A performer's guide to Jake Heggie's "The Deepest Desire: Four Meditations on Love"

Alanna Keenan
Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College

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A PERFORMER’S GUIDE TO JAKE HEGGIE’S
THE DEEPEST DESIRE: FOUR MEDITATIONS ON LOVE

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
Doctor of Musical Arts

in

The School of Music

by
Alanna Keenan
B.M., Simpson College, 2002
M.M., Louisiana State University, 2004
May 2009
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank the chair of my committee, Dr. Lori Bade. Since my arrival at LSU, you have supported, encouraged, and promoted my development as a singer and teacher. For that, I am truly grateful. Thank you for your help through this final part of my degree work. I would also like to thank Dr. Alison McFarland, Dr. Loraine Sims, Professor Patricia O’Neill, and Professor Robert Grayson, for not only being members of my committee, but acting as both mentors and advocates. Your support of me has been paramount in my successes both at LSU and in my professional life. Thank you to Professor Loren Schwerd for acting as the Dean’s representative on my committee.

I would like to thank Jake Heggie. This project would not have been possible without you. Thank you for being so generous and gracious with your time.

Finally, I wish to thank my family and friends. Thank you to my parents, Dan and Reed, for believing in me when my confidence failed. Your love and support have meant everything to me. Thank you to my siblings, Megan and Brendan, for listening, editing, and supporting my endeavors. To my friends, thank you for encouraging me when I felt discouraged, supporting me when I panicked, and prodding me when I became complacent. I could not have done this, nor would I want to have done this, without any of you.
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ABSTRACT

American composer Jake Heggie (b. 1961) gained recognition in 2000 with the premiere of his first opera Dead Man Walking. The success of this musical composition led to subsequent commissions from opera companies across the United States. In 2007, Heggie’s most recent opera, Four Decembers, premiered at the Houston Grand Opera. Heggie is currently working on another opera, Moby Dick, for the Dallas Opera and it is scheduled to premiere in 2010. Although much attention has been given to his operatic compositions, Heggie has also achieved critical success for his songs and song cycles. In 2002, Heggie’s song cycle The Deepest Desire premiered in Vail, Colorado. This song cycle, using texts of Helen Prejean, was Heggie’s first cycle following Dead Man Walking and will be the focus of the written document and lecture recital. The document will examine in detail the four songs comprising the cycle and give performance suggestions.

The written document contains four chapters. Chapter One provides biographical information on Jake Heggie. Chapter Two gives biographical information on Helen Prejean, CSJ, and examines the professional relationship between Heggie and Prejean. Chapter Three provides information about the premiere and recordings of The Deepest Desire. Chapter Four looks in detail at the songs comprising the cycle as a guide for the performer. A Bibliography and Appendices will be included to provide more information on Jake Heggie, Helen Prejean, and The Deepest Desire.

KEYWORDS: Helen Prejean, song cycle
INTRODUCTION

American composer Jake Heggie (b. 1961) gained recognition in 2000 with the premiere of his first opera *Dead Man Walking*. The success of this musical composition led to subsequent commissions from opera companies across the United States. In 2007, Heggie’s most recent opera, *Four Decembers*, premiered at the Houston Grand Opera. Heggie is currently working on another opera, *Moby Dick*, for the Dallas Opera and it is scheduled to premiere in 2010. Although much attention has been given to his operatic compositions, Heggie has also achieved critical success for his songs and song cycles. My interest in the music of Jake Heggie developed during my senior year while at Simpson College when I heard his songs performed on the album *The Faces of Love*. This interest increased during the summer of 2002 when I had the opportunity to attend a performance of selected operatic scenes from *Dead Man Walking* with the Des Moines Metro Opera. I was struck by the lyric quality of the melodic lines and the surprising harmonies that accompanied them. During the process of searching for a topic for my doctoral project, I found myself continually returning to the songs of Heggie. Through my research, I narrowed my topic to Heggie’s 2002 cycle, *The Deepest Desire*. The purpose of this project will be to examine in detail the four movements comprising *The Deepest Desire* and offer performance suggestions. Chapter one will cover Jake Heggie’s biography and compositions, including a discussion regarding important premieres as well as critical reception. The remainder of the chapter will focus on an examination of influential colleagues and teachers of Heggie. Stylistic influences, both classical and popular cited by the composer, will be included. A discussion of Heggie’s own compositional process will conclude the chapter. Chapter two will focus on the author of the text for Heggie’s song cycle, Sr. Helen Prejean, CSJ. A biography of Prejean will begin the chapter, with emphasis and attention given to Prejean’s life as a
member of the Sisters of St. Joseph and her work as a social justice activist. Prejean’s
collaboration with Heggie on Dead Man Walking and The Deepest Desire as well as her reaction
to these works will conclude the chapter. The third chapter will discuss details regarding the
commission, premiere, and public reception of The Deepest Desire. The final chapter will
provide a performer’s guide to The Deepest Desire. Each of the songs will be examined
separately and incorporate Heggie’s opinions regarding interpretation. The following elements
will be examined in each song: 1) melody – range and tessitura; 2) text setting – the relationship
between text and music; 3) ensemble – the relationship between voice, piano, and flute; 4)
thematic elements – motives which link songs; 5) stylistic elements – changes in dynamics,
tempo, and articulation suggested by the score and composer; 6) practical suggestions –
highlighting difficult vocal passages. Appendices will be included to provide additional
information on The Deepest Desire as well as the vocal works of Jake Heggie.
CHAPTER 1
JAKE HEGGIE, COMPOSER

Biographical Information

In the 2001 documentary, And Then One Night: the Making of Dead Man Walking, American composer Jake Heggie cites his duty to understand the characters of his work. “And so my responsibility as the composer is to find the music that that person [the character] would sing. Not the music that I necessarily want them to sing but the music that honestly I believe they would sing.”¹ In his attempt to create authentic characters, Heggie utilizes an eclectic style which has received from critics both praise and criticism. Influences of jazz, pop, and gospel mix frequently and unapologetically in his work. However, the use of popular styles cannot be attributed solely to character. Heggie’s music is a product of its environment; shaped by the people and events of his life.

John “Jake” Heggie was born on March 31, 1961 in West Palm Beach, Florida, to John and Judy Heggie. Both of Heggie’s parents worked in the medical field, his father as an army doctor and his mother as a nurse. Professional demands resulted in several moves during Heggie’s early childhood. After a brief relocation to California when Heggie was two, the family settled in Bexley, Ohio, a suburb of Columbus.²

Heggie’s interest in music stemmed from his father, an amateur saxophonist.³ Heggie started piano lessons at the age of six. He demonstrated remarkable adeptness and by the age of

³ Ibid.
twelve, he had performed with the Columbus Symphony. Not satisfied with his piano literature assignments, Heggie started composing his own works when he was only eleven. These early attempts featured more bravura than substance. “I was impressed with making lots of noise with lots of notes. I spent all my extra money from my paper route buying scores, records and especially music paper.”

While in high school, Heggie’s family moved from Ohio to Martinez, California. Unfortunately, the music scene was not as active as there. “I came from a school where there were two orchestras, two bands, a choir, an opera and musicals. Pleasant Hill was culturally deprived. They had a marching band and a jazz band. I wound up playing the Grieg piano concerto with a band arrangement.” Despite the poor musical environment, Heggie continued studying piano and writing music. "Back then, I wrote mostly because I was impressed with myself. . . . I was playing the piano a lot, and I'd been very turned on by showpieces and the music of Liszt. I was writing music with gazillions of notes."

Heggie’s focus on composition became more focused midway through high school. Although only sixteen, he began studying composition with Ernst Bacon.

There was a group called Performing Arts Society and it was mostly these aspiring composers. Most of them were women in their forties, fifties, sixties and once a month they’d go to Ernst Bacon and show him what they were working on and he’d do a sort of a class lesson. So I tagged along a couple times and I liked

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6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
him so much and what he had to say that I asked if I could study privately with him and he said yes.\(^9\)

For Heggie, Bacon “opened the door to what music could be.”\(^{10}\) Through Bacon’s guidance and influence, Heggie first explored song composition and text setting. “He [Bacon] introduced me to the poems of Emily Dickinson and the joys of setting text… That’s where it all started for me, really.”\(^{11}\)

After graduating from high school he decided to move to Paris to study piano rather than opting to attend a local university. Heggie admits that he was attracted to “the whole romance of Paris, especially since I was so into solo repertoire then. And with Chopin, and Liszt, and all those people who spent so much of their time in Paris in that period, I wanted to be there.”\(^{12}\) After two years in Paris, Heggie returned to the United States to pursue an undergraduate degree.

In the fall of 1981, Heggie enrolled at the University of California at Los Angeles. Heggie chose to study at UCLA specifically to work with Johana Harris.\(^{13}\) Harris, the widow of composer Roy Harris, served as Heggie’s piano teacher. Her instruction, however, reached beyond performance practice and technique. Although not his official composition instructor,\(^{14}\) Harris mentored Heggie during his studies at UCLA. To this day, Heggie credits her as, “[the] most influential of anyone be it composition, piano, anything.”\(^{15}\) In Heggie’s opinion, her influence on his compositional style was profound. “She [Harris] helped me find my voice . . . . and she introduced me to a lot of the phrasing I use and taught me how to free and find the

\(^9\) Heggie, interview.
\(^{10}\) Tom Savage, “High Scorers: Jake Heggie,” *Opera News* (January 2000), 12.
\(^{11}\) Mermelstein, 54.
\(^{13}\) Ibid.
\(^{15}\) Heggie, interview.
natural line in the music that speaks to the emotions.”

Harris’ impact was on helping Heggie find meaning in his compositions.

Her thing was within terms of harmonic, rhythmic musical language just to not feel that I needed to write in a certain style but write what was meaningful to me. Definitely to explore all permutations of what that might mean. So if I wrote a piece and I wrote a chord: what if I harmonized it differently? What if I did that? What spoke to me, you know, as meaningful? So it wasn’t just an exercise like so much of the composition study was. It was really about being creative and trusting intuition and inspiration. She really encouraged whatever was in there to blossom in addition to all the technical study and all that to really find a musical soul and purpose of the music… There was a human connection – it wasn’t just a cerebral exercise.

Heggie’s relationship with Harris evolved from student and teacher to something deeper. The two married in 1982 when Heggie was twenty-one and Harris was seventy. Heggie acknowledges the controversial age difference. “It raised eyebrows [but] people who knew us understood completely.” He explains the relationship simply: “We just complemented each other so well. There was such a strong spiritual connection. She was my best friend.”

Following Heggie’s graduation from UCLA in 1984, the two performed together frequently in concerts of chamber music throughout the United States. During this interval, Heggie’s compositions focused on chamber music, more specifically music for duo pianos which he and Harris performed in concerts. A hand injury in 1989, later diagnosed as focal dystonia, ended Heggie’s performance career. Not long after, Heggie’s wife was diagnosed with cancer. The

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16 Robins.
17 Heggie, interview.
18 Savage, 12.
19 Blumenthal, Arts.
20 Mermelstein, 54.
21 Heggie, interview.
22 Dystonia Medical Research Foundation, http://www.dystonia-foundation.org/pages/focal_hand_dystonia/57.php. Focal dystonia is a neurological disorder affecting the muscular control of the hand. Over time, a musician experiencing focal dystonia will find increasing difficulty playing his/her instrument and may notice a curling under of the fingers of the dominant hand.
emotional weight of both diagnoses effectively crippled Heggie’s creativity and he stopped composing altogether.  

In 1993, Heggie and Harris decided that he needed to leave Los Angeles and start over in San Francisco. For Heggie, the decision was difficult due to his wife’s illness, but he recognized its necessity.

The move was important for so many reasons. First, I needed to start living my own life as a gay man, and Johana recognized and supported that. We always remained very close and the best of friends, and she was more than understanding. I was feeling stifled professionally and personally in Los Angeles and knew I had to start over in a new place -- but not so far away that I couldn't be near her or see her often. I also felt that if I was going to have a chance at pursuing a musical career, it would be much more likely in San Francisco. The cultural climate and the support for the arts are tremendous here. It turned out to be the right choice on all levels.

Heggie also began working with a physical therapist to help him correct his hand injury.

To support himself financially, Heggie took a job working in the public relations department for San Francisco Opera.  

Heggie’s position at San Francisco Opera proved to be very fortuitous indeed. During San Francisco Opera’s 1994 production of The Dangerous Liaisons (Conrad Susa), he met Frederica von Stade. As a gift, Heggie presented her with some folk song arrangements. Impressed by the style, von Stade became one of Heggie’s biggest advocates and began programming his works in her recitals. When Heggie entered an art song contest in 1995, von

25 Savage, 12.
26 Ibid.
Stade made the recording. Heggie won the competition, sponsored by G. Schirmer, with his setting of Emily Dickinson’s poem, “If you were coming in the Fall.”

As news of Heggie’s win and compositional talents spread throughout the opera company, many high profile singers, including Renee Fleming and Brian Asawa, approached Heggie for new compositions. The interest in his songs took Heggie aback. “The surprise to me was that then and later when I got out of the academic world and in the professional world was that all these singers were always looking for new material that really spoke to them and that was meaningful that they could use. I was really surprised – all the literature is so rich already.” In 1998, Jennifer Larmore recorded five of his songs for release on her album, *My Native Land*. The following year, BMG Classics produced a collection of Heggie’s songs. The album, *The Faces of Love*, showcased Heggie at the piano with several prominent singers including Renee Fleming, Carol Vaness, and Brian Asawa.

In 1996, Heggie received a commission from San Francisco Opera to compose an opera for the 2000-01 season. The commission was both a shock and a challenge to Heggie who had never composed in that genre before. Heggie admits that “They [San Francisco Opera] took a risk on me, and I took a risk, too, by jumping into such a big project. I knew I had the drama for an opera in my music, but I never realized I could do it on such a large tableau.” Working with playwright and first time librettist, Terrence McNally, Heggie decided on an adaptation of Helen Prejean’s book *Dead Man Walking*. In 1998, San Francisco officially announced the premiere.

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27 Robins.
28 Savage, 12-13.
29 Heggie, interview.
30 Jake Heggie, “Jake Heggie Official Website.” Available from http://www.jakeheggie.com Internet. For a complete discography see Appendix B.
and named Heggie as the Chase Bank Composer-in-Residence for San Francisco Opera.\textsuperscript{32} Since its premiere in October of 2000, \textit{Dead Man Walking} has been produced by eighteen different opera companies and universities across the world.\textsuperscript{33}

The commission and subsequent success of \textit{Dead Man Walking} allowed Heggie to focus solely on composition. From 2000 – 2002, he served as composer-in-residence for Eos Chamber Orchestra in New York. Following this appointment, Heggie spent the summer of 2002 at the Vail Valley Music Festival where \textit{The Deepest Desire} premiered. From there, Heggie’s attention returned to opera. In 2004, \textit{The End of the Affair}, based on the novel by Graham Greene, opened in Houston. \textit{To Hell and Back}, a one-act retelling of the Persephone myth, premiered in 2006. Heggie’s most recent opera, \textit{Three Decembers} (originally titled \textit{Last Acts}) debuted in Houston in February of 2008.\textsuperscript{34} A commission from Dallas Opera for \textit{Moby Dick} is set to open during the 2009-10 season.\textsuperscript{35}

Heggie currently resides in San Francisco, California, with his partner Curt Branom.\textsuperscript{36}

\textbf{Stylistic Overview}

Although primarily known for his vocal works, Jake Heggie has composed in a variety of different genres. Currently his compositions for voice include four full-length operas, three shorter “operatic scenes,” eight works for chorus, and more than two-hundred songs.\textsuperscript{37} Although not as numerous, works for orchestra, chamber ensembles, and solo piano add to Heggie’s

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{35} Blumenthal.
\textsuperscript{36} Zinko.
\textsuperscript{37} See Appendix C of this document for complete song list.
This examination of Heggie’s catalogue reveals an affinity towards vocal compositions, which Heggie explains simply: “The voice still takes my breath away. It is the most expressive, most magical instrument ever. The inspiration comes from the voice. It brings tears to my eyes when I hear a great voice. And I love American English, too. It's a very expressive language.”

Despite his success in the realm of opera, it is to the song and, more specifically, the song cycle that Heggie so often returns. Currently, Heggie has written thirteen cycles specifically for female voices and six cycles for male voices. His use of texts varies from deceased authors such as Emily Dickinson, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Vachel Lindsay, and Rainer Rilke to contemporary writers like Helen Prejean, Terrence McNally, and Maya Angelou. Heggie also incorporates his own texts into his works. His poetry opens the soprano song cycle Songs and Sonnets to Ophelia and closes the cycle for mezzo-soprano, On the Road to Christmas.

The art of song and song cycle composition permeates Heggie’s entire output and spans the bulk of his compositional career. He notes what draws him back to the genre:

I love songs. I’m a songwriter by heart and by nature so that’s why I keep going back to it. It’s the kind of texts that I’m drawn to that there seem to be recurring themes as I get older and I set more texts I realize what it is that draws me in. The song and the song cycle is a great form to explore all that stuff but it’s the text that keeps drawing me back more than anything. And [it’s] the same with writing opera. It’s that theatrical impulse – that sense of journey and transformation and development that I think is fascinating within the words and the text but the music can take to another level.
Characterizing Heggie’s compositional style for the voice can be difficult. Anthony Tommasini, music critic for the *New York Times*, labels his songs neo-Romantic,\(^{42}\) noting that “his [Heggie’s] harmonic language, rooted in tonality, is spiked with astringent bits of dissonance and enriched with murky Impressionistic colors.”\(^{43}\) Tommasini, like other critics, finds influences of popular music in Heggie’s songs. In the foreword to his three volume song collection, *The Faces of Love*, Heggie notes the role popular music plays in his work. “In these songs, the singer encounters the full gamut of the influences I grew up with: folk music, jazz, pop, opera, rock, art song. I encourage performers to embrace these elements in the songs and not shy away from them. If it feels jazzy, well, it probably is.”\(^{44}\) The use of multiple popular styles within the framework of a more classical genre frustrates some critics. John Boyer, critic for the *American Record Guide*, addresses this in his review of Heggie’s songs.

He's clearly a multi-talented man, but his eclecticism is a problem. . . . Bernstein could write for the Broadway stage and the concert hall with equal facility, but he knew how to keep those talents separate. Heggie doesn't. We are left with an eclectic hybrid that stubbornly defies classification.\(^{45}\)

For his part, Heggie notes two tendencies in his style. He states “I think of it [my music] as lyrical. I always think of myself as a theater composer. So to me, everything I write is in service to a drama of some kind, whether it’s an internal, psychological drama or physical drama. It’s lyrical and theatrical.”\(^{46}\) Heggie’s description of his work as lyrical is perhaps the most accurate. The salient feature of his compositions is an emphasis on melody, which he considers


\(^{44}\) Jake Heggie. *The Faces of Love*. Foreword


\(^{46}\) Heggie, interview.
to be the fundamental part of his songs.\textsuperscript{47} This emphasis on melody is one of the most often cited elements of Heggie’s style. Writing for the \textit{Houston Chronicle}, Charles Ward notes that "Jake [Heggie] is at his best - and most honest - when he's writing real lyricism. Jake is a melodist."\textsuperscript{48}

Heggie’s melodies, often lyric and fluid, are noted for their accessibility in terms of range and contour. Indeed many critics point out his uncanny ability to write melodies that highlight the voice and hide flaws. \textit{Los Angeles Times} music critic, David Mermelstein notes that Heggie’s songs “possess a remarkable sing-ability for performers.”\textsuperscript{49} Heggie’s understanding of the human voice and its capabilities comes from a variety of sources.

I accompanied a lot; I learned a lot of vocal repertoire. I was playing piano all the time accompanying singers, accompanying choruses. I grew up loving listening to vocal music. It all sort of went in there I guess. As I was writing, luckily, I worked with singers who were very collaborative and they would tell me “that doesn’t really work – this works better.” I still do that to this day. I always check things with the singers and make sure I’m doing it in the right way.\textsuperscript{50}

His ability to write well for the voice is perhaps what draws so many high profile singers to his work. Mezzo-soprano Jennifer Larmore notes that Heggie’s songs "get right to the point--they are terrific to sing… Sometimes modern song composers try too hard. Jake doesn't have to try; he's a natural."\textsuperscript{51}

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\textsuperscript{47} Carolyn Redman, “\textit{Songs to the Moon: A Song Cycle by Jake Heggie}” (D.M.A. document, the Ohio State University, 2004), 10.
\textsuperscript{49} Mermelstein, 54. Other critics note this ability too. In his review of \textit{Dead Man Walking}, music critic for the \textit{New York Times}, Bernard Holland rather crudely describes Heggie as a “proficient flatterer of the voice with a real knack for hitting for hitting its G spot.”
\textsuperscript{50} Heggie, interview.
\textsuperscript{51} Mermelstein, 54.
\end{flushright}
Compositional Process

When beginning a new work, Heggie does not start at the piano. Rather he begins with the text. In an interview from 1999, Heggie points to the importance of understanding the nuance of the text and poetry before composing. “I think you have to look between the lines and behind the lines and think about the character who’s talking. Who are they? What’s their frame of mind? . . . All of those things count. I don’t know how it happens or why, but suddenly a poem will just start singing to me.”

Today, however, Heggie admits it is not so much the text but the theme that comes first. The situation, the drama, the particular point in time when something is happening or is about to happen that’s what inspires me. Really it’s a matter of my living with that thought and that space and the words for as long as I feel necessary. And then I just get a sense of when it’s time to start writing things down. This is sort of an internal clock; there really isn’t a process…

Before he starts writing, Heggie already has an idea of where the piece is headed. To do this, he finds it important to have several things in place.

I need to know where I’m going dramatically. I have to have a basic sense of what the shape of the piece is going to be – the architecture: who it’s being written for, what forces, all of that has to be in my head. I guess I just need to dwell on that and the journey, the different threads of the journey that the piece is about.

From there Heggie states that “things just start happening and coming together. I write very organically. I usually just write the beginning and go. And if things develop, they develop very naturally. It’s with this sense of shape and direction and architecture in my head that I write.”

52 Chonin.
53 Heggie, interview.
54 Ibid.
55 Ibid.
CHAPTER 2
HELEN PREJEAN, CSJ

Biographical Information

In her audio essay for National Public Radio, Sr. Helen Prejean states, “Belief and faith are not just words. It’s one thing for me to say I’m a Christian, but I have to embody what it means; I have to live it… The only way I know what I really believe is by keeping watch over what I do.” Prejean, a woman who has spent over twenty years ministering to the poor and imprisoned, feels compelled by her faith to speak out on perceived injustice. Prejean’s work to end capital punishment has resulted in two books, countless articles and speaking engagements, not to mention a movie and an opera depicting her work on death row. From these actions, it may be easy to make the assumption that Prejean has always campaigned tirelessly for human rights. However, this is not the case. By her own humble admission, Prejean was content with her quiet, prayerful life. Acquaintances and chance meetings propelled her forward and pointed her on the path towards social justice.

Helen Prejean was born on April 21, 1939, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. From an early age, she felt drawn to faith and service to God.

I remember the mystery in the mass—the silence, prayer, music, incense, candles, the big vaulted church, and the saints in the stained-glass windows. It gave me a sense of this invisible presence—that God was somehow with me and the most important thing was to do God’s will, to hear that voice and follow it. That's been with me my whole life. Prejean attended high school at St. Joseph Academy in Baton Rouge, an all-girls school run by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Medaille. In 1957 at the age of eighteen, Prejean made the

decision to join the order of nuns who had overseen her education.\textsuperscript{58} “I had this thought that there was another way of loving people besides marrying and having a family, and I saw that the sisters did that. By the time I was a senior in high school, I knew that was what I wanted to do.”\textsuperscript{59}

After receiving a B.A. in English from St. Mary’s Dominican College in New Orleans, Louisiana, Prejean worked as an educator in junior and senior high schools.\textsuperscript{60} Prejean returned to academia and received a M.A. in Religious Education from St. Paul’s University in Ottawa, Canada. In addition to her teaching duties, Prejean also served her religious community as Formation Director.\textsuperscript{61}

Prejean’s call to work on behalf of the indigent and imprisoned was not something she immediately understood or even wanted.

In 1980 my religious community, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Medaille, had made a commitment to ‘stand on the side of the poor,’ and I had assented, but reluctantly. I resisted this recasting of the faith of my childhood, where what counted was a personal relationship with God, inner peace, kindness to others, and heaven when this life was done. I didn’t want to struggle with politics and economics. We’re nuns, after all, not social workers, and some realities in life were, for better or worse, rather fixed – like the gap between rich and poor…\textsuperscript{62}

Despite the change in focus of her sisterhood, Prejean still resisted the call to social justice. At a nationwide gathering of her order in Terre Haute, Indiana, Prejean experienced a change of heart. At this meeting, Prejean felt a call to delve deeper into service. “Something in me must have been building toward this moment because there was a flash and I realized that my spiritual life had been too ethereal, too disconnected. I left the meeting and began seeking out


\textsuperscript{59} Pennington.

\textsuperscript{60} Helen Prejean, CSJ “Official Website: Helen Prejean” Available from http://www.prejean.org/ Internet; accessed 15 November 2007.

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{62} Helen Prejean, CSJ, Dead Man Walking, (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1994), 5.
the poor.”

In 1981, Prejean, as well as other sisters of her community, uprooted her comfortable life and moved into the housing projects of St. Thomas in New Orleans, Louisiana. In the opening paragraph of *Dead Man Walking*, Prejean describes St. Thomas as “Not death row exactly, but close. Death is rampant here – from guns, disease, addiction.” The bleakness Prejean describes is even more glaring when one looks at the demographics of St. Thomas. Drawing on data from the Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO), economist Brod Bagert paints this picture of St. Thomas.

Of the 2785 people who lived in the St. Thomas Housing Development in New Orleans before it was demolished for redevelopment in 2000, all were poor… Average household income was under $5,000 per year and had been steady, in nominal dollars, for the previous two decades; adjusted for inflation, it had been steadily dropping… The population density of the development was over 400% higher than that of the surrounding neighborhood. Most of the nearby through-streets came to a dead-end at St. Thomas. The rate of violent crime in the complex was 722% higher than that for the city as a whole, in a city that topped national statistics for violent crime per capita. 80% of housing units on site failed national standards of physical deterioration… 99.6% of St. Thomas residents were black.

In these environs, Prejean and her sisters began their ministry to the poor working at the Hope House.

Moving to St. Thomas was a new experience for Prejean. “I had never immersed myself in a situation where people were struggling so hard against so many odds. St. Thomas brought me to this level of humanness with people, to a deep point of solidarity and compassion and

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63 Ibid., 6.  
65 Prejean, *Dead Man Walking*, 3.  
The violence and poverty of St. Thomas deeply affected Prejean. Rather than becoming desensitized, Prejean felt a call to action. “I saw the suffering and I let myself feel it: the sound of gunshots in the night, mothers calling out for their children. I saw the injustice and was compelled to do something about it.” In St. Thomas, Prejean noticed changes within herself and her spiritual life. “In some mysterious way my living and working in St. Thomas is paring me down to essentials and liberating my spirit… even the way I pray is changing. Before, I had asked God to right the wrongs and comfort the suffering. Now I know – really know – that God entrusts those tasks to us.”

In January of 1982 while at the Hope House, Prejean received a request to serve as pen pal to a death row inmate at Angola. Although warned not to expect a response, Prejean sent a letter to Elmo Patrick Sonnier. Sonnier, convicted of killing two teenagers, did respond. The two maintained a correspondence and Sonnier eventually asked Prejean to serve as his spiritual advisor. In the months that followed, Prejean visited Sonnier multiple times at Angola. Not wanting to see Sonnier executed, Prejean immersed herself in the politics of the Louisiana judicial system. Her attempts ultimately proved unsuccessful. On April 4, 1984, Sonnier was executed via the electric chair.

As Sonnier’s spiritual advisor, Prejean not only counseled him, she witnessed his execution. The experience spurred her to action. “In this experience with Patrick Sonnier – where first I wrote him, visited him, and then watched him die – I came out rebaptized. I had watched a man's death right in front of my eyes. I knew I was one of the few people in this

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68 Pennington.
69 Prejean, “Living My Prayer.”
70 Prejean, Dead Man Walking, 10-11.
71 Ibid., 3.
73 Prejean, Dead Man Walking, 90.
country who had really seen this thing close up. It's a secret ritual done at midnight. People don't see it. All they have is the political rhetoric. It was a tremendous mantle of responsibility placed on my shoulders – to speak out.”

In the years following Sonnier’s execution, Prejean continued to serve as spiritual advisor to death row inmates. As of 2008, Prejean has been present for five other executions. Since Sonnier’s death, Prejean has worked as an active and outspoken opponent of the death penalty. This work has led to her service on the boards of the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty and the Moratorium Campaign.

In addition to numerous articles, Prejean’s work has resulted in two books, Dead Man Walking: An Eyewitness Account of the Death Penalty in the United States (1993) and The Death of Innocents (2004). Dead Man Walking received much critical acclaim and was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. The commercial success of the book, however, did not come until 1996 when it was made into a major motion picture starring Susan Sarandon and Sean Penn. In 2000, Dead Man Walking became the subject of an opera by Jake Heggie for San Francisco Opera.

In addition to her writing, Prejean maintains an active lecturing and touring schedule. Currently, Prejean resides in New Orleans, Louisiana.

74 Pennington.
75 Prejean, “Living My Prayer.”
77 “An Angel on Death Row” Front Line Show #1414 Transcript 9 April 1996. “In the three years before the movie of Dead Man Walking, her book had sold 35,000 copies. In the first three months since the movie opened, it has sold more than 300,000, sky-rocketing to the top of The New York Times best-seller list.”
Prejean and Heggie's Collaboration

In the program notes to *Dead Man Walking*, Jake Heggie explains the lure of creating a character like Helen Prejean. “Why is Sr. Helen such an operatic character? Against the enormous background of the prison system, death row, and a man convicted of a monstrous crime, there is this one small woman and her faith: her belief in the individual dignity of every person on this earth.”

Although not officially involved in the adaptation of *Dead Man Walking* for the operatic stage, Prejean did help Heggie get a sense of the character. “She was very helpful to me. Also because I was able to write knowing who the title character really is. You get this preconceived notion of what a nun is going to be like. And you don’t realize that she is just this great person…”


Heggie finds himself continually inspired by her faith. “Helen had such a powerful impact on me. She’s just like nobody else in the world, really a remarkable person. She has this fire burning in her all the time.” Heggie continues to find meaning in Prejean’s story and person. “I really responded to her energy and to her message… about the human heart and the

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82 Ibid.
human spirit. It’s something I love exploring through music. I find it resonates very strongly with me. So I look forward to doing more.”

CHAPTER 3
OVERVIEW OF THE DEEPEST DESIRE

Commission and Premiere

From conception to first performance, *Dead Man Walking* was nearly a five year project for Jake Heggie. Although not officially involved in the creative process, Helen Prejean stayed in close contact with Heggie during the five year period and attended, in October 2000, the premiere in San Francisco. Following the successful premiere, Heggie had what he described as “an amazing car ride [with Prejean].”\(^{85}\) In the program notes to *The Deepest Desire*, Heggie writes: “I was driving Sister Helen to the airport… and out of curiosity, I asked about her own sense of what ‘spirituality’ means… She answered that at one point in her life she’d had to throw away all the ‘stuff’ she’d been told she needs, the ‘stuff’ she’d been told she *must* have, *must* pursue, *must* obtain. She went to the deepest waters of her being, and it was there she found the core of her spirituality: the deepest desire of her heart.”\(^{86}\)

The phrase “the deepest desire” resonated with Heggie. “The deepest desire? These words from a nun… I knew there was a wellspring of poetry possible here. I asked immediately if she would consider writing down what it was like to get to that place – finding that deep desire – so that I could set these thoughts to music.”\(^{87}\) Prejean sent Heggie six separate meditations on faith and love. With her permission, Heggie arranged and modified the texts to suit his dramatic impulse.\(^{88}\) From Prejean’s texts, Heggie developed and pared down the texts for four songs. “I had to write what really spoke to me. In a couple of them there was repetition of thought from others. It was really consolidating and getting the essence of what she was saying in each one of

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\(^{85}\) Heggie, interview.  
\(^{86}\) Jake Heggie, program notes from *The Deepest Desire*.  
\(^{87}\) Ibid.  
\(^{88}\) Ibid.
those. A couple of them were very long too.”

In addition, Heggie incorporated text from one of Prejean’s stories. “‘I Catch on Fire’ wasn’t even part of the original. That was something she told... I sort of wrote it down while she was telling it to me. And I took excerpts from it.”

The cycle began to take shape in 2002. “[Eugenia] Zukerman had done a piece on Dead Man Walking for CBS Sunday Morning. She’s in charge of the Vail Valley Music Festival. I was walking with her and she asked me if I would like to write something and be their composer in residence. And I said, ‘Sure! How about if I write something for Susan Graham because we’ve had such a good time [doing Dead Man Walking].’” Heggie then remembered his car ride with Sr. Prejean and thought the Vail commission would be a good place to premiere the work. Heggie had not considered another instrument for the cycle until his conversation with Zukerman. “I hadn’t thought about an obbligato instrument, it just came to me when I was talking to Genie [Zukerman]. So I said, ‘How about you, me, and Susie [Graham] - and we do something about Sr. Helen writes about her internal journey?’ And she [Zukerman] loved that idea.”

For Heggie the writing of The Deepest Desire was a relatively quick process, taking only April of 2002 to complete. From his original draft to the premiere there were few changes. “I thought I had finished the whole thing and I knew I needed to send it off because we were premiering it in July. I was sending it off to my copyist and I just suddenly had this different thought about ‘Primary Colors.’ I remember I rewrote half a dozen measures right before I went

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89 Heggie, interview.
80 Ibid. Prejean briefly recounts this story in Dead Man Walking. “Actually for me, discarding the habit probably increased my life expectancy. As a student teacher my veil had caught on fire from a candle during a prayer service and I had almost gone up in smoke before my wide-eyed class.”
81 Ibid.
82 Ibid.
83 Jake Heggie, program notes from The Deepest Desire.
to the post office. But it was the right thing to do. It turned out exactly the way I wanted it to."\(^{94}\)

Once *The Deepest Desire* was sent to the copyist, however, no further changes to the score were made.\(^{95}\)

In July of 2002, *The Deepest Desire* premiered at the Bravo! Vail Valley Music Festival with Susan Graham, mezzo-soprano; Eugenia Zukerman, flute; and Jake Heggie, piano. Apart from a “couple little corners,”\(^{96}\) Heggie found the work fairly easy to put together. “We rehearsed it twice and did the premiere.”\(^{97}\) After its premiere, Heggie reworked *The Deepest Desire* for other venues and instruments. In 2005, the cycle was orchestrated by Heggie for a performance by Joyce DiDonato with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra.\(^{98}\) In 2008, Heggie changed the obbligato instrument to a violin for a performance at Vanderbilt University.\(^{99}\)

*The Deepest Desire* has been issued twice on recording. In November of 2005, Joyce DiDonato included the cycle on her recording, *The Deepest Desire*, with Frances Shelly, flute, and David Zobel, piano. In 2007, Heggie included the cycle on his recording *Flesh and Stone: the Songs of Jake Heggie* with Zheng Cao, mezzo-soprano, and Eugenia Zukerman, flute.\(^{100}\)

\(^{94}\) Heggie, interview.
\(^{95}\) Ibid.
\(^{96}\) Ibid.
\(^{97}\) Ibid.
\(^{99}\) Heggie, interview.
CHAPTER 4
PERFORMANCE GUIDE TO THE DEEPEST DESIRE

Overview

Following the success of *Dead Man Walking*, Heggie’s first important vocal work was *The Deepest Desire*. In interviews, Heggie cites this work as being significant in his compositional development. “It was a really pivotal piece for me and I still draw on ideas that I developed with *Deepest Desire*. It was the first big cycle after *Dead Man Walking* and I got to bring so much to it that I had never thought about or employed in song.”

Heggie also acknowledges the cycle’s role in developing his harmonic language. “In those two pieces [*Deepest Desire* and the cello concerto, *Holy the Firm*], I developed a language that was new for me. I explored rangy-type things and I started solidifying my own language and voice as a composer, which felt very good.”

While *The Deepest Desire* helped solidify Heggie’s compositional techniques and devices, a large debt of this discovery is owed to his opera *Dead Man Walking*. Heggie himself acknowledges the influential nature of that work. “I learned that you can say a lot with very little. I learned the value of melodic and rhythmic gestures that repeat in different dynamics—leitmotifs, you could say, but beyond that gestures that might be just a drop in the pond, but the ripple effect is strong. I learned that it is important for the characters to each have a musical language that defines them so they are recognizable immediately…”

The idea of small gestures creating a larger ripple is one that Heggie played with in *The Deepest Desire*. In the cycle, Heggie sets four separate meditations on faith and love for voice,

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101 Heggie, interview.
103 Ibid.
flute, and piano. He connects the cycle through the use of a three-note motive: a falling major third resolving up a minor third. Heggie spells the motive enharmonically throughout the work as shown in Example 1.  

![Example 1: Prelude, m. 1](image)

This three-note motive permeates the entire work in all instruments. The idea of using a motive to connect the piece was not deliberate on Heggie’s part. 

> It just came to me. I literally sat down to start the piece writing and it just happened. The whole prelude just happened. The whole piece just developed from there. But again, I had the text and I already had a sense of what was going on and where I was going. And for me it’s a matter of trusting that the different materials that are coming to me I’ll be able to develop and use in different ways. I sort of explored that to the extreme with that three note motif in the cycle.

Heggie also notes that the motive is altered and developed throughout the entire cycle. “It’s in every permutation that you could possibly imagine, I think. And yet it’s very obscured…” Its continual presence reveals two important things: time and understanding.

The concept of time is especially important when preparing *The Deepest Desire*. Heggie uses the texts of Helen Prejean and explores her evolution from a simple nun to forceful activist. Although most of Prejean’s texts imply a story being recounted, Heggie creates three distinct moments in her journey: the call, the struggle, and acceptance. With the music and text, one can almost see Prejean reliving her experience so fully that she leaves the realm of storytelling and reenters her journey at various points along the way.

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104 Heggie, program notes from *The Deepest Desire*.
105 All musical examples used with permission by the composer. See Appendix E.
106 Heggie, interview.
107 Ibid.
Heggie acknowledges that the chronology of *The Deepest Desire* does not always move in a straightforward manner. “It goes back and forth. Because she [Prejean] is telling the story of what happened to her. It is almost like she’s witnessed something and now she has to testify. She’s telling the story to us the audience - like she’s doing one of her talks… and [Prejean is] reliving it for us.” From the text alone, it appears that Heggie moves between moments in time rather fluidly without regard for chronology or structure. However, upon closer examination *The Deepest Desire* has a very clear chronology that is laid out in the first song and picked up by the final three songs.

The first song is comprised of three distinct elements: “Prelude: The Call,” “More is Required,” and “Love.” Each division represents a different moment in Prejean’s journey and is laid out chronologically. In this first movement, Heggie gives an abbreviated version of Prejean’s conversion story that will be expounded upon in later movements. The second song, “I Catch on Fire” retreats to an earlier time. The “call” is present, but it is so early in Prejean’s journey that it is not clearly defined. In the third song, “The Deepest Desire” finds Prejean engrossed in her struggle to understand and accept the ever-insistent and present call. The final song, “Primary Colors,” is the end of Prejean’s journey. With the internal struggle having been resolved in the previous movement, Prejean experiences the acceptance and relative calm that comes from understanding.

Finally, consideration must be paid to the role of each instrument in the cycle. Most obviously, the vocal line is Prejean herself, recounting her story. The other two instruments, the flute and piano, have varying roles. While some critics cite the flute as representing the Holy

\[108\] Ibid.
Spirit, Heggie is not as theological in his characterization. For Heggie, “the flute is that mysterious call all the way through that’s with her all the time trying to clarify itself and get her to clarify her life. It’s that sort of call that we all have inside that we either ignore or we embrace. And sometimes figuring out what it’s saying to us is a big struggle and journey.”

The piano serves as a barometer of Prejean’s psyche. “The piano supports both that journey and also Sr. Helen’s internal struggle. To me, the piano is more definitive of the emotional struggle she’s having.” Understanding the interpretational importance of the motive, time, and role of the instrument will ultimately provide the singer with tools necessary for an effective and engaging performance of *The Deepest Desire*.

**Prelude: The Call, More is Required, A) Love**

**Text**

*More is Required*

More is required than being swept along—
All the currents pulling me
Easy and wide in a long, slow drift –
Without rudder, floating backwards, now to the side.
What can one person do against a sucking tide?
I coil like a bow;
I gather like a fist;
I forge like a rudder
And I lean into the wide, slow drift.
I tack and veer by God’s own will.
I raise my voice against the silence.
My voice alone until a chorus joins.

*Love*

Love is the pure energy of God: pray for it ardently.
Be grateful when it comes into your life: give of it generously.
Lavish it on others: even the undeserving ones.
Cultivate friendship with care: it is the best love of all.

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110 Heggie, interview.

111 Ibid.
Performance Analysis
Prelude: The Call, More is Required, Love

The first song of *The Deepest Desire* is comprised of three distinct sections: “Prelude: the Call,” “More is Required,” and “Love.” Each section can be thought of as an independent entity with transitional material serving to connect the various elements. Chart 1 outlines the overall measure layout of the first song as well as instrumentation for the opening movement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Instrumentation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prelude: The Call</td>
<td>1 – 39</td>
<td>flute, piano (at m. 35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More is Required</td>
<td>39 – 104</td>
<td>voice, flute, piano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitional material</td>
<td>104 – 110</td>
<td>flute, piano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>111 – 137</td>
<td>voice, flute piano</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 1: Layout of *Deepest Desire*, mvt. 1

This opening movement serves as a condensed chronological version of Sr. Prejean’s journey. Each section represents a different moment in time and describes briefly Prejean’s process. Her journey will be developed more fully in the subsequent songs, but in this first movement Heggie explicitly lays out what her process will involve.

**Prelude: The Call**

The work opens with an extended flute solo which Heggie titled “Prelude: The Call.” The first measure presents the main motive (Example 1).

![Example 1: Prelude, m. 1](image)

During “Prelude: The Call,” Prejean is very clearly in the beginning stages of her journey. No text is used and the use of the musical motive supplies the listener and interpreter with plenty of
information on Prejean. The entire first section is to demonstrate the beginning stages of Prejean’s journey. The motive, representative of the undefined call Prejean feels, is tonally unstable. Heggie describes this as, “the wavering between one thing or the other. The motif expresses a lot of things including a struggle between major and minor…”\textsuperscript{112} The pull between two tonal centers can be clearly felt within the first several measures and for most of the Prelude.

In the first few measures, Heggie pits b-natural against c-natural. However, by the sixth measure, Heggie establishes a pull between d-sharp and e-natural (Example 2).

![Example 2: Prelude, 6 – 8](image)

Heggie also hides the motive within the struggle between d-sharp and e-natural. For the first time in the work, the motive, highlighted in red, is reordered and obscured. The reordered motive was an intentional device on Heggie’s part. When the motive appears in an altered state, it represents Prejean hearing but not fully comprehending her call.\textsuperscript{113}

Although Heggie exploits the idea of harmonic instability, he maintains cohesion through the “Prelude” by his persistent use of the main motive. Heggie cycles through several competing tonal centers by way of the three-note motive. Although enharmonically spelled, Example 3 demonstrates how Heggie uses the motive as a sequence. Heggie uses the sequence to set up the piano’s first entrance.

\textsuperscript{112} Heggie, Interview.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid.
Adding another layer to the relatively unstable harmonies found in the first section, Heggie also delves into metric ambiguity during the flute solo. As seen in musical example 2, Heggie switches fluidly between simple, compound, and even some additive meters. In fact, within the Prelude, Heggie changes meter six separate times. The complex metrical scheme is further compounded by several changes in tempo, the use of fermatas and, finally, cesuras.

The tonal and metric ambiguity musically establishes the struggle Prejean is facing internally. As Heggie pointed out before, the flute represents “the mysterious call” Prejean feels. What Heggie implies in the music is that Prejean feels called to action, but is not yet able to verbalize what she is called to do.

Before moving on to the second section, performance considerations for the ensemble need to be examined. For the Prelude, Heggie makes the following indication: “The pianist should hold the pedal down throughout the Prelude. The flutist should try to play directly into the open piano so the strings resonate and create a shimmer of sound.” This directive poses a problem for the placement of the performers on stage. Heggie explains how it was done at the premiere in Vail.

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114 See Example 2.
115 Ibid.
116 Heggie, program notes from *The Deepest Desire*. 
The best way I found to do it, the singer is standing a little bit stage left while the flutist is leaning into the piano and maybe the score is taped on the inside of the piano... so they can really play into the piano. When it gets to m. 38 (the resolution) the flutist while the d [d₄] is happening [m. 39] or just after walks stage right to a stand and the singer moves center stage in front of the piano.¹¹⁷

In Example 4, the resolution of the Prelude shows where the in score the movement of the singer and flutist should occur.

Example 4: Prelude, mm. 38 – 39

More is Required

The second portion of the first song, “More is Required” begins with the transitional pick-up notes into measure 39.¹¹⁸ With the beginning of this section, time has shifted. Prejean has heard the call but is struggling to accept its challenge. “This represents Helen’s coming to terms with the fact that she could not sit still in her life. She had to take the initiative and be the activist – the solo voice – before a chorus would join.”¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Heggie, interview.
¹¹⁸ See Example 4.
¹¹⁹ Heggie, program notes from The Deepest Desire.
Once again, the listener feels pulled between two tonal centers. Heggie moves fluidly between G and E-flat chords. Within these two chords, Heggie hides the motive in an altered format in the piano (Example 5). The vocal entrance also presents a modified version of the motive but spelled differently. The first true statement of the motive in this section does not occur until the voice presents it in measure 44.

Example 5: More is Required, mm. 40 – 44

Additionally, the important relationship between text and music in these opening measures (Example 5) should be noted. Prejean's text evokes images of water and tides, and
Heggie’s piano accompaniment complements the text by creating a wave-like texture. Through the use of syncopation, Heggie sets the voice as if it is “being swept along”\textsuperscript{120} by the piano (Example 6). This relationship between voice and piano continues until the pick-up into measure sixty-two.

Example 6: More is Required, mm. 49 – 51

As Heggie points out, the piano represents the emotional struggle Prejean feels.\textsuperscript{121} By hiding the motive, Heggie hints that Prejean has internalized the call but cannot yet even conceptualize it. It is not until measure 62 that the voice once again states the main motive in its original format. The motive, while taken over briefly by the flute, does not remain in the vocal line for long. Prejean has moments of fleeting clarity in which she understands her call. Ultimately, the motive cannot stay in the vocal line until Prejean submits to the call.

\textsuperscript{120} Prejean, “More is Required.”
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid.
Between measures 62 and 78, a transition occurs in both the music and Prejean’s journey (Example 7). The texture of the piano accompaniment changes and the vocal line shifts between lyrical and declamatory passages. By measure 70, Heggie is working towards establishing a new, faster tempo. All of this musical juxtaposition is done in deference to the drama. Prejean’s text clearly indicates that she has heard the call and is reluctantly moving forward.

It is at measure 78 where Prejean finally accepts and surrenders to the call. Heggie illustrates this through text setting. Unlike previous measures, the voice and piano work fluidly together. The voice, no longer laboring against the piano line, moves easily into the upper range.
At measure 79, the voice reaches for the first time its highest note (G₅) of entire cycle (Example 8).

Example 8: More is Required, mm. 78 – 79

In a gesture reminiscent of the Prelude, at measure 94, the motive returns in the flute (Example 9).

Example 9: More is Required, mm. 94 – 95

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This time, however, the voice and later the piano echoes the motive. In the vocal line, the motive is sung twice at the same pitch level and then a third time a step higher. With the exception of three notes, the motive is the only musical material in the vocal line from m. 97 to the end of “More is Required” (Example 10).

![Example 10: More is Required, mm. 97 – 99](image)

The piano also picks up the motive at its entrance in measure 100 (Example 11). Like the vocal line, the motive comprises the main musical material until the end of “More is Required” as well as the transitional material before “Love.”

![Example 11: More is Required, m. 100](image)

Vocally, “More is Required” should not pose many problems for the advanced singer. Like many of Heggie’s other vocal works, while the range is fairly large (D#₄ – G₅), the tessitura of the melody lies in an easily accessible range for the singer (G₄ and E₅). The high note (G₅) is articulated only once in measure 79 of “More is Required” (Example 12). Although the top is
approached by means of a diminished triad, the line should not present any great difficulties for the singer if proper vowels are articulated and diphthongs avoided.

Example 12: More is Required, mm. 78 - 79

However, the difficulty of this section lies in ensemble. In “More is Required” there are several instances where Heggie indicates a ritardando in one measure and in the next calls for an accelerando. Understanding the role and importance of each instrument will help solve ensemble issues. For the most part, the ebb and flow of the tempo should be led by one instrument. For example, in m. 41 the vocal line is dependent upon the piano for the ritardando and the return to tempo 1 in m. 42 (Example 13).

Example 13: More is Required, mm. 40 – 44
Example 13, continued.

“Love,” the final segment of the opening movement, begins in measure 111. This third section finds Prejean in the present. She has accepted her call and relishes the peace attached in it. Heggie notes that the text draws from what Prejean learned during the journey. “That’s life experience. That’s not where she was [at the beginning] because she thought love was a different thing...”\(^{122}\) Heggie provides two hints in the music that illuminate Prejean’s current tranquil state: the motive and ensemble. The first is the use, or rather the absence, of the motive. Apart from one brief instance in the flute, the persistent motive that overwhelmed and shaped the previous two sections does not appear (Example 14). Heggie presents the motive in the flute in an altered form, but the tonal instability it presented earlier does not permeate this movement. Rather, the motive leads into a resolution of sorts.

\(^{122}\) Ibid.
Heggie introduces the idea of peace through the interplay between voice, flute, and piano. In this final section, the flute, representing “the mysterious call,” works fluidly with vocal line. At this point in the text, Prejean is at peace with the call that permeated so much of the previous section. To illustrate this, Heggie doubles the flute at the octave with the vocal line (Example 15).

The struggle between voice and piano, a prominent feature in “More is Required,” dissipates. Instead, the piano, once the “inner struggle,” is now subsidiary to voice at the beginning of “Love.” The voice moves fluidly over the harmonic and static accompaniment. Opera News critic Drew Minter describes this moment as “an effusion of vocal sound underpinned by a chordal ostinato, one of Heggie’s most successful textures, at the words ‘Love

\[\text{Example 14: Love, mm. 128 – 130}\]

\[\text{Example 15: Love, mm. 119 – 120}\]

\[\text{Example 14: Love, mm. 128 – 130}\]

\[\text{Example 15: Love, mm. 119 – 120}\]

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\[123\text{ Ibid.}\]

\[124\text{ Ibid.}\]
is the pure energy of God.’ Heggie sets ‘God’ with a prominent melisma in these otherwise syllabic settings” (Example 16).125

Example 16: Love, mm. 111 – 115

Special care should be given to the melisma in m. 115 (Example 16). The melisma on “God” is the only one in the entire first movement and one of only two melismas in The Deepest Desire. Suggesting give and take in the passage, Heggie has marked the measure colla voce. It is also important that the singer observe the crescendo marked at the end of the phrase as it leads into a change in tonality as well providing the impetus for the più mosso.

Several considerations for performance and preparation should be noted. While the range of “Love” (F₄ to G₅) is smaller than “More is Required,” the tessitura lies higher. Heggie sets much of the text between B₄ and F₅. In addition, the singer will find that many of the higher pitches are set with bright, closed vowels (Example 17). This will require the singer to modify the vowel when necessary.

125 Minter.
Like “More is Required,” Heggie only uses G₅ once and in the final moments of “Love.”

Approaching G₅ by a leap of a major seventh, Heggie’s pianissimo marking asks for delicacy rather than a full vocal production (Example 18).

While this could be easily managed in full voice, the text and dynamic markings require much more nuance. For approaching the upper range, Heggie helps the singer with the indication in the music to “take time.” Also it is important to realize that the G₅ is not the height of the musical phrase, but rather serves to highlight the text which follows. A strong emphasis on the word “best” will also serve to cue the rest of the ensemble in terms of tempo.

**I Catch on Fire**

**Text**

*I Catch on Fire*

*Long black dress to my toes– Flowing black sleeves and veil. A walking bolt of black material. Fourth grade religion class–Teaching full force: The Gospel according to … Lit candle. Fifty little eyes wide. Twenty-five voices shout:*
“Sister! Sister! You’re on fire!”
Flames shooting. Hands beating.
Silence. Breathing.
Children, this teaches us always to be careful with fire.
Now, years later, when I pray
I catch on fire.
Amen.

Performance Analysis

In her book, *Dead Man Walking*, Helen Prejean writes, “Actually for me, discard ing the habit probably increased my life expectancy. As a student teacher my veil had caught on fire from a candle during a prayer service and I had almost gone up in smoke before my wide-eyed class.”126 This story, a small detail in Prejean’s book, captivated Heggie so much that he included it in *The Deepest Desire*. Heggie felt it was important to include this story because it displayed so much of Prejean’s character and personality. “She has a tremendous sense of joy and love. And she uses humor all the time to share her message… so humor is very, very important to her.”127 In addition, Heggie felt a more upbeat and humorous movement would aid the overall pace and arc of the drama within the cycle.128

In his program notes, Heggie writes, “She [Prejean] told me this story, laughing the whole time, and then told me that now, when she prays, she feels like she catches on fire.”129 This description (of Prejean’s laughter) figures prominently in how Heggie sets the text. The piano accompaniment, playing syncopated rhythms with abrupt leaps, illustrates the laughter of Prejean as she tells her story. Heggie uses the flute in a similar way (Example 19).

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127 Heggie, interview.
128 Ibid.
129 Heggie, program notes from *The Deepest Desire*. 
Example 19: I Catch on Fire, mm. 1 – 4

In addition, Prejean’s laughter can be sensed in how Heggie writes the vocal line. Due to the syncopation in the piano, the vocal line seems syncopated even though it rarely occurs in the opening measures. This faux-syncopation evokes laughter at times. Another example is a melisma on the “al” in the word “material” (Example 20). At the end of the melisma, Heggie has the singer bend the pitch up a minor third. The score indicates that the melisma can be performed as the final syllable of material or rearticulated as “ah.” Either way, the melisma should give the idea of laughter.

Example 20: I Catch on Fire, mm. 14 – 17

In the first song, Heggie takes the listener on an abbreviated tour through Prejean’s journey. In that first movement, Heggie marks out three important sections in Prejean’s process:
hearing the call, the internal struggle to accept the call, and living in harmony with the call. The second piece, “I Catch on Fire,” is divided into two sections in time: Prejean’s life before the call and her current state.\textsuperscript{130} The text clearly indicates these divisions: the text begins in the past but moves to the present in the final three lines (at “Now, years later…”). Musically, Heggie highlights the shift in time by altering the tempo, rhythms, and tonality. The first section (m. 1 – 79) is marked by a high energy, rapid articulation of notes in all voices. The obbligato and accompaniment feature syncopated rhythms throughout, while the voice often keeping strict rhythms creates the illusion of syncopation (Example 21).

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{example21.png}
\caption{Example 21: I Catch on Fire, mm. 5 - 8}
\end{figure}

Beginning in measure 80, the syncopation dissipates and the tempo slows. The jagged and fast articulations of the first section are replaced by a more sustained line in all instruments (Example 22).

\textsuperscript{130} It is worth mentioning that in “I Catch on Fire” the motive does not appear. The reason for this is twofold. First, the story of “I Catch on Fire” occurs many years before Prejean feels called. Second, the shift from past to present skips the years Prejean heard and struggled with her call.
Example 22: I Catch on Fire, m. 80

The shift to a more sustained texture does not last. Heggie returns, in measure 84, to the original tempo and texture (Example 23). This return should be exploited by the singer with a strong articulation on the word “fire.”

Example 23: I Catch on Fire, mm. 83 – 85

The range (D#₄ – G₅) and tessitura of “I Catch on Fire” is the same as the opening movement and does not pose problems for the advanced singer. As in the first movement, the highest note is used only once. Although the G₅ is approached from a leap of a minor seventh, like before, Heggie gives the voice space and time to sing with full voice (Example 24).
Example 24: I Catch on Fire, mm. 47 – 51

The difficulties in “I Catch on Fire” stem from ensemble and rhythm issues. There are several tempo changes of which instrumentalists should be aware. For the most part, these shifts are controlled and adjusted by one instrument. Additional rhythmic issues are found in the highly syncopated accompaniment. Here the singer must be as precise as possible and take note of where the melody falls into place with the piano, flute, or both.

The Deepest Desire

Text

_The Deepest Desire_

_I thought I knew my heart’s desire:
To love God. To be with God in Heaven
A bud unfolding; a dutiful, prayerful nun.
I pleased God, I thought,
By being obedient.
It made me feel holy._

_But getting to heaven takes a long time. And dwelling far below was a Voice, calling:_
   “_Lose yourself!”_  
   “_Lose yourself upon the deeper currents!”_ 

_Then I heard cries from the heart of the city:_
   “_Is there life before death?”_  
_I saw. I heard. I followed._
_I made my way to prison cells._
_I made my way to death chambers._
_I saw. I heard. I followed._
_I witnessed._
A desire for justice woke in me.  
A fierce desire that will not let go.  
The deepest desire.  
The deepest desire of my heart.  
“Come home!”  
“Come home!”  
“Come home!”  

**Performance Analysis**

For Heggie, the first two movements of *The Deepest Desire* set the stage for the third song. The role of the first two songs was to give background on Prejean’s life and struggle “and then with all of that information on who she is, I think, we’re prepared to hear the real hot coal of the story.”\(^{131}\) The “hot coal” is Prejean’s conversion story. This tale in some form appears in almost all of Prejean’s writings. In an audio essay for National Public Radio Prejean says,

> “Love your neighbor as yourself,” Jesus said, and as a beginner nun I tried earnestly to love my neighbor—the children I taught, their parents, my fellow teachers, my fellow nuns. But for a long time the circle of my loving care was small and, for the most part, included only white, middle-class people like me. But one day I woke up to Jesus’s deeper challenge to love the outcast, the criminal, the underdog. So I packed my stuff and moved into a noisy, violent housing project in an African-American neighborhood in New Orleans… Working in that community in New Orleans soon led me to Louisiana’s death row…\(^{132}\)

Heggie taps into this story and adds emotional depth and drama to the text. For Heggie, “The Deepest Desire” truly is “a scena.”\(^{133}\) What Heggie wants to capture in this story is the emotional and spiritual discovery that Prejean experiences.

In this piece, more than any other, the presence of the motive provides insight into Prejean’s state of mind and understanding. While Prejean is struggling to comprehend, the

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\(^{131}\) Heggie, interview.  
\(^{132}\) Helen Prejean, CSJ, “Living My Prayer.”  
\(^{133}\) Heggie, interview.
motive appears in an altered or obscured form. As Prejean moves closer to her eventual epiphany, the motive appears more frequently and openly in the score. Within the first six measures of “The Deepest Desire,” the motive is presented six times in the piano with three different spellings (Example 25).

Example 25: The Deepest Desire, mm. 1 – 6

The text at measure 7 (“I thought I knew my heart’s desire”) reveals the uncertainty that Prejean is feeling. With the text “heart’s desire” Heggie presents an altered version of the motive in all instruments which is to demonstrate and mirror unsettled feelings of Prejean (Example 26).

Example 26: The Deepest Desire, mm. 7 – 10
After the initial altered motive, the piano returns to a true statement of the motive. Heggie hides the motive in many ways in the piano line (Example 27). Remembering that, for Heggie, the piano represents “the emotional struggle” of Prejean, one can see that Prejean has internalized the call but is struggling to answer it.

Example 27: The Deepest Desire, mm. 17 – 20

In the pickup to measure 34, the vocal line finally has the motive in an unaltered form (Example 28). This coincides with Prejean acknowledging the call for the first time with the line, “getting to heaven takes a long time.”

Example 28: The Deepest Desire, mm. 32 – 34
The motive is then picked up by the piano in measure 34. The motive serves as an ostinato as Prejean continues, “And dwelling far below was a voice…” From measure 36 to 37, the motive, which had been active in the piano, is taken over by the voice and echoed by the flute (Example 29).

Example 29: The Deepest Desire, mm. 37 – 42

At measure 42, the voice and flute double at the octave to directly quote the second measure of “Prelude: The Call” (Example 30). From this moment, it is clear that Prejean finally understands her call. The understanding about which she is speaking is represented by the motive appearing in all instruments in an unaltered manner.

Example 30: The Deepest Desire, mm. 42 – 46
At measure 57, the text transports us to the St. Thomas Housing Development where Prejean is now living and working. Not yet fully understanding the true path of her call, the musical motive returns, but is hidden in the piano accompaniment and flute. Here, Heggie indicates that Prejean has not yet reached the end of her journey.

By measure 67, Prejean finds herself working with inmates on death row. The intensity builds as Prejean cries, “I saw, I heard, I followed, I witnessed.” Heggie does not use the motive in these measures as Prejean is fully engaged in her call. From measure 77 to 84, the music of all instruments mirrors nearly exactly the measures 7 through 14 (Example 31).

Example 31: The Deepest Desire, mm. 77 – 84

These seven measures propel the action forward to measure 86, where the motive appears in an unaltered form in all instruments. As Prejean repeats the text “the deepest desire” the intensity builds into measure 91 (Example 32).
Heggie describes measure 91 to the end as “a joyous explosion. It’s suddenly realizing, ‘Oh there’s the answer. Right there.’ It’s total jubilation to me. That kind of stunning jubilation when you feel your hair is just going to lift right off your head.”

This moment of jubilation

134 Ibid.
and perfect clarity continues and builds all the way to the end of the piece. For Heggie, the desire becomes “so enormous that her heart cries out ‘come home!’” (Example 33).  

Example 33: The Deepest Desire, mm. 98 – 102

The title song in *The Deepest Desire* is perhaps the most difficult in terms of vocal and dramatic requirements. While the range (D₄ – G₅) remains similar to the previous two

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135 Heggie, program notes from *The Deepest Desire.*
movements, the vocal demands are more extensive. Heggie exploits, to a greater extent, the higher portion of the singer’s range. Throughout, he also asks for louder dynamics which build with intensity. In terms of drama, the challenge is to stay engaged throughout the entire song.

Pacing as it applies to both the singing and drama is an important consideration. If too much effort and energy is spent on the middle portion, the final two pages will not be as effective. However, if the singer does not remain energized throughout the piece, the final pages will suffer the same ill effects. The singer should also be mindful of slowly building dramatic intensity. Attention must be paid to the drama but never at the expense of the voice. Ultimately, the singer must find the balance between acting and singing. In this song, like so many of Heggie’s other works, the drama and music are woven so tightly together that one cannot exist effectively without the other.

**Primary Colors**

**Text**

*Primary Colors*
*I live my life in primary colors.*
*I let praise and blame fall where they may.*
*I hold my soul in equanimity*
*And leave the fruits of my labors to God.*
*At night, when I pray, I catch on fire.*
*And when I put my head on the pillow,*
*I fall instantly to sleep.*

**Performance Analysis**

At the end of “Deepest Desire,” Prejean understood and finally embraced the call. Her journey over, Prejean can now settle into the relative peace that comes with acceptance. In many ways then “Primary Colors” acts as a postlude to the third song. Heggie describes “Primary Colors” as the “beautiful resolution to this incredible struggle.”

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136 Ibid.
For Heggie, “the final song is the more peaceful place Helen [Prejean] finds herself today… when she needs solace or a place to write, she goes to a Northern Cheyenne reservation in Montana.”

Heggie evokes time through his use of motive and harmony. While it does not appear in its true form in “Primary Colors,” the opening measures of the flute clearly are influenced by the motive. For Heggie, “it’s a kind of inversion of that idea [the motive]. It sort of sighs into a natural cadence; there’s not as much struggle.” In addition, Heggie uses this melodic gesture in the flute to capture the sound and feel of “a wooden flute, bending the tone downward into a peaceful sigh.”

The flute, mimicking an Indian wooden flute, evokes the Native American Reservation that Prejean retreats to when she is writing (Example 34).

Example 34: Primary Colors, mm. 1 – 3

The Prejean of this final song is one who is at peace. The pull between opposing tonal centers and the fluctuating harmonies of previous movements vanishes. In fact, “Primary Colors” feels almost static by comparison. Indeed, in “Primary Colors” Heggie rarely migrates from the tonal center of B-flat. With the tonality remaining steady, it is as if time has stopped and the finds Prejean reveling in the stillness.

The stillness and relative ease of “Primary Colors” is evoked through Heggie’s harmonic and melodic choices. Heggie keeps the harmony static through “these open fifths. There’s just

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137 Heggie, program notes from The Deepest Desire.
138 Heggie, interview.
139 Heggie, program notes from The Deepest Desire.
this openness and this sense of space.” In examining the score, one will immediately notice that Heggie does not alter the harmony in the first eight measures. Furthermore, Heggie uses the same repetitive melodic gesture in the piano accompaniment (Example 35).

Example 35: Primary Colors, mm. 3 – 4
Layered on top of the piano accompaniment, the flute repeats the same motivic idea presented in the first measure (Example 32). The final addition is the vocal line which makes two similar melodic statements (Example 36).

Example 36: Primary Colors, mm. 5 - 9
As in the other pieces of The Deepest Desire, the range (E4 – F5) should not pose any significant challenges for the singer. In fact, “Primary Colors” has the most limited range of the

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140 Heggie, interview.
entire cycle. The challenge lies in dynamic shading and contrast. The only dynamic marking in the vocal line of “Primary Colors” is *piano*. Within this, the singer should find different colors and timbres to express the text without disrupting the ethereal stillness of the accompanying instruments.

In this stillness lies Heggie’s biggest challenge for the singer. How does the singer maintain the homeostatic nature of the piece? The answer really lies in Prejean’s texts. Unlike the grand scena of “The Deepest Desire,” “Primary Colors” is a statement of faith and purpose. The inner-struggles of the previous movements have vanished from the text. There is no doubt or uncertainty left in Prejean. For the singer, it may be helpful to think of the text as reflection uttered from a distant and wholly disconnected realm. The singer should express the text simply and sincerely while maintaining a line that is as legato as possible.
CONCLUSION

Jake Heggie’s song cycle *The Deepest Desire* is a creative and thought-provoking musical work for solo singer which deserves a place among repertoire for song recitals. The cycle’s length and storyline was composed with the intent that it be performed in its entirety. Excerpting songs from this cycle would damage the integrity of the story line and disrupt Heggie’s vision of Prejean’s journey. *The Deepest Desire* can also be used as a teaching piece to address specific technical issues including sustained singing in the passaggio, intonation on chromatic melodic lines, maintaining rhythmic intensity in syncopated melodies, and dynamic shading and nuance.

Perhaps the most important lessons the cycle provides are on vocal pacing and maintaining dramatic intensity. As Heggie points out, *The Deepest Desire* is “a huge cycle and it’s big singing.”¹⁴¹ The singer not only needs to understand where the climactic moments in each song occur, but where they fit into the arc of the story. This understanding will help provide shape and continuity to the cycle. The awareness that the emotional climax occurs in the third song should assist the singer with pacing and avoiding the possibility of over-singing in the earlier movements. In addition, the importance of maintaining Prejean’s character throughout the cycle is both expected and demanded of the singer. For Heggie, sustaining the mood and character between the movements is vitally important. Heggie further emphasizes these points by posing the following questions: “What is your thought process between songs? Where are you emotionally in the piece between the songs? I think that is almost as important as where you are within the song.”¹⁴² The reason this is important is that passage of time between songs can move either forward or back. For example, at the end of the first movement, Prejean is in the

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¹⁴¹ Heggie, interview.
¹⁴² Ibid.
present; yet the second song starts in the past. The singer must be aware at all times where Prejean is in her journey.

In *The Deepest Desire*, text, music, and drama are all inextricably linked. Heggie takes six separate meditations with little relation to each other and weaves a coherent retelling of Prejean’s journey of faith and discovery. Through the use of the musical three-note motive, Heggie creates gestures that allow the listener understanding in where Prejean is in her path towards acceptance of her call. The instrumentation, whether echoing or obscuring the motive, enhances Heggie’s ideas and provides additional clarity for the listener. From the elegant melodic lyricism found in “Love” to the humor-tinged syncopations of “I catch on fire,” Heggie moves fluidly between styles and textures in service of the text. While his music is decidedly tonal, Heggie infuses modal harmonies to add to the overall atmosphere of the work.

This performer’s guide will serve to enhance and inform musicians looking to prepare and present this cycle. Marilyn Tucker writes of the work, “More than just poems set to music, these four songs are meditations on spiritual life. [Heggie] catches their spirit with a melodic line enriched by its powerful simplicity.”

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BIBLIOGRAPHY


More is Required
More is required than being swept along—
All the currents pulling me
Easy and wide in a long, slow drift –
Without rudder, floating backwards, now to the side.
What can one person do against a sucking tide?
I coil like a bow;
I gather like a fist;
I forge like a rudder
And I lean into the wide, slow drift.
I tack and veer by God’s own will.
I raise my voice against the silence.
My voice alone until a chorus joins.

Love
Love is the pure energy of God: pray for it ardently.
Be grateful when it comes into your life: give of it generously.
Lavish it on others: even the undeserving ones.
Cultivate friendship with care: it is the best love of all.

I Catch on Fire
Long black dress to my toes– Flowing black sleeves and veil.
A walking bolt of black material.
Fourth grade religion class–Teaching full force:
The Gospel according to …
Lit candle.
Fifty little eyes wide. Twenty-five voices shout:
“Sister! Sister! You’re on fire!”
Flames shooting. Hands beating.
Silence. Breathing.
Children, this teaches us always to be careful with fire.
Now, years later, when I pray
I catch on fire.
Amen.

The Deepest Desire
I thought I knew my heart’s desire:
To love God. To be with God in Heaven
A bud unfolding; a dutiful, prayerful nun.
I pleased God, I thought,
By being obedient.
It made me feel holy.
But getting to heaven takes a long time.
And dwelling far below was a Voice, calling:
“Lose yourself!”
“Lose yourself upon the deeper currents!”

Then I heard cries from the heart of the city:
“Is there life before death?”
I saw. I heard. I followed.
I made my way to prison cells.
I made my way to death chambers.
I saw. I heard. I followed.
I witnessed.

A desire for justice woke in me.
A fierce desire that will not let go.
The deepest desire.
The deepest desire of my heart.
“Come home!”
“Come home!”
“Come home!”

**Primary Colors**
I live my life in primary colors.
I let praise and blame fall where they may.
I hold my soul in equanimity
And leave the fruits of my labors to God.
At night, when I pray, I catch on fire.
And when I put my head on the pillow,
I fall instantly to sleep.
APPENDIX B
DISCOGRAPHY


Flesh & Stone: The Songs of Jake Heggie (Americus Records), 2007. Features Frederica von Stade, Joyce Castle, Zheng Cao, and Mary Phillips. Jake Heggie, piano; Eugenia Zukerman, flute; Carey Bell, clarinet; David Henderson, saxophone; Dawn Harms, violin; Emil Miland, cello; Richard Worn, bass.

To Hell and Back (available for download only at magnatune.com), 2006. World premiere recording. Nicholas McGegan conducts the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra with Isabel Bayrakdarian (Stephanie) and Patti LuPone (Anne).


Dead Man Walking (ERATO), 2001. The complete live recording of the October 2000 world premiere production by San Francisco Opera. Patrick Summers conducts the San Francisco Opera Orchestra and Chorus featuring Susan Graham (Sr. Helen Prejean), John Packard (Joseph de Rocher), and Frederica von Stade (Joseph’s Mother).


APPENDIX C
SONG LIST

Song Cycles

Soprano

*Facing Forward/Looking Back*
Duets for Soprano and Mezzo-Soprano with piano
Poetry: Charlene Baldridge, Eugenia Zukerman, Raymond Carver, Armistead Maupin, and Jake Heggie
   1. Motherwit (Baldridge)
   2. Grounded (Zukerman)
   3. Hummingbird (Carver)
   4. Mother in the Mirror (Maupin)

*Rise and Fall*
Soprano and piano.
Poetry: Gene Scheer.
   1. Water Stone (Noguchi)
   2. Incantation Bowl
   3. Angels Wings
   4. The Shaman

*How Well I Knew the Light*
Soprano and piano.
Poetry: Emily Dickinson.
   1. Ample Make This Bed
   2. The Sun Kept Setting

*Songs and Sonnets to Ophelia*
Soprano and piano
Poetry: Edna Saint Vincent Millay and Jake Heggie.
First Performance: Old First Church, San Francisco, 1999.
   1. The Spring is Arisen; Ophelia's Song (Heggie)
   2. Women have loved before as I love now (Edna St. Vincent Millay)
   3. Not in a silver casket cool with pearls (Millay)
   4. Spring (Millay)

*Natural Selection*
Soprano and piano.
Poetry: Gini Savage.
First Performance: Old First Church, San Francisco, 1997.
1. Creation  
2. Animal Passion  
3. Alas! Alack!  
4. Indian Summer - Blue  
5. Connection

**Eve-Song**  
Soprano and piano. *Even, Listen, and Snake were orchestrated for chamber orchestra in 2001.*  
Poetry: Philip Littell.  

1. My name  
2. Even  
3. Good  
4. Listen  
5. Snake  
6. Woe to Man  
7. The Wound  
8. The Farm

**Mezzo-Soprano**

*Facing Forward/Looking Back*  
Duets for Soprano and Mezzo-Soprano with piano  
Poetry: Charlene Baldridge, Eugenia Zukerman, Raymond Carver, Armistead Maupin, and Jake Heggie  
1. Motherwit (Baldridge)  
2. Grounded (Zukerman)  
3. Hummingbird (Carver)  
4. Mother in the Mirror (Maupin)

**Statuesque**  
Mezzo-soprano and piano (also available with chamber accompaniment)  
Poetry: Gene Scheer  
First Performance: University of Kansas at Lawrence, 2005  
1. Henry Moore: Reclining Figure of Elmwood  
2. Pablo Picasso: Head of a Woman, 1932  
3. Hapshetsut: The Divine Potter  
4. Alberto Giacometti: Standing Woman #2  
5. Winged Victory: We’re Through

**The Deepest Desire**  
Mezzo-soprano, flute, and piano (orchestrated in 2005)  
Poetry: Sister Helen Prejean, CSJ  
First performance: Vail Valley Music Festival, 2002  
1. The Call; More is Required; Love
2. I Catch on Fire
3. The Deepest Desire
4. Primary Colors

_The Starry Night_
First performance: Merkin Concert Hall, New York, 2002
1. The Starry Night (Anne Sexton)
2. Celestial Locomotion (Van Gogh)
3. Go Thy Great Way (Dickinson)
4. Reflection (Van Gogh)
5. The sun kept setting (Dickinson)
6. Touch (Van Gogh)
7. I would not paint a picture (Dickinson)

_Of Gods and Cats_
Mezzo-Soprano and piano
Poetry: Gavin Geoffrey Dillard
First performance: Monte Carlo, 200.
1. In the beginning ...
2. Once upon a universe

_Songs to the Moon_
Mezzo-soprano and piano
Poetry: Vachel Lindsay
First Performance: Ravinia Festival, Illinois, 1998
1. Prologue: Once More - To Gloriana
2. Euclid
3. The Haughty Snail-King
4. What the Rattlesnake Said
5. The Moon's the North Wind's Cooky (What the little girl said)
6. What the Scarecrow Said
7. What the Gray-Winged Fairy Said
8. Yet Gentle Will the Griffin Be (What Grandpa told the children)

_Paper Wings_
Mezzo-soprano and piano
Texts: Frederica von Stade.
First performance: UC Berkley, 1997
1. Bedtime Story
2. Paper Wings
3. Mitten Smitten
4. A Route to the Sky
Countertenor

Countertenor and piano
Texts: John Hall
  1. Countertenor's Conundrum
  2. The trouble with trebles in trousers ... (Pitch can be a bitch!)
  3. A Gift to Share

Medium Voice

Three Folk Songs
Voice and piano
First performance: First Congregational Church, Berkeley, 1995 (composed in 1994)
  1. Barb'y Allen
  2. He's Gone Away
  3. The Leather-Winged Bat

Tenor

Friendly Persuasions: Songs in Homage to Poulenc
Tenor and piano
Poetry: Gene Scheer
  1. Wanda Landowska
  2. Pierre Bernac
  3. Raymonde Linossier
  4. Paul Eluard

Baritone

A Great Hope Fell: Songs from Civil War
Baritone and chamber orchestra
Poetry and texts: Maya Angelou, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Emily Dickinson, Stephen Foster, Annie Davis, and Julia Ward Howe
First performance: Society for Ethical Culture, New York, 2002 (composed in 2001)
  Prologue: Ships that Pass in the Night (Dunbar)
  1. Africa (Angelou)
  2a. When Johnny Comes Marching Home (Gilmore)
  2b. Letter to President Lincoln from Annie Davis, 1864
  2c. Was My Brother in the Battle? (Foster)
  3. A great Hope fell (Dickinson)
  4a. Glory (Howe)
  4b. America (Angelou)
The Moon is a Mirror
Baritone and piano (three songs orchestrated for full orchestra).
Poetry:  Vachel Lindsay.
First performance of orchestrated songs:  Vienna, 2001
  1. The Strength of the Lonely (What the Mendicant Said)
  2. What the Miner in the Desert Said
  3. The Old Horse in the City
  4. What the Forester Said
  5. What the Snowman Said

Thoughts Unspoken
Baritone and piano
Texts:  John Hall
First performance:  Vocal Arts Festival, The George Washington University, 1996
  1. A learning experience over coffee...
  2. You enter my thoughts
  3. To speak of love
  4. Unspoken thoughts at bedtime

Trois poèmes intérieurs de Rainer Maria Rilke
Baritone and piano
Poetry by Rainer Maria Rilke
Composed:  1988
  1. Portrait intérieure
  2. La porteuse de fleurs
  3. Epilogue: C'est pour t'avoir vue...

Songs with Orchestra and Chamber Orchestra

The Deepest Desire:  Four Meditations on Love
Mezzo-soprano and chamber orchestra (2-2-2-2, 2-2-0-0, perc, pno, strings)
Texts:  Sister Helen Prejean, CSJ
First performance:  Vail, Colorado, 2002
First orchestrated premiere:  St. Paul, 2005
  Prelude: The Call
  1. More is Required; Love
  2. I Catch on Fire
  3. The Deepest Desire
  4. Primary Colors

Paper Wings
Mezzo-soprano and full orchestra.
Texts:  Frederica von Stade
First performance:  Berkeley, California, 1997
First orchestrated performance: Louisville, Kentucky, 2000
1. Bedtime Story  
2. Paper Wings  
3. Mitten Smitten  
4. A Route to the Sky

*Three Folk Songs*  
Mezzo-soprano and full orchestra.  
First performance: Berkeley, 1995  
1. Barb'ry Allen  
2. He's Gone Away  
3. The Leather-Winged Bat

*So Many Notes*  
Eleven singers and full orchestra  
Text by the composer  
Commissioned by San Francisco Opera to celebrate its 75th Season.  
First Performance: War Memorial Opera House, San Francisco, California, 1997

*On the Road to Christmas*  
Mezzo-soprano and string orchestra  
Texts: A.E. Housman, Frederica von Stade, John Jacob Niles, Emily Dickinson, and Jake Heggie  
commissioned by the New Century Chamber Orchestra.  
First performance: Herbst Theatre, San Francisco, California, 1996  
1. The Night is Freezing Fast (A.E. Housman)  
2. The Car Ride to Christmas (von Stade)  
3. Good King Merrily on High (traditional)  
4. I wonder as I wander (Niles)  
5. The Road to Bethlehem (Dickinson)  
6. And then the Setting Sun (von Stade)  
7. Christmas Time of Year (Heggie)

*Songs with Chamber Accompaniment*

*Here and Gone*  
Tenor, baritone, violin, viola, cello, and piano.  
Texts: A.E. Housman and Vachel Lindsay  
1. The Farms of Home (Housman)  
2. In Praise of Songs That Die (Lindsay)  
3. Stars (Housman)  
4. The Factory Window Song (Lindsay)  
5. In the Morning (Housman)  
6. Because I Liked You Better (Housman)  
7. The Half-Moon Westers Low (Housman)
**Statuesque**
Mezzo-soprano, flute, alto saxophone, clarinet, bass clarinet, violin, cello, bass, and piano.
Texts: Gene Scheer
First performance: University of Kansas at Lawrence, 2005
   1. Henry Moore: Reclining Figure of Elmwood
   2. Pablo Picasso: Head of a Woman, 1932
   3. Hapshetsut: The Divine Potter
   4. Alberto Giacometti: Standing Woman #2
   5. Winged Victory: We’re Through

**Times of Day**
Mezzo-soprano, violin, cello, piano.
Texts: Raymond Carver
   1. The Minuet (Carver)
   2. Simple (Carver)
   3. The Best Time of the Day (Carver)

**Vanity (Blah Blah Me)**
Part of the cycle *The Seven Deadly Sins* (featuring songs by Michael John La Chiusa, Steven Flaherty, Ricky Ian Gordon, and...)
Soprano, clarinet, cello, bass, piano, and percussion; *Piano version available*
Text: Jake Heggie
First performance: Zankel Hall, New York, 2004

**Winter Roses**
Mezzo-soprano, string quintet, wind quintet, and piano
Text: Charlene Baldridge, Emily Dickinson, Frederica von Stade, Raymond Carver
First performance: Majorie Luke Theatre, Santa Barbara, CA, 2004
   Prologue: Winter Roses (Charlene Baldridge)
   I. Two Birds
      1. The Wren (Baldridge)
      2. The Robin (Dickinson)
   II. Three Shades (in memoriam C.v.S.)
      3. A Hero (Frederica von Stade)
      4. Sleeping (Raymond Carver)
      5. To My Dad (von Stade)
   III. Looking West
      6. Sweet Light (Carver)
   Epilogue: Late Fragment (Carver)

**From Emily’s Garden**
Soprano, flute, violin, cello, and piano
Text: Emily Dickinson
First performance: Old First Church, San Francisco, CA, 1999
   1. Here, where the Daisies fit my Head (revision of 1987 version)
2. In lands I never saw (revision of 1987 version)
3. To make a prairie
4. It makes no difference abroad

Before the Storm
Mezzo-soprano, cello, and piano
Texts: Judyth Walker, Emily Dickinson, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Dorothy Parker
First performance: Old First Church, San Francisco, CA, 1998
  1. Before the Storm (Judyth Walker)
  2. It sounded as if the streets were running (Emily Dickinson)
  3. What lips my lips have kissed (Edna St. Vincent Millay)
  4. The Thin Edge (Dorothy Parker)

My True Love Hath My Heart
Soprano, cello, and piano (also arranged as a duet for soprano, mezzo-soprano, cello, and piano)
Text: Sir Philip Sidney
Composed: 1996

Individual Songs with Piano

Soprano

Final Monologue from Master Class (2007) Text by Terrence McNally

Poems of Emily Dickinson
Ample make this bed (1999)
The sun kept setting (1999)
It makes no difference abroad (1998)
I shall not live in vain (1995)
As well as Jesus? (1995)
At last, to be identified! (1995)
If you were coming in the Fall (1987)
Here, where the Daisies fit my Head (1987)
In lands I never saw (1987)
She sweeps with many-colored Brooms (1987)
All that I do (1987)


Mezzo-Soprano

Sophie's Song (1998) Text by Frederica von Stade
Dixie (1997) Traditional
To Say Before Going to Sleep (1988) Poetry by Rainer Maria Rilke, Albert Ernest Flemming
Away in a Manger (1986) Traditional.

**Baritone**

Three Decembers (originally titled Last Acts)
Chamber opera in two acts
Libretto: Gene Scheer (based on Terrence McNally’s play Some Christmas Letters)
Premiere: Cullen Theatre at the Wortham Center, Houston Grand Opera, Houston, TX, 2008

For a Look or a Touch
Music drama for one actor and baritone
Libretto: Gene Scheer (based on interviews from the documentary Paragraph 175)
Premiere: Nordstrom Recital Hall, Seattle, WA, 2007

To Hell and Back
Opera in one act
Libretto: Gene Scheer (based on The Rape of Persephone)
Premiere: Mountain View Performing Arts Center, Palo Alto, CA, 2006

At the Statue of Venus
Music scene for soprano
Libretto: Terrence McNally
Premiere: Ellie Caulkins Opera House, Opera Colorado, Denver, CO, 2005

The End of the Affair
Opera in two acts
Libretto: Heather McDonald (based on novel by Graham Greene)
Revised libretto: Heather McDonald, Jake Heggie, Leonard Foglia
Premiere: Cullen Theatre at the Wortham Center, Houston Grand Opera, Houston, TX, 2004
Revised: 2004-2005

Dead Man Walking
Opera in two acts
Libretto: Terrence McNally (based on book by Sr. Helen Prejean, CSJ)
Premiere: War Memorial Opera House, San Francisco Opera, San Francisco, CA, 2000
March 14, 2009

Alanna Keenan
Franciscan University of Steubenville
1235 University Blvd.
Steubenville, OH 43952

Dear Alanna,

As composer and publisher of the song cycle The Deepest Desire, it is my pleasure to grant you permission to use as many musical examples from the score as you need for your doctoral dissertation. Congratulations on all of your hard work and I look forward to seeing a copy of your paper when it is complete.

All the best,

[Signature]
VITA

Alanna Keenan, soprano, is an active performer on both the operatic and recital stage. Her roles include Mother Marie (Dialogues of the Carmelites), Mrs. McClean (Susannah), Cathleen (Riders to the Sea), Hermia (A Midsummer Night’s Dream), Marcellina (Le nozze di Figaro), and the title role in Carmen. Oratorio credits include Fauré’s Requiem, Saint-Saëns’ Christmas Oratorio, Vivaldi’s Gloria, and Handel’s Messiah. She has recently performed recitals in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Wheeling, West Virginia, and Steubenville, Ohio. Ms. Keenan is currently assistant professor of music and directs the program in voice at Franciscan University of Steubenville, where she has served since Fall 2007. She conducts the University Chorale.

Ms. Keenan is a graduate of Simpson College with a Bachelor of Music in vocal performance, a graduate from Louisiana State University with a Master of Music in vocal performance, and is completing her Doctor of Musical Arts Degree in vocal performance with a minor in musicology.