recruitment song.' The texture is thin, giving the song a 'deserted' quality. Hagen indicates the gesture *crescendo/decrescendo*, should always be expressed as a wheezing breath or a repeated sigh, thus suggesting the physical and emotional exhaustion of the war. Hagen notes the vocal line should sound 'numb and remote.' It is important for the singer to remain emotionally detached, simply reporting the facts. Hagen uses the lower range of the soprano voice to color the despair and fatigue which the speaker feels. The last few vocal phrases begin *forte* and fade dynamically to an exhausted *piano*. And likewise, the last

two measures of the song are heard from the flute and piano, echoing the now faded ‘rabble-rousing recruitment song.’ An almost emotionless approach to this final song is chilling.

#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Russell Platt, “Artful Simplicity: the Art Songs of Daron Hagen,” liner notes to *The Art Songs of Daron Hagen*, ARSIS Audio 106, 3.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 3.

<sup>3</sup>Daron Aric Hagen, interview by author, 5 December 2001, New York, NY.

<sup>4</sup>James Reel, “A Conversation with Composer Daron Hagen.” *Fanfare*, September/October 1998, 5 of 26.

<sup>5</sup>Daron Aric Hagen, telephone interview by author, Baton Rouge, LA, 15 January 2002.

<sup>6</sup>Daron Hagen, “Writing Opera With Paul,” liner notes to forthcoming *Bandanna: World Premier Recording*, ARSIS Audio 128, On-line accessed 10 October 2001, available from <http://daronhagen.com/perspective.html>, 12, 13 of 26.

<sup>7</sup>Carol Kimball, “Daron Aric Hagen,” Song: A Guide to Style & Literature, (Seattle: Pst..., Incorporated, 1996) , 298.

<sup>8</sup>Reel, 6.

<sup>9</sup>Lewis Collins, J.A. James, and U.P. James, “The Poets and Poetry of Kentucky,” Historical Sketches of Kentucky vol. 1 (Scott County, Kentucky; 1968) , 603.

<sup>10</sup>Hannah Ropes, Civil War Nurse: The Diary and Letters of Hannah Ropes, ed. John R. Brumgardt (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1999) , 69-70.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 117-119.

<sup>12</sup>Platt, 4.

<sup>13</sup>E. D. Cheney, Louisa May Alcott: Her Life, Letters, and Journals (Boston: Robert Brothers, 1889) , 31.

<sup>14</sup>David Smith and Ann Smith, Who Only Stand and Wait: Civil War Letters of David and Ann Smith (1863-1865), ed. by H. C. Phelan (Almond, NY 1990) , 239-241.

<sup>15</sup>George W. Ingram and Martha F. Ingram, Civil War Letters of George W. and Martha F. Ingram 1861-1865, compiled by Henry L. Ingram (College Station, Texas: Texas A & M University, 1973) , 43- 44.

<sup>16</sup>Elisabeth Muhlenfeld, Mary Boykin Chesnut: A Biography, (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1981) , 10.

<sup>17</sup>Mary Boykin Chesnut, Mary Boykin Chesnut 1823-1886: A Diary from Dixie, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976) , 512.

## CHAPTER 3

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Daron Hagen has taken up the standard which his teacher Ned Rorem and mentor Leonard Bernstein have set. Like them, Hagen is prolific. To date, he has written 300 art songs (125 in publication), three vocal chamber pieces, and four operas.

In Hagen's compositions, expression of the text is paramount. He has a superb ear for capturing the inflections of 'American' English and supporting them sensitively with music. His utilization of 'musicalization' employs frequent meter changes and lyrical melodies that are typically step-wise but varied with large leaps for textual emphasis. The vocal and instrumental lines are approached with simplicity; that is, 'less is more.' Yet, the skill required for performance demands secure vocal and instrumental technique, sensitivity to text, and a theatrical flair. His scores are clearly marked to help the performer define the emotional intent. This intersection of text, music, and drama is a Hagen hallmark.

True to the compositional approach as described above, Hagen's miniature folk opera, *Dear Youth*, is an extended dramatic monologue for the singer. Experienced as a whole, these 'mood-setting' monologues evolve into what Hagen describes as 'having an emotional trajectory,' rather than a traditional operatic plot. Portraying the experiences of actual women during the Civil War, Hagen employs *parlando* style preludes/*recitatives*, *arias*, a *scherzo*, and a *nocturne*. The singer, in preparation for performance, should study the poem, letter, or journal entry in its entirety, rather than focusing solely on the excerpt Hagen set to music.

Through his contributions to opera and art song, Daron Hagen is earning his place among America's great composers. Finally, it is intended this study serve as an introduction to the music of Daron Hagen, particularly his miniature folk opera *Dear Youth*, and inspire teachers and singers to include his music in their recital programming.

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APPENDIX A

LIST OF PUBLISHED VOCAL WORKS

Voice and Piano

<i>Figments</i> (2000)	Seven Songs on Poetry of Alice Wirth Gray	Tenor and Piano
<i>Larkin Songs</i> (2000)	Song Cycle on the Poetry of Philip Larkin	Baritone and Piano
<i>Phantoms of Myself</i> (2000)	Seven Songs on Poetry of Susan Griffin	Soprano and Piano
<i>Love in A Life</i> (1999)	Eight Songs for Voice and Piano	Voice and Piano*
<i>Merrill Songs</i> (1995)	Song Cycle on Poetry of James Merrill	High Voice and Piano
<i>Muldoon Songs</i> (1992)	Song Cycle on Poems of Paul Muldoon	Voice and Piano
<i>Love Songs</i> (1986)	Eight Songs for Voice and Piano	Voice and Piano
<i>Echo Songs</i> (1983)	Ten Songs for Voice and Piano	High Voice and Piano

\*Collections which are not voice/gender specific contain songs which can be sung by many voice types.

Vocal Chamber Music

*Songs of Madness and Sorrow* (1996): Dramatic Cantata for Tenor and Fourteen Instruments

fl(=picc); ob(corA).c; cl(=bcl); bn-hn; tp; perc(1);  
vibr/SnD/sndpr.bl/t.bell(1a)/tgl; pft-3vlns; vla; vlc; db

*Dear Youth* (1991): Miniature Folk Opera Based on Civil War Poems and Letters

For Soprano, Flute (Piccolo), and Piano

*Three Silent Things* (1984): Song Cycle on American Poets

For Soprano, Violin, Viola, Cello, and Piano

## Opera

*Bandanna* (1997-1999): Prologue and Opera in Two Acts

Libretto: Paul Muldoon

Treatment by: Daron Hagen and Paul Muldoon

Roles: soprano, lyric mezzo-soprano, tenor, dramatic baritone, lyric baritone, 2 small *compramario* roles, and mixed chorus

*Vera of Las Vegas* (1995-1996): A Nightmare Cabaret Opera in One Act Libretto: Paul Muldoon

Roles: male soprano, soprano, tenor, lyric baritone, and chorus of 5-9 women

*The Elephant's Child* (1994): A One Act Opera For Children

Libretto: Daron Hagen, based on *Just So* by Rudyard Kipling

Original Version- Six *a cappella* roles: soprano, alto, tenor, 2 baritones, and bass

Alternate Version- Six roles: soprano, alto, tenor, 2 baritones, and bass with piano or small chamber ensemble (fl; cl; tp; tb; pft).

*Shining Brow* (1990-1992): Prologue and Opera in Two Acts

Libretto: Paul Muldoon

Treatment by: Daron Hagen and Paul Muldoon

Roles: lyric baritone, soprano, tenor, mezzo-soprano, bass baritone, 6-8 *compramario* roles which may be drawn from the chorus, which should number at least 20

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APPENDIX B

LETTER OF PERMISSION

Subject: **Permission**  
Date: 1/24/02 9:05:03AM Central Standard Time  
From: [cjlyons@rcn.com](mailto:cjlyons@rcn.com) (Christa Lyons)  
To: [kmarrbari@aol.com](mailto:kmarrbari@aol.com)

Dear Ms. Redding,

We hereby grant you permission to use measures 1-3 and 13-15 from Daron Hagen's work titled "Christmas Night" from Dear Youth in your doctoral paper. There will be no fee for this use as long as your paper is not sold or published in any manner.

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Sincerely,  
Christa Lyons  
Copyright Administrator  
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## VITA

Jane McCalla Redding was born in Corinth, Mississippi, November 4, 1968. Her parents are Don Redding and the late Ann McCalla Redding. She has five siblings: Donnie, Ted, John, Mary Ann, and an identical twin sister Jeanne. Ms. Redding grew up in the community of Biggersville, Mississippi, and graduated from Corinth High School in 1986.

Completing the Bachelor of Arts degree in music education in 1991 from the University of Mississippi, Oxford, she then attended Louisiana State University where she received the Master of Music degree in vocal performance in 1994. While beginning her professional operatic career, Ms. Redding also began work on the Doctorate of Musical Arts in Vocal Performance at Louisiana State University. During her course work, Ms. Redding served as a graduate assistant and was later appointed adjunct professor of voice.

Ms. Redding, coloratura soprano, most recently appeared to rave reviews with Chautauqua Opera as Lisette in *La Rondine*, Rosina (*Il Barbiere di Siviglia*) with Opera Southwest, Lauretta (*Gianni Schicchi*) and Sister Genevieve (*Suor Angelica*) with Des Moines Metro Opera, and Augusta Opera as Laurey in *Oklahoma!* Other successes include Redding's performances as Norina (*Don Pasquale*) with Opera Southwest and The Natchez Opera Festival. Ms. Redding's additional roles include the title role of Douglas Moore's *The Ballad of Baby Doe*, Zerbinetta (*Ariadne auf Naxos*), and Nanetta in Verdi's *Falstaff*.

Ms. Redding has been a National Finalist in the National Association of Teachers of Singing Artist Awards (NATSAA), Regional Winner in the Metropolitan Opera Council Auditions and was the winner of the George S. Olive Award in the National Finals of the MacAllister Competition (Professional Division). She is the recipient of a Shoshana Award

(Richard F. Gold Career Grant) from Des Moines Metro Opera, as well as a Louisiana Arts Fellowship. In recent concert appearances she sang the soprano solos for the Baton Rouge Symphony's presentation of Mozart's *Requiem* and the role of Miss Silverpeal in Mozart's *The Impresario* with the Jacksonville Symphony.

Upcoming engagements include a concert with The National Symphony Orchestra (Kennedy Center), Rosina (*Il Barbiere di Siviglia*) with Virginia Opera, Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*) with New Orleans Opera, Gilda (*Rigoletto*) with Nevada Opera and Pensacola Opera and Cunegonda (*Candide*) with Des Moines Metro Opera.