The Innocence of Lennie Small in Carlisle Floyd's Opera Of Mice and Men In Excerpts Presented as a Performer's Guide

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THE INNOCENCE OF LENNIE SMALL IN CARLISLE FLOYD'S OPERA *OF MICE AND MEN* IN EXCERPTS PRESENTED AS A PERFORMER'S GUIDE

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
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in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts

in

The School of Music

by
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS........................................................................................................ ii

LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES................................................................................................... v

ABSTRACT.................................................................................................................................. vi

INTRODUCTION............................................................................................................................. 1

CHAPTER 1. OF MICE AND MEN: THE CREATION, AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF LENNIE SMALL................................................................................................................................. 5
    The Creation of Of Mice and Men......................................................................................... 5
    The Development of Lennie Small..................................................................................... 10

CHAPTER 2. ACT ONE, SCENE 1. OPENING SCENE WITH GEORGE AND “IT WAS SOMETHIN’ I COULD STROKE” ............................................................................................................. 13
    Analysis: Opening Scene with George............................................................................ 13
    Summary of Characteristics: “It Was Somethin’ I Could Stroke”................................. 21
    Analysis: “It Was Somethin’ I Could Stroke”................................................................. 22
    Performance Suggestions................................................................................................. 25

CHAPTER 3. ACT THREE, SCENE 1. “WHY DID YOU HAVE TO GO AN’ DIE?” AND BARN SCENE WITH CURLEY’S WIFE............................................................................................................... 32
    Analysis: “Why Did You Have To Go An’ Die?”.............................................................. 33
    Analysis: Barn Scene with Curley’s Wife........................................................................ 34
    Performance Suggestions................................................................................................. 50

CHAPTER 4. ACT THREE, SCENE 2. “OH, I FEEL COLD INSIDE” AND FINAL SCENE WITH GEORGE............................................................................................................................. 52
    Analysis: “Oh, I Feel Cold Inside”.................................................................................. 52
    Analysis: Final Scene with George.................................................................................. 55
    Performance Suggestions................................................................................................. 68

CONCLUSION............................................................................................................................... 71

APPENDIX A. CARLISLE FLOYD’S BIOGRAPHY...................................................................... 72

APPENDIX B. WORKS BY CARLISLE FLOYD........................................................................ 75

APPENDIX C. INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS.............................................................................. 76
    WNIB Classical 97 Chicago Interviews Julian Patrick, 1985......................................... 76
    Deseret News Interviews Carlisle Floyd, 1999................................................................. 83
    The Washington Opera Magazine Interviews Michael Hendrick, 2001....................... 85
    Louisiana Eccentric Observer (LEO) Weekly Interviews Carlisle Floyd, 2009............. 86
    Kentucky Courier Journal Interviews Michael Hendrick and Rod Nelma, 2009....... 88
LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES

Example 2.1 *Something I Could Stroke* motive, Act 1, Scene 1, mm. 70-72................................. 14
Example 2.2 “The cloth looked so soft, George.” Act 1, Scene 1, mm. 77-78................................. 15
Example 2.3 “I just wanted to stroke the cloth.” Act 1, Scene 1, mm. 81-82................................. 16
Example 2.4 “Just give me the word - I.” Act 1, Scene 1, mm. 172-75................................. 17
Example 2.5 “Just give me the word - II.” Act 1, Scene 1, mm. 184-86................................. 18
Example 2.6 “Just give me the word - III.” Act 1, Scene 1, mm. 189-91................................. 19
Example 2.7 “All right, George, I'll stay with you.” Act 1, Scene 1, mm. 193-96................................. 20
Example 3.1 *Bird* motive, Act 3, Scene 1, mm. 1-3................................................................. 33
Example 3.2 “Now I've got nothin' to pet.” Act 3, Scene 1, mm. 37-41........................................ 34
Example 3.3 “Our farm's got a small house.” Act 3, Scene 1, mm. 65-69................................. 37
Example 3.4 “It will all belong to us.” Act 3, Scene 1, mm. 133-136........................................ 40
Example 3.5 “Stop it! Stop yellin'!” Act 3, Scene 1, mm. 209-15........................................ 45
Example 3.6 “I done somethin' bad this time.” Act 3, Scene 1, mm. 244-49................................. 47
Example 4.1 “An' George is gonna give me hell.” Act 3, Scene 2, mm. 498-509................................. 54
Example 4.2 “George, I done somethin' terrible!” Act 3, Scene 2, mm. 538-43................................. 56
Example 4.3 “Go on, George. Go on, now.” Act 3, Scene 2, mm. 619-27................................. 63
Example 4.4 “An' I'll tend to my pets all day long.” Act 3, Scene 2, mm. 636-48................................. 65
Example 4.5 “I see it, George! I see it! There! Over there!” Act 3, Scene 2, mm. 685-94............. 69
ABSTRACT

*Of Mice and Men* is a 20th century American opera composed by Carlisle Floyd. Carlisle Floyd also served as librettist, as he did with all of his operas. Based on the American novel of the same name by John Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men* is Carlisle Floyd's second most performed opera. This project serves to demonstrate the innocence of the role of Lennie Small, as seen through his intellectual shortcomings, enhanced by the vocal line and music of the composer. A performer's guide is also provided.
INTRODUCTION

Composer Carlisle Floyd, age 94, born June 11, 1926, has been hailed as “the voice of American opera” in 2007 by Anne Midgette, writing in *Opera Quarterly*. The success of his best-known opera, *Susannah*, premiered when Floyd was a mere 25 years of age, brought further commissions. Kurt Herbert Adler and the Ford Foundation invited him to adapt his choice of a work by John Steinbeck into an opera, and Carlisle Floyd chose *Of Mice and Men*. The composer secured the rights for the opera in 1964, with Steinbeck's only caveat that there be no reference to the 1930's. It was completed in 1969 when Carlisle Floyd was age 35 and was premiered on January 22, 1970 by the Seattle Opera Association, directed by Frank Corsaro and conducted by Anton Coppola. Last year, 2020, marks the 50th anniversary since its premiere. While many biographies of Carlisle Floyd have been created throughout the composer's long career, the author has included, in the appendices, the official biography of Carlisle Floyd, used with the written permission of his publisher, Boosey & Hawkes.

It is not known if Carlisle Floyd intentionally composed *Of Mice and Men* in order to demonstrate innocence of the tragic figure of Lennie Small, and it is problematic to attribute something to a composer who is no longer able to answer for himself. Carlisle Floyd, although still alive, is of advanced age and no longer able to be interviewed. The author has always believed that the music of *Of Mice and Men* heightens the presence of the character of Lennie Small, and in particular his innocence, throughout the opera. In this study the author will attempt to demonstrate that musical motives in *Of Mice and Men* represent specific ideas that accentuate

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the innocence of Lennie Small's character. The elements noted in this analysis and the way the other characters in the opera see Lennie, combine to guide the audience to the same conclusion.

Merriam-Webster defines *innocence* as “lack of worldly experience or sophistication.”

Cambridge Dictionary's definition, “the quality of not having much experience of life and not knowing about the bad things that happen in life,” describes the character of Lennie Small even more closely. The arias and scenes of the opera reveal this lack of experience in life in each of the three acts: first in the opening scene of Act One between Lennie and George, which includes the aria, “It was somethin’ I could stroke.” Next, in the second scene of Act Two with Lennie's opening solo “Why did you have to go and die?,” having accidentally killed a puppy. That aria leads to the entrance of Curley's Wife (the only name she is given in the opera), their scene together, and her accidental murder. Finally, Lennie's aria, “Oh I feel cold inside,” which opens act three, and the final scene with Lennie and George conclude the opera.

In all the opera literature, there are certainly roles that encompass complete innocence, such as Marguerite in Gounod's *Faust*, and Lucretia in Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*. The author knows of only one operatic role for tenor whose character is that of complete innocence in the same way as that of the role of Lennie Small in *Of Mice and Men* by Carlisle Floyd.

Of several dissertations that have been written on other operas of Carlisle Floyd, the subject most common is *Susannah*. Floyd's most widely known and most often performed of his operas, *Susannah*, premiered in 1955 when Carlisle Floyd was 25. These studies approach *Susannah* from different perspectives, including an analysis of the opera in the light of the socio-

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political culture of the time of the composition, the 1950's.\(^7\) A second investigates the historical and musical context of the characters in *Susannah*,\(^8\) while a third presents character analyses of soprano Phyllis Curtin's premieres of roles in Carlisle Floyd's operas, including *Susannah*.\(^9\) Still another spotlights the religious elements in three of Carlisle Floyd's operas including *Susannah*, along with *Bilby's Doll*, and *Cold Sassy Tree*.\(^10\)

Various other studies of Floyd's operas exist, including a discussion of the historical figure of Eleanor of Aquitane from his opera *Flower and Hawk*.\(^11\) Another dissertation, from Louisiana State University, traces the development of Carlisle Floyd's *Willie Stark*,\(^12\) while another dissertation's focus is on *The Passion of Jonathan Wade*.\(^13\)

Not surprisingly, the subject of intellectual disability has been twice addressed through the context of the opera *Of Mice and Men*. One study, published in *Disability Studies Quarterly*,\(^14\) criticizes Carlisle Floyd's approach to intellectual disability, through the lens of a single production of the opera performed at Vancouver Opera. *American Music* was the source of another study, “Intellectual Disability in Carlisle Floyd's *Of Mice and Men*.”\(^15\) These latter approaches are beyond the scope of this study. Only one dissertation has been published on the

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7 Melissa L. Allen, “‘Ain’t it a pretty night?': An analysis of Carlisle Floyd's *Susannah* as an allegory for the socio-political culture of the United States in the 1950s” (Honors College project, James Madison University, 2017).
9 Bethany Kiral, “Character Analyses of the Soprano Roles Created by Phyllis Curtin in the Operas of Carlisle Floyd” (DMA dissertation, The Florida State University College of Music, 2010).
music of Carlisle Floyd's *Of Mice and Men*, which has focused exclusively on the only female character in the opera, the role of Curley's Wife.\(^{16}\) As the character Lennie Small is, like Curley's Wife, also one the chief characters of the opera, it is appropriate to analyze the tenor role of Lennie Small and demonstrate the uniqueness of his innocence in operatic literature.

Permission was obtained from Boosey & Hawkes, the publisher of the piano vocal score of the opera *Of Mice and Men*, the principal source of my study, for permission to use printed selections of the music to show musical motives of interest in my study.

Lastly, included are transcripts of interviews given by Carlisle Floyd, to provide a written record of the composer's own words with reference to the innocence of the character of Lennie Small. Other transcripts include interviews given by the author himself during the last 20 years, in association with professional stage appearances as Lennie Small.

CHAPTER 1. OF MICE AND MEN: THE CREATION, AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF LENNIE SMALL

The Creation of Of Mice and Men

After his success with Susannah, Carlisle Floyd received a commission from Kurt Herbert Adler at San Francisco Opera, and the Ford Foundation, to adapt a libretto from a work by John Steinbeck and to then write an opera based upon the libretto. Ultimately, however, Adler expressed concerns about complaints from San Francisco Opera patrons who believed the commission should go to a local, San Francisco Bay area composer.17

In the early stages of this process, Floyd chose Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men.18 In 1964, when the composer secured the rights for the opera, Steinbeck asked Floyd to consider using not only his novel, but his play of the same name, which Floyd would later admit he had not known existed, at the time.19 Floyd found the play's material to be a very close match to the original and agreed to Steinbeck's invitation to use it for his source material, in addition to the novel. Steinbeck agreed in writing on November 12, 1964.20 Steinbeck's only caveat was that there be no reference to the 1930's.21 In a 2013 interview with Greg Bortnichak from Observer, on the eve of the opening night of Of Mice and Men at Sarasota Opera, Carlisle Floyd was asked about Steinbeck's demand:

“Yes, he did. And it really surprised me--- that's the one thing I hadn't figured. I thought he going to take issue with the fact that I eliminated the character of Crooks in the book, which I did because I thought it was the right decision and I wanted to focus on the characters of George and Lennie. I wanted the focus to be on them exclusively. Also, the character of Crooks was not a very pleasant guy and I had no dramatic use for him, but he [John Steinbeck] did not object to that in the least. He did not want Of Mice and Men pinned down to a social message. Later I had the good fortune of going to a performance in New York with Elaine Steinbeck (John's widow)

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19 Holliday, 227.
20 Ibid.
and we talked about this, and she said: “You dramatized what John thought was important in the book.” Which was the whole drama of attachment, and the attachment of these two men, however flawed and imperfect it was ... it was still preferable to the isolation of the other ranch hands who simply had no contact with others.”

Julius Rudel, of New York City Opera, had expressed interest in presenting *Of Mice and Men* in City Opera's 1969 season, and once San Francisco Opera released all rights to the premiere, Floyd invited some of his most trusted friends over for a listen. The feedback was unanimous; everyone considered it boring. This propelled Floyd to dig deeper, and he took on the task to completely rewrite it. His changes included a new chase scene at the start of the opera to create interest, and expanded both the role of Curley's Wife, and to some degree, the role of Lennie Small. But it was the advice from Julius Rudel and Tito Capobianco, after a read-through, that spurred him to revise *Of Mice and Men* into the definitive version we have today, which retains less than a fourth of the original version. His same friends heard it again and gave their stamp of approval. Yet Rudel, despite his advice to Floyd, decided to postpone the opera at New York City Opera until spring 1970 due to, as he claimed to Floyd, financial challenges. Next came Cincinnati Opera and its patrons Patricia A. and J. Ralph Corbett, who expressed interest in presenting *Of Mice and Men* in the fall of 1969. Ultimately the premiere went to Glynn Ross at Seattle Opera, who agreed to present it without having heard it first.

After some delays, due to faculty duties at Florida State University, Floyd completed his orchestration while in Shreveport, Louisiana, while directing performances (Nov. 24, 25, and 26, 1969) of a production of *Susannah.* Meanwhile in New York, stage director Frank Corsaro

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23 Holliday, 234.
24 Ibid., 235.
25 Ibid., 237.
26 Ibid., 241.
began working with the singers in his apartment, talking about the drama and discovering the physical and psychological identities of each character. By mid-December Corsaro was staging, with Floyd in attendance. Corsaro interrupted the singers regularly in order to urge them to tone their acting down, to be non-operatic in simpler reactions or looks to each other. He asked tenor Robert Moulson, who premiered the role of Lennie Small, to sing a high B while seated on a board fifteen feet above the stage, legs hanging off the edge. Moulson wrote that Floyd would ask for changes when needed, but “only if they concurred with his ideas and only if they fit with what came before and after. Never was a change made just to make things easier.”

Once the company had moved to Seattle for staging rehearsals, Anton Coppola worked with the orchestra for more refinements, improving balancing issues. When the singers began rehearsals with the orchestra, the cast would gather in the wings to support each other's big singing moments, especially the long duet in Act 2 between Lennie and Curley's Wife, which ends in her murder.

Baritone Julian Patrick, who created the role of George Milton in the Seattle premiere, would later recall that Floyd's Act III orchestra prelude was one of his favorite moments in Of Mice and Men. Patrick referred to it as “the finest orchestra construction I have heard from any contemporary composer in years.”

Of Mice and Men, Carlisle Floyd's Musical Drama in Three Acts was completed in 1969 and received its premiere in 1970 by Seattle Opera, marking last year, 2020, the opera's 50th anniversary. The opening night performance on January 22, 1970, as with each of the other four performances, January 24, 28, 30, and February 1, received standing ovations.

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27 Holliday, 242.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid., 244.
30 Ibid., 245.
Most reviews from West Coast newspapers were radiant, including “The best new American opera to come along in many, many years,” and “Picks you up and shakes you hard, then drops you drained and overwhelmed... an artwork of stunning impact.”

Robert Commanday, critic of the San Francisco Chronicle, whose review was reprinted by The New York Times, was more reserved. He acknowledged Floyd's stylistic growth since Susannah but thought Steinbeck's harshness had been blunted by the romanticism of the score, yet he wrote, “...Of Mice and Men promises to be around for some time to come.”

No other review could match the one in Time magazine, which compared Of Mice and Men's emotional impact to that of Porgy and Bess, pointing out Floyd's mastery of human situations, and his ability to create music that elevated “foolishness, vanity, and ambition to the level of high tragedy... Floyd's opera has calluses on its hands and hot blood in its heart.” and predicted the opera would endure in popularity.

Later in his life, Carlisle Floyd revealed his two proudest accomplishments. While the first was the complete reconstruction of his piano technique with Sidney Foster, his second was Of Mice and Men, a journey of seven years from his first to the final version, which he considered a labor of love. In 2014, while at San Francisco Opera for a production of Susannah, Floyd was asked in a September 27, 2014 interview with William Burnett, “Now that Susannah has joined the performance repertory of the “main” San Francisco Opera season, which of your other works would you regard as appropriate for the War Memorial Opera House? Floyd responded, “My opera Of Mice and Men is the most frequently performed after Susannah

31 Holliday, 245.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid., 245-6.
34 Ibid., 225.
and should be done here. I think another one that would work well is my comedy, *Cold Sassy Tree*, which, by the way, was dedicated to David Gockley.”

Robert Wilder Blue of *San Francisco Opera Magazine* hinted at Floyd's long association with David Gockley in his feature on Carlisle Floyd that same year. He wrote, “On July 9, 1971, Floyd attended a new production of his most recent opera, *Of Mice and Men*, and met David Gockley, the 28-year-old general director-designate of Houston Grand Opera. After the performance Gockley pitched his ideas to the composer over Jack Daniels at Floyd’s hotel: new productions of *Susannah* and *Of Mice and Men*, to be followed by a new opera.

After its 1970 premiere at Seattle Opera, *Of Mice and Men* was next produced that summer by Central City Opera in eighteen performances between June 27 and July 25, with tenor Robert Moulson returning in the role of Lennie. Baritone Julian Patrick also returned for this second production. Years later, in a 1985 telephone interview with Bruce Duffie, Patrick singled out his appearances in *Of Mice and Men* as “one of the high points of my life.” Of the performances a Central City Opera, *The Rocky Mountain News* in Denver expressed: “Gripping, intense, dynamic... subtle, touching... poignant, moving.”

Near the end of September 1970, Floyd was in Kansas City at the Lyric Theater (renamed the current Lyric Opera of Kansas City in 1974) for the third *Of Mice and Men* production, although the first with an entire group of new singers, and for which Floyd himself did not stage

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37 Holliday, 247.


39 Holliday, 247.

direct\textsuperscript{41}. Only one month later in October, \textit{Of Mice and Men} received another brand-new cast, including tenor William Neill (with whom I took a few voice lessons), as Lennie in a production by St. Paul Opera\textsuperscript{42} (which merged with Minnesota Opera in 1976),\textsuperscript{43} receiving more positive press reception.\textsuperscript{44}

\textit{Of Mice and Men} went on to be produced by San Francisco Opera (1971), New York City Opera (1972), Houston Grand Opera (1972), and Cincinnati Opera (1973). The European premiere took place on November 30, 1974, in a German translation at Augsberg, Germany.\textsuperscript{45}

\textbf{The Development of Lennie Small}

John Steinbeck based the character of Lennie on a real-life ranch hand who was imprisoned in California in 1937 after killing his boss in retaliation for the firing of his friend.\textsuperscript{46} In late 1963 Carlisle Floyd, who had just completed \textit{The Sojourner and Mollie Sinclair}, took a look at Steinbeck's \textit{Of Mice and Men} and found himself “struck by its play-like qualities in addition to its memorable characters and theatrical scenes”\textsuperscript{47} and began to imagine tenor Richard Cassilly in the role of Lennie Small.\textsuperscript{48} Floyd wrote:

Lennie, in order to allow me to deal with him musically, would be characterized primarily as a child: a physical giant with the self-image, as Frank Corsaro put it, of a small and rather helpless mouse. I wanted to de-emphasize the empty-eyed, slack-jawed conception... which is where some actors begin and end their portrayal... and I felt I had Steinbeck in my corner since he has George frequently refer to Lennie as being “just a kid.”\textsuperscript{49}

\textsuperscript{41} Holliday, 248.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{43} Minnesota Opera, “History.” https://mnopera.org/about/history.
\textsuperscript{44} Holliday, 249.
\textsuperscript{46} Holliday, 225.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 226.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 227.
In the 2013 interview with Greg Bortnichak, Carlisle Floyd was asked more specifically about his concept of Lennie Small, and what he thought of this author's own interpretation:

“Of Mice and Men is a work that is unique in a sense because it is most intimately understood by two men: John Steinbeck and yourself. In light of the state of Texas using the character of Lennie Small as a benchmark to decide legal mental retardation in criminal trials (i.e., the “Lennie Small criteria”), do you view Lennie as a character that is afflicted by a cognitive handicap, or do you view him, as Michael Hendrick (playing Lennie in Sarasota Opera's 2013 production) put it, as a “simple” or “childlike” man who has the capability of overcoming his deficiencies through learning and love? In short, is Lennie sick, or is he just naive?”

Floyd responded:

“I think he is impaired. I think he has the mental capacity of about a six-year-old. And one of the first things I had to do after I had done the libretto and started composing was to decide how to treat him musically ... I've seen him played as a slack-jawed idiot, and I very much resented that. I don't think that's the character. I think you have to make it understandable in the first scene, why George spends his life with Lennie. Lennie must have some appeal just as a human being, however limited. And I think that's the appeal of a child. And when I first started doing the music, I felt, how do I treat somebody who is weak-minded? But then I thought in the book he keeps saying he is just a big kid, in the book, and that pointed me towards writing music that sounded like a child, that suggested a child or someone very innocent. And so his aria in the first scene is my big chance to win the audience for Lennie right from the beginning because he explains what he loves ... and George asks the perfectly obvious question of, 'Why do you want a dead mouse?' and he is very put off by this, but obviously, not Lennie.”

For the record, to The Observer's Greg Bortnichak's question to Carlisle Floyd about this author's stage interpretation of the role of Lennie Small, it must be included that the interviewer misunderstood and therefore mischaracterized th author's response in an earlier interview with him. While the author does consider Lennie to be “simple” and/or “childlike”, he never intended to imply that Lennie has the capability of overcoming his deficiencies through learning and love.

In Floyd's latter revisions, the new music for Lennie was the greatest challenge to him. It was important for the audience to become attached to Lennie from the beginning. The compassion that George has for Lennie, to prevent him from suffering in the end, needed to
deeply affect the audience. Replacing tenor Richard Cassilly, Robert Moulson created the role of Lennie Small in the Seattle Opera production of 1970. Moulson later expressed:

I was immediately impressed by... the beautiful, direct, but musically complicated melodies... I soon learned that the pure singing of the part, with its extremely high tessitura, would challenge me to keep in character and not yield to the desire to 'belt'.\textsuperscript{50}

\textsuperscript{50} Holliday, 238-9.
CHAPTER 2. ACT ONE, SCENE 1. OPENING SCENE WITH GEORGE, AND “IT WAS SOMETHIN’ I COULD STROKE”

Analysis: Opening Scene with George

The opera *Of Mice and Men* does not open with a prelude, rather, it begins from the downbeat of the music in mid-action, first with the screech of police sirens followed by the orchestra’s entrance. Two men appear onstage and suddenly hide themselves. Once the police sirens have ended, we learn that the two, George Milton and Lennie Small, migrant ranch hands in California who work from job to job, have spent two hours running from the police, through the woods. In conversation, George reminds Lennie that he had promised Lennie's aunt to be Lennie's caretaker. Lennie, while a big man with great strength, is simple minded, and has a propensity, as we learn, for getting himself into trouble. Lennie has a great desire to stroke soft objects, like mice or rabbits, but is unable to control his strength when petting them, and inadvertently kills the animals by stroking them too hard.

After the sirens dissipate, George berates Lennie for creating their situation, “Trouble, always trouble: that's all you're good for! You're nothin' but trouble!” After Lennie's simple response, “But George, I didn't mean no harm,” a significant motive is heard for the first time. See Example 2.1 on the following page. This motive, which the author shall call the *Something I Could Stroke* motive, returns throughout the opera, and is, he believes, a musical representation of the character of Lennie's innocence. The author has added what he believes is a missing dot to the half notes in measure 71, to fulfill the full 6/4 meter as indicated.

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52 Ibid.
Example 2.1. *Something I Could Stroke* motive, mm. 70-72

*Of Mice and Men* by Carlisle Floyd, John Steinbeck  
© 1971 By Carlisle Floyd, Boosey & Hawkes, Inc. Sole Agent.  
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Here and throughout, all examples are reprinted from *Of Mice and Men: A musical drama in three acts, five scenes* by Carlisle Floyd. New York: Boosey & Hawkes, Inc., 1971.  
Corrected and revised edition, 1996.

As the conversation continues, George asks Lennie, “Did you have to touch that girl's dress? Couldn't you just have looked?”,\(^{54}\) with written indication to be spoken on approximate pitches. The audience learns that Lennie has grabbed a woman’s dress (unaware and unconcerned that it was being worn) in order to stroke its softness, and the woman had accused Lennie of molestation. George's very questions themselves further reveal Lennie's nature as not being aware of what he was doing, when he had been touching the woman's dress. As George later scolds Lennie, “...she thought you was out to rape her!”\(^{55}\)

Underneath Lennie's innocent response, marked without indicated pitches, “The cloth looked so soft George. I just wanted to feel it,”\(^{56}\) we hear the motive again, connecting to Lennie's simple thought process. See Example 2.2 on the following page.

\(^{53}\) Floyd, 5.  
\(^{54}\) Ibid., 6.  
\(^{55}\) Ibid.  
\(^{56}\) Ibid.
When George replies, “But you scared her, Lennie. She thought you was out to rape her!”\textsuperscript{57} the repeated motive, along with George's words to Lennie, that Lennie had not understood the confusion he had caused for the woman, have now solidified our understanding that because of Lennie's innocence, he was not aware that he had scared the woman, when he stroked her dress while it was still on her body. With Lennie's next reply, “I just wanted to stroke the cloth, it was yellow and looked so soft,”\textsuperscript{59} the \textit{Something I Could Stroke} motive has not only reached aural familiarity, but the listener has consciously awaited its return. See Example 2.3 on the following page.

Lennie's reasoning clearly reveals his lack of awareness of what he had done. With George's rebuttal, “But she screamed, Lennie. Why didn't you turn her loose?”,\textsuperscript{60} Lennie confirms this lack of understanding with, “She scared me, George! I couldn't think!”\textsuperscript{61}

\textsuperscript{57} Floyd, 6.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 7.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.
More police sirens sound, and the two hide themselves once again. When the coast is clear, George, almost to himself, contemplates how simple his life would be, without having to take care of Lennie, how, without Lennie, he could find a stable, decent life for himself. George angrily accuses Lennie of getting them into trouble once again, singing “My life would be so simple by myself, I could live so easy all alone.”63 This musical material will also return in the final scene and therefore, become poignant. George lists things he could do if on his own, “I, me, and mine,”64 if only not having to take care of Lennie, how he could find a stable, decent life for himself. As George's music unfolds, “Without you, I could live where I pleased,”65 this may be Floyd's way of not only providing the baritone with an aria but implying that this speech has been articulated many times before. The fact that George feels compelled to give this speech, is another indicator of Lennie's innocence. George's familiar message, ironically, comforts Lennie, who has heard all of this before. He realizes the deeper thread in George's complaining, that

Example 2.3. “I just wanted to stroke the cloth.” Act 1, Scene 1, mm. 81-82

62 Floyd, 7.
63 Ibid., 8.
64 Ibid., 9-13.
65 Ibid., 9.
George, through his energy and attention, confirms a much stronger message than his words, of how much he cares for him. So George’s words ring hollow and fairly routine as Lennie pretends to leave George behind, saying, “Just give me the word and I’ll strike out alone.” The routine continues with Lennie taunting George thus, three times.\textsuperscript{66}

Just before Lennie's first taunt, “Just give me the word and I'll strike out alone,” we hear the return of the musical motive, repeated and transposed before each of the following two taunts. The first appearance of the motive, at Rehearsal 27, begins on F.\textsuperscript{68} See Example 2.4.

\textbf{Example 2.4.} “Just give me the word - I.” Act 1, Scene 1, mm. 172-175\textsuperscript{69}

\textsuperscript{66} Floyd, 13-15.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., 13-14.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., 13.
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid.
Responding to Lennie's first taunt, George reminds Lennie of how he had previously agreed to be Lennie's caretaker, “I promised your aunt I'd look after you.”\textsuperscript{70} When the new motive returns, just after Rehearsal 29, it begins a major 3rd higher on A\textsuperscript{71}. See Example 2.5.

\textbf{Example 2.5. “Just give me the word - II.” Act 1, Scene 1, mm. 184-186}\textsuperscript{72}

Just before the 3rd time Lennie repeats the same taunting phrase, “Just give me the word and I’ll strike out alone,”\textsuperscript{73} the motive has returned to original F. See Example 2.6, next page.

This introduction of the \textit{Something I Could Stroke} motive is an indicator of Lennie's innocence of mind. The motive seems to incorporate the quality of a lullaby, which similarly communicated to the audience that it is observing a character with this innocence.

At this point George, hearing this repetition, has reached his limit of patience and demands that he wants Lennie to stay, just to get him to stop. Lennie answers, “Alright, George, I’ll stay with you”\textsuperscript{74} and we immediately hear the motive again, but this time doubled in length.

\textsuperscript{70} Floyd, 14.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 14-15.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 15.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid.
Example 2.6. “Just give me the word - III.” Act 1, Scene 1, mm. 189-191

The motive has now developed and grown into something more. The new consequent begins a perfect 4th higher. See Example 2.7 on the following page. We will see this longer expression of the motive again.

George notices Lennie's hand in his pocket, stroking something with delight. George demands that he give over the object, already knowing it is yet another dead mouse and throws it

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25 Floyd, 15.
far into the woods, saying, “But it's dead Lennie! You killed it! It's dead!” Lennie has a temper tantrum and George asks Lennie, “What 'cha want of a dead mouse?” 76 and musically, the Just

Example 2.7. “All right, George, I'll stay with you.” Act 1, Scene 1, mm. 193-9677

Give Me The Word motive is used as a transition to set up Lennie's full vocal response, an aria, and we hear the motive again, now having moved for the first time to the solo voice.

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76 Floyd, 18.
77 Ibid., 15-16.
Summarization of Characteristics: “It Was Somethin' I Could Stroke”

- **Range:** E₃ to A₄

- **Vocal Line:** The vocal line begins simply with an easy motivic four-bar phrase followed by a four-bar response to the phrase. It then moves to a spoken format with approximated pitches, for four bars. The original vocal motive returns for a new six-bar iteration that reaches into the high voice for the first half, but middle-voice for the last half that includes a leap of a ninth. The aria returns to spoken format for six bars, then finishes in singing format, with a return to a final iteration of the motive as expressed in its opening, including a leap of a 10th, to A₄.

- **Metric Organization:** Alternates between 5/4 and 6/4, with occasional 3/4 and 4/4 bars.

- **Rhythm:** Combined quarter, quarter, eighth, and half notes with dotted, tied, and syncopated rhythms.

- **Expression and Tempo Markings:** Slow with movement. Aria begins in *Adagio con moto* with a quarter note equaling 70 beats per minute. When moving to each of the two spoken sections, the tempo increases to 80 quarter beats per minute. With each return to singing format, the tempo slows back to its original 70. The aria moves forward steadily in the orchestra accompaniment with syncopation throughout.

- **Accompaniment:** The accompaniment is chordal with syncopated rhythm.

- **Level of Difficulty:** Moderate. “It Was Somethin’ I Could Stroke” requires the singer to sing the melodic material with calm and beautiful phrasing, interspersed with heightened spoken lines in rhythm, unpitched, yet the spoken lines must imbue emotion while remaining, measure by measure, with the moving accompaniment underneath.

- **Length:** Thirty-nine measures and approximately three minutes.
Analysis: “It Was Somethin' I Could Stroke”

The aria “It was somethin’ I could stroke” is actually Lennie Small's answer to a question by George Milton, “What you want of a dead mouse?” From the opening of the aria we hear the motive again, having moved to the solo voice. Examining this aria, the author will correlate the similar musical motives to demonstrate the innocence of the character of Lennie Small.

While the opening measure resides in D Major, there is also a simultaneous A Major Ninth chord, along with a B in both the vocal line and orchestra, which might be expressed as passing tones in contrary motion. In these opening measures Floyd begins in D Major with A Major, so tonic and dominant simultaneously, obfuscating a clearly defined key. This opening measure shows the juxtaposition of tonality with something outside of traditional tonality. But the music seems to also support another characteristic of tonality, that is, triads and tarian harmonies arranged in relationships of a third. The opening measures show that the music retains some aspects of tonality, but also additional notes outside of a triad to add color. For example, at one bar after Rehearsal 35, “somethin’ I could pet,”78 we see that in the second measure, a G# has also been added in the bass. G# is not in the tonality of either tonic or dominant. We hear the opening key of D Major but the sense of key is affected by the inclusion of C#, E, and G#. However, the G# is an enharmonic spelling of Ab which is, after all, a part of the tonality of an upcoming chord in the B-section of the aria, that of E♭ Minor. It finally becomes clear that each note of the motive is exactly matched by the notes of the harmony. The solo voice expresses it melodically while the orchestra plays it vertically. And in that sense, you can express the presence of the A natural and the B natural simply as part of the notes of the motive itself.

78 Floyd, 19.
The G# that was introduced, has remained into the next bar, at two bars after Rehearsal 35. It might be expressed as the leading tone of the A class pitch, or “five” (which begins as a drone that starts at Rehearsal 36, at the beginning of the B section). Floyd wanted to introduce the pitch A before he gets to Rehearsal 36 when the tonality changes completely, and he wants the A to stay in the ear. The earlier leading tone serves as a preamble, and the droning A now represents Lennie's thoughts as the aria reaches a section of exclusively spoken words by Lennie.

At four bars before Rehearsal 36, at “somethin' soft with fur” there is no longer a musical statement in the orchestra because Lennie is stating it in the sung solo line. At three bars before Rehearsal 36, an F and C are introduced. The author thinks the presence of F is significant. It creates a meaningful musical problem that is quickly resolved to F♭, enharmonically E, or V of V. The mere presence of F helps us to accept the upcoming Eb Minor that opens the chromatic B section. Notes are slowly creeping in, bit by bit, to prepare us for that upcoming Eb Minor which we have yet to hear. And so the F is quickly resolved but the sound of the F stays in the ear, along with an accompanying brand-new C. By two bars before Rehearsal 36, the F and C have led us to a new spelling of a G♭ Minor triad, G♭, B♭, D♭. Note that there is still the C# pitch in this measure, reinterpreted as a D♭, a common tone, aiding in musical coherence while Lennie sings an A♭. The F remains, hanging there. The solo voice resolves to that F♭, yes, enharmonic to E, so we have now come around to V of V which will bring us eventually back to V by the second half of the bar that is two bars before Rehearsal 36. Floyd has provided a complete statement of the musical motive, further developed. These key relations

79 Floyd, 19.
80 Ibid.
support that Floyd continues in tonality. Floyd has remained linked to original D Major, through A Major.

In the start of the B section, at Rehearsal 36, we seem to be finished with A Major but the A tone, Lennie's thinking, persists in its drone, through every measure of the B section. Floyd uses it to remain anchored in V but to also serve the move into Eb. In Rehearsal 36 we also have in the high instrumental solo, the A that moves to Ab, resulting in an Eb Minor triad, returning to the motive in the next measure, one bar after Rehearsal 36, which continues to be developed in the final two measures of B section of the aria. With the return of A-prime section, our motive has come along, too, and is restated exactly as before. The material presented has stayed close to tonality even while venturing off into chromaticism, seemingly growing out like a centrifugal force, yet all the while the A natural, the tone of Lennie's character and innocence, can be interpreted as the centripetal force to keep us tied down from going too far away. You could also characterize this as a sense of centricity, as centering on the tonic of D Major. We hear the centripetal force returning to tonic with the new endings to A’ and B’. Lennie rises to a high G#, the leading tone to his following high A, which is, again, the bringing out of the same two pitches as seen in earlier places of the aria, the juxtaposition of the Ab harmony in Eb Minor, with the A.

Reaching Rehearsal 36, two bars in, at the spoken “That mouse didn't cost a cent,” we have a return of the Something I Could Stroke motive in the accompanying music, and again, four bars in, accompanying “I didn't see no harm in carryin' it around with me.” We transition to a new restatement of the Something I Could Stroke motive with the pickup to Rehearsal 37.

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81 Floyd, 19.
82 Ibid., 20.
83 Ibid.
in Lennie's vocal line, “It was small and sharp and grey.”\textsuperscript{84} However, the tenor line, here, develops into a finishing statement of the same motive of which we have only heard the first part, up to this point. The motive develops into its full, unfolded melodic completion, all the way to the caesura before Rehearsal 38.\textsuperscript{85} At Rehearsal 38, Lennie returns to spoken delivery with “I didn't mean to kill my mouse”\textsuperscript{86} and five bars later (as opposed to four bars later, in the first spoken rendition), with “He tried to run away,”\textsuperscript{87} there is more of the \textit{Something I Could Stroke} motive underneath both. Reaching Rehearsal 40,\textsuperscript{88} the motive does not return as usual, but instead, a return to “Something small, not growed up yet”\textsuperscript{89} that we first heard twice before, at four bars after Rehearsal 35,\textsuperscript{90} and two bars before Rehearsal 38.\textsuperscript{91} Each of the “Somethin' small, not growed up yet”\textsuperscript{92} are differently stated musically, with this last one, in Eb Minor, with Lennie's A “thinking tone” finally taking its greatest place, with a sung high-A fermata. Lennie’s aria ends on V, creating a sense of an open-ended question to George, but immediately following, in the next two bars leading to George’s response, at Rehearsal 41, we get a Perfect Authentic Cadence back to D Major.\textsuperscript{93}

\textbf{Performance Suggestions}

Tenors in the future who sing Lennie will benefit greatly from knowing the path of the operatic role, vocally and dramatically. The first aria, “It was somethin’ I could stroke”, \textsuperscript{94}

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[84]{Floyd, 20.}
\footnotetext[85]{Ibid., 21.}
\footnotetext[86]{Ibid.}
\footnotetext[87]{Ibid.}
\footnotetext[88]{Ibid., 22.}
\footnotetext[89]{Ibid.}
\footnotetext[90]{Ibid., 19.}
\footnotetext[91]{Ibid., 21.}
\footnotetext[92]{Ibid., 22.}
\footnotetext[93]{Ibid.}
\footnotetext[94]{Ibid., 18-19.}
\end{footnotes}
includes several vocal and dramatic challenges. Just prior to the aria, in the opening scene of Act I, George notices that Lennie has killed another mouse, and is stroking the fur of the dead mouse hidden inside his pocket. George demands that Lennie give over the mouse, against Lennie's protestations. George throws the mouse deeper into the woods which triggers a childish temper tantrum in Lennie, as his protests transition to sobbing. George asks him, “What ya want of a dead mouse?” and the aria is Lennie's answer to George's question. It is a significant challenge to achieve the vocal lyricism needed, after the tantrum and cries of frustration which just precede. The physicalizing of the prior temper tantrum and emotion must not be overdone to the point that one cannot immediately recover one's breath before the opening line of the aria.

Another danger is to use one's voice in yelling out towards George, tiring out one's voice unnecessarily. In my opinion, a tenor must always guard against sacrificing one's singing at the altar of acting, but it is prudent to be especially careful, here. It does not matter how convincing the tantrum is, if the singing line is not beautifully delivered. The author learned this lesson when making this mistake in the first production for which he learned the role, as the cover for Lennie Small with New York City Opera in 1998. One of the distinguishing characteristics of the aria is the use of speaking interspersed with the singing, in the aria. The first speaking section is directed to the character of George, while the second speaking section is more spoken to oneself in reflection. In those sections, the manner of speaking is not designated with approximate pitches, so Floyd's idea was for the tenor to speak the lines with freedom of the pitch, according to each tenor. However, Floyd has given a rhythmic structure to the spoken lines, in order to help the tenor stay lined up with the accompaniment. This is particularly important in the second spoken section, when the tenor voice must line up with the accompaniment at two bars before

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95 Floyd, 18.
Rehearsal 39, when the singing returns, at “held him tight in my hand!”\textsuperscript{96} over a C Diminished Ninth chord. This entire sequence, from the scene with the mouse, the protesting, the temper tantrum and crying, must be practiced at full voice in rehearsal regularly in order to discover the pacing and vocal balance needed to sing the vocal lines, both out to the audience as is typical in an aria, but also, at times, directed to another character on the stage. However, that is yet another challenge, because when Lennie is directing a sung or spoken line to George, it cannot be done in the same way that one expects such interactions in people. Lennie must show at all times, including in the aria, that he communicates in a way that illuminates Lennie's general lack of awareness of his actions, and his innocence to the consequence of his actions. It is interesting to note, and remarkable, that Carlisle Floyd gives almost no specific stage directions during this aria, while having provided many other stage directions throughout \textit{Of Mice and Men}. After all, he is not only the composer and librettist but was frequently the stage director of his own operas. His only stage direction, at the start of the first spoken section, is simply, “looking down at his empty hand” and at the start of the second spoken section, “again looking down at his hand.” This allows the tenor much creative freedom.

When one thinks of a typical operatic aria, this aria demonstrates an approach that is almost the opposite of audience expectation. When Lennie sings the aria, he must appear to be singing the aria almost to himself, with only occasional references to George. Lennie does not have trouble finding the words, as he knows what makes him happiest. Usually in opera, another person would make the character happiest, but in this case it is only the act of petting soft things. That is the essence of Lennie's character. Lennie must convey it convincingly yet within the context of who he is, and if it comes across as too directly delivered, it lessens the effect.

\textsuperscript{96} Floyd, 21.
As the aria concludes at Rehearsal 41, two transitional measures are heard before George responds to Lennie.\(^97\) The two measures are a solo violinist, playing a new motive that will return on occasion, at emotionally poignant dramatic moments, to the very end of the opera, the *Life Will Be Good When We Get Us Our Farm* motive. It is not an accident that Floyd introduces the motive here. Just before George's reply, “Lennie, I'll tell you what, when we get our farm and our little house,”\(^98\) Lennie has just shared, in his aria, what is most important to him in all the world, and George recognizes that innocence. Some people desire wealth, some fame, and others, power. But his friend Lennie wants only the companionship of animals in order to stroke their soft fur. George says to Lennie, when we have that farm one day, Lennie can have that thing that he wants more than anything. George will buy him “a puppy, some baby chicks, an' maybe even some rabbits,”\(^99\) leading us to Rehearsal 42, *più vivo*.\(^100\)

Accompanying Lennie's two-measure vocal line, “Really George? Even rabbits? Oh, I'd like that George, I'd like that!”,\(^101\) the motive *Something I Could Stroke* returns, and even expands to include the following line by Lennie in the aria, “...something I could pet.” George's next warning is prescient, “But you can't get in no trouble or we'll never get our house and farm”\(^102\) in foretelling the tragic end of their dream. But there is another aspect to that warning. It demonstrates, again, through George's need to issue the warning altogether, than Lennie cannot avoid embodying the tragic ending, due to his innocent disability in being able to rein himself while petting soft things. Lennie responds, “Oh, I'll be good! I swear it! I'll be so good, don't worry George. I won't do nothin' bad, I swear it!”\(^103\) Lennie wants to be good. Lennie equates

\(^{97}\) Floyd, 22.  
\(^{98}\) Ibid., 22-23.  
\(^{99}\) Ibid., 23.  
\(^{100}\) Ibid.  
\(^{101}\) Ibid.  
\(^{102}\) Ibid.  
\(^{103}\) Ibid., 24.
being in trouble, as having been bad, to have done another “bad” thing. Just after Lennie sings, “I swear it!” we get a two-measure musical re-interpretation of the vocal line just sung prior by Lennie, “Oh, I'll be good! I swear it! I'll be so good, don't worry George.” (Stage direction: “Lennie stretches out beside George.”)\textsuperscript{104} It is the time of day when Lennie falls asleep as George tells him the story of their future house and farm together. With Lennie's urging, George takes a few measures before beginning. (Stage direction: “Lennie nudges George impatiently and, with a sigh, George props up on his elbow and begins the nightly recounting of their dream.”)\textsuperscript{105} In those transitional measures we hear again, for only the second time, the \textit{Life Will Be Good When We Get Us Our Farm} motive, expressed twice consecutively, leading us to Rehearsal 46.\textsuperscript{106}

George begins his nightly story to Lennie, and the \textit{Life Will Be Good} motive now appears in George's own voice, at Rehearsal 46 with the opening words, “One day soon we'll save up enough.”\textsuperscript{107} Floyd has given it to us twice before so now its full restatement only reinforces our familiarity. The theme is powerfully restated in the orchestral interlude leading into the final scene of the third act. That \textit{One Day Soon} motive, at Rehearsal 46,\textsuperscript{108} is one of the most powerful motives for the entire opera, and, while not tied directly to Lennie's character, is tied to the pervasive idea of hope, the hope for something better than one has.

George continues to describe to Lennie the vision of their future home. At Rehearsal 49 we come to another restatement of \textit{One Day Soon} motive, now with the words, “An' that small-shingled house, on two acres of land with its two acres of air an' two acres of sky...”\textsuperscript{109} before

\textsuperscript{104} Floyd, 24. \textsuperscript{105} Ibid., 25. \textsuperscript{106} Ibid. \textsuperscript{107} Ibid. \textsuperscript{108} Ibid. \textsuperscript{109} Ibid., 27.
Lennie continues George's statement, in vocal duet with George, “...will all belong to us. It will be our home. An' we'll live off the fat of the land!” which is followed by two disjunct measures, spinning a displaced melody among registers, easily compared to Rehearsal 47.

At Rehearsal 52 is heard a beautiful L'istesso tempo, più cantabile (Stage direction: “George sits up.”) of the motive Life Will Be Good, which we now know well. George is embellishing the story in his vocal line... “the windmill, the garden, the swarm of bees...” The Life Will Be Good motive has now reached the heart and emotion of the audience. Floyd has succeeded in associating the theme with hope for the future. The audience begins to relate to the struggle of these two and begins to root for their future happiness. As George asks Lennie if he can see it- that home, that future- the audience members also want to see it again for themselves, as new, in their own memories. They want Lennie to see it, they can feel through the music that he indeed is going to see it, and thereby we all share it. 'That farm. Look over there. Look! Go on, George... Look over there. Can you almost see it?' It is the simple message of hope and yearning, and Floyd succeeds in inviting the audience to see it as well. Floyd entices the audience to see it, just like George entices Lennie to see it, and in some ways, what makes this so impressionable and deep for the audience is that the music leads the audience into a wish to see this hope, again themselves. The audience members have yearned to see it again in their own lives, just like these two grown men are looking for it. 'The clover-field. The shadows, cool on the grass.' “I can almost see it!” “Can you hear the birds crowded in the trees, singing at dusk? Then Lennie, you tell it!” “Can I? Alright!” And Lennie finishes the story, while George urges

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110 Floyd, 28-29.
111 Ibid., 26.
112 Ibid., 29.
113 Ibid., 30.
114 Ibid., 31-32.
him on, “Tell our dream! We'll save up enough. And we'll buy our small house on two acres of land! Yes, Lennie! And it will all belong to us, it will be our home.” And then, “We'll even have us a mailbox down by the road, and we'll write on its side for all to see, “Home of George Milton and Lennie Small”! (For all to see, he said.) “And we'll live off the fat of the land,” itself a new theme brought back by Floyd, from a scene in the bunkhouse during Act II.

At the end of the duet, we reach Rehearsal 59 and the orchestra section, a strong reinforcing “Yes” to their dream, in Più appassionato ma largamente (Stage direction: “Lennie, beside himself with delight, throws his cap in the air and rolls over and over on the ground. George, smiling warmly at his pleasure, watches him. After some time, Lennie lies back, sighing happily and covers his face with his cap.” These two are feeling, 'This dream is going to happen to us, it's going to be there! But at three bars after Rehearsal 60, at Meno mosso, a new motive is heard, that will return in the opera's final act, leading into Lennie's aria "Oh I feel cold inside.” At Rehearsal 61, as Lennie is asleep, George finishes, (Andante molto sostenuto, stage direction: “very quietly”), “Some dreams is so far away, an' those dreams can break your heart, but our dream is so close, just across the street.” The audience sees the dream, even feels it, yet also knows, these two are not going to obtain it.

\[\text{Floyd, 32-33.}\]
\[\text{Ibid., 33.}\]
\[\text{Ibid., 34.}\]
\[\text{Ibid., 35.}\]
\[\text{Ibid.}\]
\[\text{Ibid., 36.}\]
CHAPTER 3. ACT THREE, SCENE 1. “WHY DID YOU HAVE TO GO AN' DIE?”, AND BARN SCENE WITH CURLEY'S WIFE

Act Three's opening, Deliberato (♩ = 48), followed to measures later by Più mosso ma sostenuto (♩ = 58), sets the scene of Lennie, sitting alone in the barn. Scene one's opening reads: (Interior of a barn the following afternoon. There are slopes of hay inside and a loft with sacks of grain stacked against the wall. Leading up to the loft is a ladder, nailed to one wall. Also visible are old wagon wheels, horse collars, and the like. The late afternoon sun comes in through cracks in the walls, streaking the mounds of hay. From outside is heard the clang of horseshoes striking a metal peg and the sound of men's voices. Inside the barn there should be a feeling of quiet and lazy warmth.)

A theme the author calls Bird motive appears very close to the opening, in only the third measure, and again at Rehearsal 2 and after. This motive is a representation of Lennie's emotional state, when he is alone and under stress, as he is in this scene. See Example 3.1.

Only a glancing mention of the forest agitato reminds the listener of the chase which opened the opera. In this iteration, this Chase motive is elongated in a foreshadowing of what is to come. As the curtain rises, we move to Andante mosso (♩ = 58) as the stage directions read, “Lennie is sitting on the hay, looking down sorrowfully at his small puppy which lies dead in front of him. He strokes the puppy with long, deliberate strokes.” The audience only slowly realizes that Lennie has a dead animal beside him. It is through Lennie's words that the audience understands that the animal he is petting, is in fact dead.

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121 Floyd, 139.
122 Ibid.
123 Ibid.
124 Ibid.
125 Ibid.
Example 3.1. *Bird* motive mm. 1-3\textsuperscript{126}

Analysis: “Why Did You Have To Go An' Die?”

The first thing Lennie says, “Why did you have to go an' die?”, at two measures before Rehearsal 5, with *L'istesso tempo* of the previous *Andante mosso* (\( \dot{\text{j}} = 72 \))\textsuperscript{127} can at first be interpreted as any person sitting alone, grieving over a loved one. Lennie continues, “I didn’t mean no harm, you belonged to me,”\textsuperscript{128} in a descending stepwise motion, and cantabile manner. A sudden eruption in *subito forte* follows, with the exclamation, ”Now I’ve got no pet!”, launched with a 7th leap to a high B\textsubscript{♭}\textsuperscript{129}. In his childish anger, Lennie shakes the dead puppy. (Stage directions: Lennie shakes the dead puppy back and forth in sudden anger.)\textsuperscript{130}

This is followed, at Rehearsal 7, in *Più adagio* (\( \dot{\text{j}} = 54 \)) by Lennie's statement, in his mourning, of that which is most important to him in his life, “Now I've got nothin' to pet, nothin' soft to stroke an' pet.”\textsuperscript{131} Floyd enhances this sustained phrase moving dissonance into consonance in the orchestra while leaving the dissonance in the vocal line on “stroke” unresolved, and

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{126}] Floyd, 139.
\item[\textsuperscript{127}] Ibid., 140.
\item[\textsuperscript{128}] Ibid.
\item[\textsuperscript{129}] Ibid., 141.
\item[\textsuperscript{130}] Ibid.
\item[\textsuperscript{131}] Ibid., 140-41.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
highlighting, in Lennie’s innocent mind, the justification of his temper tantrum. See Example 3.2.

**Example 3.2.** “Now I’ve got nothin’ to pet” mm. 37-41

At Rehearsal 8, a musical transition creates a layering of phrases from the previous *Andante mosso* from Rehearsal 3, with a return of the *Chase* motive while Floyd slips in yet another motive, the *Curley's Wife* motive, introduced in her first appearance in the first scene of Act Two, at Rehearsal 101, *Largo non troppo* (\( \dot{J} = 60 \)).

**Analysis: Barn Scene with Curley's Wife**

Stage directions read: (Lennie puts the puppy inside his shirt and climbs up the ladder to the loft. Once there, he hides the puppy between the grain sacks. While he is doing this, Curley's Wife enters the barn. She furtively crosses downstage, carrying a cheap suitcase with her. Sitting

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132 Floyd, 141.
133 Ibid., 139.
134 Ibid., 59.
on a barrel, she opens the suitcase and takes out a change of shoes and earrings. As she does so, Lennie inadvertently pushes an empty sack out of the loft.)\textsuperscript{135}

With the entrance of Curley's Wife, the story takes a turn that leads to the climax. Just before Rehearsal 9, the scene continues as Curley's Wife enters the barn, unaware of Lennie's presence, and he of hers.\textsuperscript{136} The conversation that follows between them begins with a combination of recitative and \textit{Sprechgesang} forms.

She eventually sees Lennie, exclaiming, in spoken form without pitched note heads, “You scared me!” which immediately returns to sung notes, “What are you doing here?”\textsuperscript{137} When Lennie responds, in \textit{Sprechgesang} notation, “Nothin'. Just loafin',”\textsuperscript{138} it is clear from Curley's Wife inattentive reply that she does not consider Lennie a threat and is oblivious to Lennie as he attempts to hide the dead puppy. Lennie's reply to Curley's Wife belies what we see him doing physically, attempting to hide the evidence of something he believes he has done wrong. In an odd musical transition, Lennie finds a suitable hiding spot and is suddenly drawn to the suitcase that Curley's Wife has brought into the barn with her, and asks, again in \textit{Sprechgesang}, “Where you goin’?”\textsuperscript{139} This may be Floyd's way of moving the story forward toward the next scene. Curley's Wife vaguely responds, “Let's just say I'm leaving. I've had enough of this place.”\textsuperscript{140} Now it is evident that both of them are hiding something, Lennie, the puppy, and Curley's Wife, her imminent departure. For Curley's Wife, trust is the issue, while Lennie, for his part, fears reprisal for the puppy. Lennie, in another glimpse of his innocence, blurts out, “George told me not to talk to you.”\textsuperscript{141} Curley's Wife responds in a way that suggests

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{135} Floyd, 141.
\item \textsuperscript{136} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{137} Ibid., 142.
\item \textsuperscript{138} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{139} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{140} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{141} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
she feels comfortable with Lennie and wants to continue talking as she says, “Well, he can't hear you in here, he's outside pitching horseshoes.”\textsuperscript{142} When Lennie adds, “George told me if I talk to you, we wouldn't get our farm,”\textsuperscript{143} Curley’s Wife’s response, “Oh you're leaving, too? I should have left long ago, in fact, I should have never come, I was meant for better than this,”\textsuperscript{144} indicates that she does not process what Lennie means or that there might be an option for her to leave or live with them in their dream. Leaving with anyone else would neither pique her interest, nor cross her mind.

At Rehearsal 12, \textit{Sostenuto and cantabile} (\textit{♩} = 69), Lennie sings, marked \textit{piano} and \textit{sostenendo}, “Our farm's got a small house on five acres of land and a lily pond an' beautiful trees,”\textsuperscript{145} which serves as the beginning of a duet between them. This “Our farm's got a small house” is itself the \textit{One Day Soon} motive sung without orchestral accompaniment, save a sustained and \textit{piano} E Minor. Then, at “and a lily pond an' beautiful trees,” a combined and sustained Ab Minor and G Major alters the melody, reinforcing the impression that his dream has made on him.\textsuperscript{146} See Example 3.3 on the following page.

Lennie's mention of “five acres of land,”\textsuperscript{147} first mentioned in the first scene of Act Two,\textsuperscript{148} shows the childlike innocence/abandon that he is determined to claim. By Rehearsal 13, as the tempo slows to \textit{Larghetto tranquillo} (\textit{♩} = 56) to accommodate the vocal entrance of Curley's Wife, as she reveals her own dreams,\textsuperscript{149} the two of them seem to be listening to

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{142} Floyd, 142-43.
\textsuperscript{143} Ibid., 143.
\textsuperscript{144} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{145} Ibid., 144.
\textsuperscript{146} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{148} Ibid., 104.
\textsuperscript{149} Ibid., 144.
\end{flushleft}
each other, but are actually caught up in their respective dreams, unconsciously using each other's presence as a catalyst. Neither is looking for a response from the other, immersed in the unplanned chance for human connection. In Thomas Holliday's authorized biography of Carlisle Floyd, “Falling Up,” the author includes the following statement by Floyd, and perhaps one of his reasons for choosing to primarily compose opera:

There is so much you can do in opera that you simply can't do in any other form. For instance, just before the murder of Curley's Wife, when Lennie is sitting with her in the hay, each of them fantasizes about [their] own dreams. She sings about the career she's going to have in Hollywood, and he's singing about the land he will share with George. Each has [their] own kind of vocal line, and they weave in and out while they remain independent. This is something you can't do in any other medium.\(^{151}\)

Floyd layers the two voices, with one finishing a thought and passing to the other, with a continuation of each upon the other. Lennie sings, at one bar before Rehearsal 14, another variation on the *One Day Soon* motive, leading to a bit more movement (\(\text{j} = 66\)) with “We'll have us a pasture and a brown, lowin' cow and a chicken coop full of cluckin' hens an' their soft, baby...

\(^{150}\) Floyd, 144.
\(^{151}\) Holliday, 241.
chicks.” Floyd, 145.

152 Lowin’ is an unexpected word use, more British than American, but perhaps Floyd's avoidance of the word “mooing” which might have seemed inappropriately humorous. Lennie is simply relating something in the way that George would have said it. The tempo of Curley's Wife's singing slows to Larghetto (\( \text{j} = 56 \)) as she thinks only of the dream of having her name in lights, in Hollywood, and taking the time to revel in her thoughts. “There they'll dress me in expensive clothes; they'll do my hair in just the latest style. Then they'll teach me how to walk an' talk.” (Stage directions: Curley's Wife takes a doll out of her suitcase and, in the succeeding lines, she talks to it, sharing with the doll her dream and her excitement.) The tempo quickens again in her excitement, back to (\( \text{j} = 66 \)), as she mulls being the center of attention, “They'll make me over from head to toe, you won’t know me; I won't know myself!”

Curley's Wife's vocal lines are often in arpeggiated style, commonly notated with dotted rhythms which seems to reflect in her confidence in ultimate victory, while Lennie's vocal line is stepwise, with occasional leaps, but staying true to Floyd's motives and variations. With Lennie's “Birds will be welcome in our trees” we hear a transition to a new key, B Major, at Rehearsal 18, where Lennie continues in a stepwise and melodic quality, “Bees will swarm among the grapes an' the pasture will bloom with flowers.” As the duet approaches its climatical ending, Curley's Wife's vocal line merges with Lennie's, as she sings, ironically, “Oh, I see it! I see it now! Oh, I can see it all so plain...,” as they both reach the final, sustained unison high B on

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152 Floyd, 145.
153 Ibid., 144.
154 Ibid., 145-46.
155 Ibid.
156 Ibid., 146.
157 Ibid.
158 Ibid., 148.
159 Ibid.
160 Ibid., 148-49.
The orchestra swells into a cadence of *sforzando* chord clusters, with the lower voiced orchestral instruments creating an E Major tonality contrasting with the higher voiced instruments in G Major. As Lennie begins again, “The beautiful trees, they will all belong to us,” Curley's Wife's meter alternates from 5/8 to 3/4, with Lennie's vocal line of sustained words harmonically supportive.

At three bars after Rehearsal 22, “It will all belong to us,” Floyd stretches the line to accommodate three measures, each with an orchestral chord cluster, while Lennie's line is a 12-tone row with only F natural and B natural omitted. As each of the three measures progresses, Floyd omits a note in Lennie's voice that sounds in the orchestra, a B natural in the first measure, while in the second measure, the orchestra omits an A natural that Lennie must sing, while the orchestra sounds a C♭ to Lennie's C natural, all resolving to G Major in the third measure. This is a significant musical moment, reflective of the times when Floyd wrote the opera, used to bring the duet to a close, while illustrating a meaningful statement by Lennie. See Example 3.4.

At Rehearsal 23, in *Andante mosso* (♩ = 80), just after Curley's Wife's question, “You won't tell where I've gone?” we hear a variation of *Something I Could Stoke* motive in the two measures just before Lennie replies, “I won't say I seen you at all.” Lennie will not tell anyone because he does not want to get into trouble. Curley's Wife does not want anyone to know she will have departed the ranch. Lennie finishes his line, “I won't say I seen you at all,” with “or

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161 Floyd, 149.
162 Ibid., 150.
163 Ibid.
164 Ibid.
165 Ibid., 151.
166 Ibid.
167 Ibid., 152.
168 Ibid.
George won't let me have no rabbits when we get our little farm."^170 At Rehearsal 24 there is an enormous dramatic pivot, starting with a two-measure transition, in *Più sostenuto* (*j* = 69), of a juxtaposition of simultaneous soundings of G Major and G Minor, which returns in-between each vocal line leading to Rehearsal 26.^171 But at Rehearsal 24, Curley's Wife, in finally hearing something that Lennie has said, in a *piano sostenendo*, asks, “You like rabbits?”^172 We hear again the *Something I Could Stroke* motive in the orchestra under Lennie's reply, “I like soft things I can pet,”^173 followed by, “I like to stroke their fur”^174 in the same musical vein. Here, Floyd has allowed Lennie Small to say simply, yet exactly, what his great love is.

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^169 Floyd, 152.
^170 Ibid.
^171 Ibid.
^172 Ibid.
^173 Ibid., 153.
^174 Ibid.
At Rehearsal 26, in a slower *Andante mosso* than before (*♩* = 72), Curley's Wife begins singing, “Sometimes when I'm combin' my hair, it gets to feelin' so silky an' soft that I sit there an' stroke it myself.” One hears the little chromatic appoggiatura still present in the vocal line of Curley's Wife. Lennie, who had once disassociated a woman's dress while it was being worn, that we heard about in the opening scene of the opera, begins here, slowly disassociating Curley's Wife's hair from Curley's Wife. Her hair becomes another thing to stroke, but as the scene unfolds, Floyd shows us that he knows where the line is; Lennie knows not to just go over and grab her hair. But when she combs her hair, Lennie forgets the line as he watches her. Curley's Wife finishes in saying to Lennie, “Here, feel it. See what I mean.” (Stage directions: Lennie crosses slowly to her and she takes his hand and puts it on her hair.)

This leads immediately to a Grand Pause at one bar before Rehearsal 28, in *L'istesso tempo* from the previous *Andante mosso* (*♩* = 72), and rising pitches that crawl upward from a low G. As lurching chord clusters begin, Lennie, (Stage directions: His face brightens as he begins to stroke it), sings, “That's nice, that's real nice.” She replies, as *Bird* motive sounds, “Be careful, don't muss it now.” But not only in the *Bird* motive, but also through Curley's Wife, we see Lennie's innocence. Here is a woman who asks a grown man to stroke her hair and trusting Lennie enough that he won't receive her offer as an act of seduction. She is not being flirtatious, only shallow and childlike. In her dream to go off to Hollywood, you don't see hardness in her, just her youthful exuberance, still present despite having been beaten down by

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175 Floyd, 153.
176 Ibid., 153-54.
177 Ibid., 154.
178 Ibid.
179 Ibid.
180 Ibid.
181 Ibid.
182 Ibid., 155.
the man she married. Curley's Wife does not suspect that he has any kind of issue with Lennie stroking her hair. Perhaps she is actually imagining how it might be, if she were in Hollywood and someone were giving attention to her hair. She wants to have someone put her into expensive dresses, to make her hair nice, etc. She is using this moment to let Lennie feel her hair because she thinks, “If he likes to feel hair, I'll let him stroke my hair and make me feel like it will be, when I get to Hollywood.” At Rehearsal 30 (Stage direction: Patiently), she states, “That's enough, that's enough now.” Lennie's zeal increases, and the music begins to crescendo, little by little, yet also showing through his words, “It's so soft, it's so smooth and soft,” that he is not attempting to instigate anything untoward.

From Rehearsal 31, crescendos enhance the growing dramatic intensity. Yet Curley's Wife says, “Stop it, you're musing my hair.” She does not say, “Stop it, you're going to hurt me.” Even up to this point, Curley's Wife senses no threat from Lennie. Lennie continues, “So soft, so smooth” while she replies, “I ain't got time to fix it again.” She still has no thought that Lennie might take advantage; Curley's Wife senses his innocence, even to this point. It is a striking moment. If it had been another man, say one of the bunkhouse ranchers, this might have been seen as overtly sexual, to be in that kind of situation, isolated with someone in a barn. She was safe because of Lennie's innocence, even to that point where Lennie is not letting go of her hair. Only until we reach two bars before Rehearsal 32 (Stage directions: beginning to get angry)
does Curley's Wife tone change with, “Stop it, stop it now, can't you hear me?”\textsuperscript{189} which leads to Rehearsal 32 and her first sense of trouble with, “What's wrong with you?”\textsuperscript{190}

When Lennie responds, caught up in the pleasure of stroking her hair, “Your hair feels so nice,”\textsuperscript{191} she finally voices her first “Let me go!”\textsuperscript{192} (Stage directions: Curley's Wife becomes alarmed and begins to twist violently to free herself.)\textsuperscript{193} Unknowingly, she has now become, in Lennie's mind, like any other animal trying to get away, like a mouse or puppy, and inevitably leads to his holding them too tightly to prevent their escape. She then calls out to him “Stop! Let me go! Let me go, let me go!”\textsuperscript{194} with sweeping phrases of chordal clusters, and follows with “Stop! Now!”\textsuperscript{195} while Lennie simultaneously sings, “So soft!”,\textsuperscript{196} ending together on unison Ab\textsubscript{4}.\textsuperscript{197}

During the vocal progression to unison, the stage directions read, (She jerks her head wildly from side to side but Lennie, now suddenly bewildered and distressed, only holds on more tightly to her hair.)\textsuperscript{198} Immediately, Curley's Wife lets out a scream (to be sung on B\textsubscript{4})\textsuperscript{199} with new stage directions: (Panic-stricken, Curley's Wife screams, and Lennie clamps his huge hand over her mouth)\textsuperscript{200} which arrives at Rehearsal 34, and a relatively brisk Animato assai (\textquoteright\textquoteright\textsuperscript{120})\textsuperscript{201}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{189} Floyd, 157.
\item \textsuperscript{190} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{191} Ibid., 157-58.
\item \textsuperscript{192} Ibid., 158.
\item \textsuperscript{193} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{194} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{195} Ibid., 159.
\item \textsuperscript{196} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{197} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{198} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{199} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{200} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{201} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
At Rehearsal 34, Lennie has wrapped his body around the body of Curley's Wife, with his hand over her mouth to prevent her from screaming any longer than she already has.\textsuperscript{202} (Stage directions: pleading)\textsuperscript{203} Lennie sings, with definite pitches given to sing, not merely indicated, “No, no, please don't yell! I'll get in trouble, please stop! Now!”\textsuperscript{204} We hear two measures of \textit{Bird} motive \textsuperscript{205} (Stage directions: Curley's Wife bites his hand and briefly breaks away, screaming. Lennie pursues and overtakes her and angrily clamps his hand over her mouth once more. She struggles wildly to get free but Lennie only holds on more tightly, backing her against a post.)\textsuperscript{206} At this point, the soprano must sing, as if in another scream, a high C to B.\textsuperscript{207} Lennie clamps his hand over her mouth again and sings, with given pitches, at Rehearsal 35, “Stop it, stop yellin'!”\textsuperscript{208} while at the same time, in what appears to be complete chaos reigning (\textit{j} = 120),\textsuperscript{209} Floyd finds a way to add \textit{Something I Could Stroke} motive in the orchestra.\textsuperscript{210} See Rehearsal 35 in Example 3.5 on the following page. More struggling ensues at two bars after Rehearsal 35, as Lennie continues, “You'll get me in trouble! Quit it now! Quit it now! Stop!” (Stage directions: Lennie shakes her violently and her neck suddenly snaps. Her struggling abruptly stops.)\textsuperscript{211} Please see under Performance Suggestions, for my thoughts on these moments based on my personal experience in singing and acting this scene as the role of Lennie.

\textsuperscript{202} Floyd, 159.
\textsuperscript{203} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{204} Ibid., 159-60.
\textsuperscript{205} Ibid., 160.
\textsuperscript{206} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{207} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{208} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{209} Ibid., 159.
\textsuperscript{210} Ibid., 160.
\textsuperscript{211} Ibid., 161.
Example 3.5. “Stop it! Stop yellin’!” mm. 209-15

Len. 35  \( \text{(} \text{d} = 120 \text{)} \)

You’ll get me in trouble!  Quit it now!

Quit it now!  Stop!

\(^{212}\) Floyd, 160-61.
At Rehearsal 37 we have reached a suddenly calm *Andante poco sostenuto* (♩ = 66).\(^{213}\) Curley's Wife's neck has been broken and is clearly dead, and the audience is aghast in their realization that Lennie does not realize he has done any harm to her. Lennie sings, “There now, that's better, I don't want to hurt you, but I can't have you yellin',”\(^{214}\) and the audience sees a line has been crossed. Lennie would be willing to hurt her, or any living thing in his possession, in order to avoid getting into trouble with George. But Lennie, in his innocence, thinks, because she has stopped struggling, that he has convinced her to cooperate with him. It is all he ultimately wanted, for her to cooperate, simply so that he could continue to stroke her hair. That Lennie's thinking of Curley's Wife, in this moment, as more of another creature than of an actual human being, is the crux of his ultimate end. Lennie finishes his explanation to Curley's Wife at Rehearsal 38, with, “George would know I'd been talking to you,”\(^{215}\) while the orchestra sounds another variation of *Something I Could Stroke* motive.\(^{216}\) Floyd then provides five bars of allowing the soprano's body weight to slowly carry Curley's Wife from Lennie's arms, to the floor.\(^{217}\)

At Rehearsal 39, *Allegro appassionato* (♩ = 92),\(^{218}\) there is a cymbal crash, and we watch Lennie attempt to work out some way to hide what he has done, as the tempo moves to *Molto più vivo* (♩ = 132).\(^{219}\) (Stage directions: Suddenly, he runs to the hay and, taking up handfuls of it, frantically attempts to cover her body. When he has partially covered her, he returns to his position upstage and crouches once again on his haunches.)\(^{220}\) At Rehearsal 41, *Andantino poco*

\(^{213}\) Floyd, 161.
\(^{214}\) Ibid.
\(^{215}\) Ibid., 162.
\(^{216}\) Ibid.
\(^{217}\) Ibid.
\(^{218}\) Ibid.
\(^{219}\) Ibid.
\(^{220}\) Ibid., 162-63.
sostenuto (♩ = 80), Lennie sings, “I done somethin' bad this time; I done somethin' real bad this time,”221 but for him, tragically, it is like all the animals in his care that suffered the same outcome. He cannot measure the real damage he has done, singing, “I better hide, real fast. George will find me, George will find me.”222 See Example 3.6.

Example 3.6. “I done somethin' bad this time.” Act 3, Scene 1, mm. 244-49223

Just before leaving, Lennie, in his innocence, retrieves the toy doll and places it next to the body of Curley’s Wife, and tries to cover it with straw, as he has done with Curley's Wife, before exiting the barn. He thinks, “I'll put this doll beside her, to comfort her,” like a child

221 Floyd, 163.
222 Ibid., 163-64.
223 Ibid., 163.
might think. Once Lennie takes his hat and exits the barn, to run and find some place to hide, we have a few bars of no action, only the sound of ranch hands, offstage, playing horseshoes. Candy, the old ranch hand, enters the barn, asking “Lennie, Lennie, you in here?” In Act Two, Candy learned of George and Lennie's plans to buy a farm and convinces George to let Candy join them. As Candy enters the barn, he sings, “I been figurin' 'bout our farm. Tell ya what we can...” Candy then discovers the body on the floor. He calls out to George to come into the barn. George arrives with Slim, the leader of the ranch hands. Slim listens for a heartbeat and conveys to the others that she is dead. Slim then tells George that he must go and find Lennie first, to end his life, because Curley will send the ranch hands out to find him. George responds, revealing another glimpse into Lennie's innocence, “I can't let nobody hurt him, Slim. I just can't let that happen. If he's got to die, he's gonna die happy. I won't have him scared or hurt.”

If Lennie weren't an innocent creature, George would not seek to prevent the posse from capturing, torturing, and putting him to death. They realize that he did not do this because he knew what he was doing, but because of his innocent disability. Slim says to George, “Then go get Carlson's pistol,” with the word “pistol” is approximated spoken pitches. Slim continues, in sung pitches, “I'll hold him here as long as I can. Get it over with as soon as you can; don't wait; it won't help none. You'll do him a favor to end his life.” Slim informs the audience here, of what has happened and what will happen. Was Floyd afraid of not putting these lines in, that the audience would not understand what George was about to do?

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224 Floyd, 165.
225 Ibid., 106-116.
226 Ibid., 166.
227 Ibid., 168-69.
228 Ibid., 169.
229 Ibid., 170.
Slim leaves the barn and just as George is about to leave, at one bar before Rehearsal 52, Lento assai, Candy stops George and asks, “George, can you and me, can we get the little farm?”\(^\text{230}\) To which George gently replies, “It was our dream, his and mine. No offense.”\(^\text{231}\) At Rehearsal 54, we hear the One Corner Of Earth To Call My Own motive poignantly expressed, in piu cantabile.\(^\text{232}\) At Rehearsal 55 Candy interrupts the motive and declares to the dead body of Curley's Wife, “May you rot in hell for what you took from us! Rot in hell! Damn you! Rot!”\(^\text{233}\) Floyd, after giving us just enough of the One Corner Of Earth To Call My Own motive, itself a version of One Day Soon We'll Get Us a Farm motive, the message of hope, provides for Candy to interrupt it. Hope is no longer possible.

There is an Interlude between Scenes 1 and 2 of Act Three which begins at Rehearsal 56. and runs until Rehearsal 74, for a total of 121 measures.\(^\text{234}\) It contains complex rhythms in 3/4, 7/8, 4/4, 2/4, 5/8, 3/2, 2/2, and 5/4 until settling into a consistent 3/2 at Rehearsal 63,\(^\text{235}\) with a soaring melodic sequence, finally adding in 6/2 and 5/2.\(^\text{236}\) Floyd uses the prelude to restate many of the themes we know, especially the forest Chase motive at the start,\(^\text{237}\) developing it into its fullest completion, and other motivic material including from Act Two, with new melodies, lacing them together, leading directly into the start of the second scene of Act Three.\(^\text{238}\)

\(^{230}\) Floyd, 171.
\(^{231}\) Ibid., 171-72.
\(^{232}\) Ibid., 172.
\(^{233}\) Ibid., 172-73.
\(^{234}\) Ibid., 173-82.
\(^{235}\) Ibid., 176.
\(^{236}\) Ibid., 178-79.
\(^{237}\) Ibid., 173.
\(^{238}\) Ibid., 182.
Performance Suggestions

The entire scene in the barn with Curley's Wife must be carefully worked out, and practiced, by both singers. It is important to make everything as safe as possible, including the act of putting one's hand over the mouth of Curley's Wife, and keeping it there while she struggles, culminating in a sustained high B. In the productions the author sang Lennie, he always worked on each of the steps in this duet very slowly and carefully. The soprano must always know what the tenor will do.

I cannot emphasize enough, the importance for the tenor to be well-prepared in these vocal lines. There is nothing that should be left to approximation, knowing exactly where the vocal line lands in each beat of the orchestra. It is rhythmically complicated and is meant to convey a situation completely out of control. It is easy for one to be caught up in the wild intensity of the drama. Other tenors have resorted to yelling out Lennie's words, having thrown singing completely out the window. It takes an enormous amount of time and advance vocal preparation individually with a musical coach, before any attempt should be made to physicalize.

From Rehearsal 35 to two bars after Rehearsal 36, the vocal line must be practiced to the point that it is routine, because the end result on stage must appear to be complete chaos. The way to achieve it, is to master the vocal line and the staged struggle, or choreography, with the soprano singing Curley's Wife, so that in reality there is nothing unexpected onstage, amidst the intensity of the scene and the raging of the orchestra underneath. Lennie must sing these lines, keeping everything lined up with the orchestra, while at the same time holding Curley's Wife in one's arms and covering one's hand over the soprano's mouth, who is portraying a violent struggle. The tenor must also prepare for the vocal line that ends At Rehearsal 36, with the words

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239 Floyd, 159.
240 Ibid., 160-61.
“Quit it now!” and a sustained high B on “Stop!”,241 followed by further thrashing Curley's Wife from one side to another (Staging reads: “Lennie shakes her violently and her neck suddenly snaps.”)242 In order to sing the high B at the end it takes almost flawless execution after complete preparation, for the scene to come across as terrifying. All of the struggling, therefore, must only come from the soprano doing it alone, with the tenor merely supporting the soprano's body from underneath. The moment of the break of Curley's Wife's neck, at one bar before Rehearsal 37, Floyd writes a lunga with fermata.243 The reaction from the audience, here, is unpredictable and has sometimes resulted in audible gasps or even screams from the audience.

It is important that when playing the character of Lennie in this scene, to work out one's inner calm, as much as possible, for every moment of the scene, so that one has the vocal fortitude to sing all the pitches Floyd has written, and not just to yell them out, as the author has heard done by tenors attempting the role of Lennie Small.

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241 Floyd, 161.
242 Ibid.
243 Ibid.
CHAPTER 4. ACT THREE, SCENE 2: “OH, I FEEL COLD INSIDE”,
AND THE FINAL SCENE WITH GEORGE

Analysis: “Oh, I Feel Cold Inside

The opening scene of Act Three ended with the death of Curley’s Wife at the hands of Lennie. He does not understand the full ramifications of what he has done, but says, “I done somethin' bad this time; I done somethin' real bad this time. I better hide... real fast... George will find me,” before running out of the barn. Soon we hear the orchestral interlude that leads into Scene 2, which opens to reveal the same clearing in the woods where he and George hid during the chase at the outset of the opera. In the book, Steinbeck includes a conversation between Lennie and George, that if Lennie ever got into trouble again, that they would meet at the same clearing. This material is omitted in the opera. Lennie, having fled the barn in the earlier scene, appears early in the new scene, as the orchestral interlude comes to its conclusion. He finds himself in the same state as before, when he had been sought by the police.

The stage direction reads that at the rise of the curtain, at Rehearsal 78, Adagio dolente (♩ = 69), Lennie appears. (Stage directions: At Rise: It is dark now and the stage is silent and empty for only a moment before Lennie is heard lumbering through the underbrush and tall grass. He comes downstage, visibly trembling, and huddles in the underbrush.) The Bird motive returns in an expanded form and serves as the introduction to Lennie's aria. The aria begins, “Oh, I feel cold inside. I done somethin' terrible. I'm in real trouble this time, real trouble.” The Bird motive returns again, symbolizing Lennie's recognition of the same

244 Floyd, 163-64.
245 Ibid., 183.
246 Ibid.
247 Ibid.
248 Ibid., 183-84.
249 Ibid., 184.
location as before, and continues, “An' George is gonna give me hell. I don't deserve no friend like George. He'll wish he was travelin' all by himself.” Lennie is oddly comforted by these thoughts, that things will return as they used to be. 'He's going to give me hell over what I have done, I am in big trouble.' And here is another window into the innocence of the character of Lennie Small. This would not be the normal mindset of someone who has just committed manslaughter. Lennie is a creature who lacks awareness, self-control, or the conceptual weight of acts and consequences. Though he is concerned about how George will react, he doesn't really recognize the difference between a mouse, rabbit, puppy, or Curley's Wife, and that is what makes the character so heartbreaking. Lennie continues, “…he'll wish he'd never got mixed up with me. But I hope he don't give up on me. I just hope he don't give up on me.” See Example 4.1 on the following page. Lennie does not recognize in any way, the impending danger. He is only worried about George's reaction and the possibility of losing George as his friend and companion, i.e., the fear of ending up alone.

The return of the Bird motive has now secured itself as essential to the aria, conveying Lennie's thoughts whenever he is not singing. Lennie returns to “Oh I feel cold inside. I've done something terrible. I'm in real trouble this time, real trouble,” with rhythmic alteration and inter-spaced with 5/8 bars. He finishes with, “Hurry up George, an' find me” with high B♭ to A♭ fermatas on the first two utterances of “so cold,” and marked molto allargando and forte, and

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250 Floyd, 184.
251 Ibid., 184-85.
252 Ibid., 185.
253 Ibid., 185-86.
Example 4.1. “An' George is gonna give me hell.” Act 3, Scene 2, mm. 498-509

An' George is gonna give me hell, I don't deserve no friend like George. He'll wish he was travelin' all by himself, he'll wish he never got mixed up with me. But I hope he don't give up on me, I just hope he don't give up on me.

254 Floyd, 184-85.
subsequently, *sostenendo* and *sottovoce*, the *Bird* motive returns and brings the aria to its conclusion. (Stage directions: Lennie, shivering, buries his face in his arms.)

**Analysis: Final Scene with George**

At the conclusion of Lennie's aria, at Rehearsal 87, we hear the *Chase* motive in 7/8 and 5/8 *Precipitato* (**♩** = 92) which indicates the approach of George toward Lennie in the forest. (Stage directions: After a moment, George is heard running through the underbrush. He rushes onstage and Lennie leaps to his feet.) When George appears, (Stage directions: George, out of breath, nods his head), Lennie immediately goes to him and sings, *Allegro poco agitato* (**♩** = 112), “George, I done somethin' terrible! I'm in real trouble this time,” followed up importantly by, “I might've lost us our jobs again.” See Example 4.2, next page. (Stage directions: Again, George nods.) We peer further into Lennie's innocence. He sees the harshest result of his action as the loss of their jobs. Lennie cannot understand the depth of his action.

The returned *Precipitato* now includes the *Bird* motive, reflecting the oddity of Lennie's thinking. At Rehearsal 89 (*Allegro poco agitato*), Lennie then asks George, almost in a yell as the rising question moves into the passaggio and stays there, “Ain't you gonna give me hell?

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255 Floyd, 186.
256 Ibid.
257 Ibid.
258 Ibid., 187.
259 Ibid.
260 Ibid.
261 Ibid.
262 Ibid.
263 Ibid.
264 Ibid.
Come on, George, give me hell.”\textsuperscript{265} With the return of \textit{Precipitato} and the \textit{Bird} motive, George considers how to respond to Lennie's demand.\textsuperscript{266}

**Example 4.2.** “George, I done somethin' terrible!” Act 3, Scene 2, mm. 538-43\textsuperscript{267}

At Rehearsal 90, Lento molto sostenuto ($\textit{j} = 42$), George tries to respond, haltingly, with, “My life would be so simple... by myself...” with tenuto articulation and rests in between each word.\textsuperscript{268} (Stage directions: George, turning slowly and looking at Lennie, recites in a monotone.)\textsuperscript{269} We know George's “My life would be so simple by myself” from Act One when

\textsuperscript{265} Floyd, 188.
\textsuperscript{266} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{267} Ibid., 187.
\textsuperscript{268} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{269} Ibid.
George complains to Lennie about having to take care of him. This complaint, as we have learned, serves an ironic, unintentional purpose in giving Lennie a feeling of comfort and security through George's angry outbursts, finishing with “I, me, and my!” knowing that George cares about him. But now, George can only get so much of this statement out. In this moment we also see George's own knee-jerk recognition of the effect these complaints have had on Lennie in the past. George knows he is saying the same thing he has said before, yet it seems all the more intense in the very fact that George, in this moment of shocking realization of what must be done, cannot find the strength to say those words.

It takes two measures of an orchestral break before George can continue, but those two measures are not wasted with the opportunity to restate the One Day Soon motive, that uplifting theme representing the future that they were to have together. They have probably sung this, together, many times. It has bolstered them in hope of their shared dream. Floyd has brought that theme of hope back, for only a measure, in contradiction to what the audience is seeing unfold.

When George is able, he continues, again haltingly, with “I could live so easy... all alone...,” but what follows this phrase is not the One Day Soon motive as before, but another motive that the author calls the No Mess, No Fuss motive. We have first heard the No Mess, No Fuss motive in George's rant toward Lennie in the first scene of the opera, “My life would be so easy by myself,” later in the same rant, and after, when Lennie decides to show his stoic intent to leave George, in his “Just give me the word and I'll strike out alone.” But here, George's “I could live so easy all alone” is all he can get out, (Stage directions, George stops,

270 Floyd, 8-13.
271 Ibid., 13.
272 Ibid., 188.
273 Ibid., 188-89.
274 Ibid., 9.
275 Ibid., 12.
276 Ibid., 13.
unable to continue) before Lennie explodes with impatience, “Go on, George! You know! 'No mess, no fuss, no trouble, none at all: just me to take care of: I, me an' mine!'”277 In Lennie's utterance, we hear the No Mess, No Fuss motive simultaneously, in the orchestra as well as in Lennie's voice. George responds immediately to Lennie with “That's enough! That's enough!”278 (Stage directions: George turns away abruptly and Lennie cowers, thinking he has angered George.)279

At Rehearsal 94, Meno mosso, più cantabile (♩= 76), Lennie, in his mind, tries to help George with his “Just give me the word and I'll strike out alone.” 280 In his limited capacity he remembers this other routine they have, and blurts it out, and it's followed by a variation of the No Mess, No Fuss motive in A tempo, ma sempre cantabile (♩= 92). 281 At two bars before Rehearsal 95, George, (Stage directions: speaking with effort)282, manages to reply to Lennie, “No, Lennie, you, stay, with me.”283 That was enough for Lennie to hear. He does not want to give all three of them as per usual. Lennie jumps at the first offering, (Stage directions: eagerly),284 with his usual “Alright George, I'll stay with you.”285

Lennie and George then hear voices in the distance, written in Sprechstimme with approximate pitches, “Spread out... Keep spreadin' out!”286 followed by “Don't kill him, leave that for me,”287 and finally, with pitched notes, “Head west... look up there! Head west for a
while. Head west!”\textsuperscript{288} At Rehearsal 97, \textit{Allegro agitato} (\( \text{\textdollar} = 116 \)), (Stage directions: Alarmed, Lennie turns to George), Lennie asks, “Are they lookin' for me, George? Is it the bad thing I done? It is, George? Is it what I done? Are they lookin' for me, George?”\textsuperscript{289} At Rehearsal 98 (Stage directions: becoming more desperate),\textsuperscript{290} Lennie continues, marked \textit{più cantabile}, “You won't let 'em get me will you?... Please don't let 'em get me George! I'm scared George, I'm scared!”\textsuperscript{291} while in the orchestra we hear the return of \textit{Something I Could Stroke} motive, in rhythmic displacement. Floyd intends Lennie's vocal line to be sung cleanly, with the given pitches, instead of trying to produce an off pitch wailing to appear more dramatic, as this author has heard before. The dramatic moment from Lennie's “Please don't let 'em get me George! I'm scared, George, I'm scared!” to George's (Stage directions: shouting) but pitched “Stop it! Stop it now!”\textsuperscript{292} becomes a meaningful moment of the opera, in Lennie's request for honesty.

George responds, “Stop yellin'. Just be calm. Nobody's out lookin' for you. Then men are chasin'... are chasin'... a runaway colt.”\textsuperscript{293} George lies to Lennie. He lies, knowing that the sound of those distant voices are people coming to capture Lennie, make him suffer, and kill him. George knows they are coming. George tells his most faithful friend a lie, only in service to his ultimate agenda; he knows there is only one thing he can do to save Lennie from horrible suffering and death. George must be the one to put an end to Lennie's life, enabling Lennie to die without suffering. In their partnership, luck has run out, with nowhere to go, and the approaching ranch hands are going to kill Lennie. George does not want his friend, for whom he pledged to be

\textsuperscript{288} Floyd, 191-92.
\textsuperscript{289} Ibid., 192-93.
\textsuperscript{290} Ibid., 193
\textsuperscript{291} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{292} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{293} Ibid., 193-94.
responsible, to suffer. George knows he must try and get Lennie into a calm and happy state, as best as he can, and as quickly as he can, so that he can end Lennie's life with mercy, before the ones hunting for him do it in the way they would. Just after George lies about the reason for the sounds of ranch hands in the distance, we hear the One Day Soon motive again, followed by a Grand Pause. (Stage directions: “Lennie, greatly relieved, smiles broadly, and sits on the ground.”) Lennie's innocence is conveyed again, through his relaxation. The Grand Pause serves like a caesura in classic sonata form. This sonata, or story, of Lennie Small's life with George Milton, is turning home, back to tonic.

At Rehearsal 100, Poco lento e gravemente (♩ = 60), George, after a longer pause, speaks again, “Take off your hat, Lennie.” George's vocal line itself, here, is once again the One Day Soon motive, yet with a slight change, as the final note goes to a new, slightly higher pitch. Is it a false motive, something intended to unconsciously disturb the listeners' ears? George continues, “The air feels fine, real soft an' warm.” Lennie does as George says (“George removes his hat and Lennie takes his off.”), and responds, “It is nice, so soft and warm.”, and we hear, in Più mosso (♩ = 92), the return of the No Mess, No Fuss motive that also depicted Lennie's innocence as fully heard from George when describing how easier his life would be, without Lennie to take care of. George has never imagined this end, and Floyd uses the No Mess, No Fuss motive, in this moment, to deepen the audiences' pathos, as Lennie obediently follows George in removing his hat. George continues, in a slightly faster return to Poco lento e

294 Floyd, 194.
295 Ibid.
296 Ibid.
297 Ibid.
298 Ibid.
299 Ibid., 195.
300 Ibid.
301 Ibid.
gravemente ($\downarrow = 66$), “Look across the river, Lennie,”\textsuperscript{302} and we hear the same theme as “Take off your hat, Lennie,”\textsuperscript{303} only moments before, now reinforced, unsettlingly altered from the original One Day Soon motive. Carlisle Floyd's “Look across the river, Lennie,” continuing with “and I'll tell you 'bout our little farm, so good you'll almost see it,”\textsuperscript{304} has radically transformed their “One day soon” song, the uplifting reminder of their shared future together, into a funeral dirge for George's dear friend.

At Rehearsal 102, Allegro poco moderato ($\downarrow = 84$), we hear the ranch hands in the distance again, again in Sprechstimme, “Spread out, keep moving west”\textsuperscript{305} yet Lennie is now no longer worried by these voices. He is hearing the words, but Lennie doesn't make the connection, again similarly shouted in the distance, “Don't kill him... Leave that for me... Don't kill him now,”\textsuperscript{306} that this, on its face, is not logical, if indeed they were merely chasing a colt that had gotten free. Lennie does not understand that disconnect in his implicit trust in George. Lennie simply says, “Go on, George. Go on now,”\textsuperscript{307} simultaneously with “We'll get him, we'll bring him back. We'll get him, Curley!”\textsuperscript{308} At one bar before Rehearsal 103 we hear a 6/4 measure of two chord-clusters,\textsuperscript{309} followed immediately at Rehearsal 103 by a return of the Just Give Me The Word motive, stated not once, but twice, in four bars.\textsuperscript{310} We first heard the Just Give Me The Word motive just before Lennie's Act One aria, “It was somethin’ I could stroke,” then in 6/4,\textsuperscript{311} now here in 9/8\textsuperscript{312}. Floyd uses these motives masterfully, weaving them in and out, even amidst

\textsuperscript{302} Floyd, 195
\textsuperscript{303} Ibid., 194.
\textsuperscript{304} Ibid., 195.
\textsuperscript{305} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{306} Ibid., 196.
\textsuperscript{307} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{308} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{309} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{310} Ibid., 196-97.
\textsuperscript{311} Ibid., 18.
\textsuperscript{312} Ibid., 196-97.
the off-stage commotion of people coming to capture Lennie. Lennie continues to George, singing in a calm *mezzo piano* voice, at Rehearsal 103, *Meno mosso, più cantabile* (*♩.* = 72), “Go on, George. Tell me so good I can see it. Tell me.”\(^{313}\) See Example 4.3 on the following page.

If one did not know Lennie better, one might think that he, in his now-calm demeanor, has come to his own personal terms with the need for George to end his life, that he chooses to move George forward to commence their “One day soon” story. But once again we stare at, not only the reality of Lennie's innocence of mind, but his fortitude of trust in George to make things right for him, as they begin their routine to find their farm, just across the river.

At Rehearsal 104, *Andante moderato* (*♩.* = 66),\(^ {314}\) perhaps in Lennie's own quiet resolve to see their farm together, George finds his voice. He finds the strength to do what he must, as he sings to Lennie, one more time, “One day soon we'll have us our farm with its small, white frame house and its cool, green lawn. An' we'll have us a barn with some livestock inside and a garden an' also a clover field.”\(^ {315}\) It is the complete One Day Soon melody in its fullness again, just as it was in the first scene of the opera, when they were dreaming together.\(^ {316}\) As always, he sings it with the objective to calm Lennie, although here, with a devastating outcome.

Leading into Rehearsal 106, *Allegro affrettando* (*♩.* = 100),\(^ {317}\) Lennie sings, “An' I'll tend to my pets all day long! Puppies, an' baby cats, baby chicks, an' rabbits! Rabbits! Go on, George, go on!”\(^ {318}\) (Stage directions: George takes Carlson's pistol from inside his belt and stands before Lennie. He slowly raises the pistol but his hand begins to shake. He tries to steady his arm by

\(^{313}\) Floyd, 196-97.
\(^{314}\) Ibid., 197.
\(^{315}\) Ibid., 197-98.
\(^{316}\) Ibid., 25-29.
\(^{317}\) Ibid., 198.
\(^{318}\) Ibid., 198-99.
Example 4.3. “Go on, George. Go on, now.” Act 3, Scene 2, mm. 619-27

Example 4.3. “Go on, George. Go on, now.” Act 3, Scene 2, mm. 619-27

Len. $\text{d} = 84 \ (\text{d} = \text{d})$  

$\text{M}f$  

Go on, George.  

Go on, now.

103  

Meno mosso, più cantabile  

$(\text{d} = 72)$

Go on, George.  

Tell me so good I can

slentando

See it.  

Tell me.

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319 Floyd, 196-97.
gripping it with his free hand but the shaking continues.)\(^{320}\) Underneath Lennie's vocal line, Floyd finds a way to place yet another variation of *Something I Could Stroke* motive in the orchestra, in 5/8, along with note displacement among the octaves, causing less ability to hear the theme, now in variation.\(^{321}\) See Example 4.4 on the following page.

Lennie's “Go on, George, go on!”\(^{322}\) leads to Rehearsal 108, *Molto largamente ma appassionato* \((\text{♩.} = 56)\) and a full, strong return to *No Mess, No Fuss* motive which then decays.\(^{323}\) (Stage directions: He drops the pistol on the ground and turns sharply away from Lennie.)\(^{324}\) It is as if the *No Mess, No Fuss* motive has itself informed George directly, instead of merely a reflection of the drama, as we now associate these themes as so clearly depicting their friendship, and Lennie's innocence. George is singing to Lennie to calm and comfort him, yet Lennie rejoins, 'Yeah, and I'll tend to my pets!' Floyd sets this line in a rising E\(\flat\)-like arpeggiation from G\(_3\) to G\(_4\).\(^{325}\) Tending to his pets is clearly all Lennie cares about. 'Tell me more, George,' as if he is saying, 'when we're going to have this farm for ourselves, when I can pet all these animals. Instead of getting into trouble when I pet a puppy, or a mouse, on our farm one day, I will have cats, puppies, baby chicks, rabbits... Rabbits! Go on, George!' Lennie's inner thinking is, 'You're telling me of a place where all of *my* troubles are going to be over, where I'm going to be able to go and enjoy all these animals the way *I* want,' which is really all Lennie wants. (Stage directions: George turns back slowly to Lennie and kneels. He picks up the pistol and holds it slackly in his hand. When he begins speaking again his voice is very tender.)\(^{326}\)

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\(^{320}\) Floyd, 198.  
\(^{321}\) Ibid.  
\(^{322}\) Ibid., 198-99.  
\(^{323}\) Ibid., 199.  
\(^{324}\) Ibid.  
\(^{325}\) Ibid., 198.  
\(^{326}\) Ibid., 199.
Example 4.4. “An' I'll tend to my pets all day long.” Act 3, Scene 2 mm., 636-48

At Rehearsal 110, Larghetto e molto sereno ($\dot{J} = 76$), with a indicated molto teneramente,[328] George really tries to pour on the calm in his voice to calm Lennie further, the

\[\text{Example 4.4. “An' I’ll tend to my pets all day long.” Act 3, Scene 2 mm., 636-48}^{327}\]

\[\text{At Rehearsal 110, Larghetto e molto sereno (} \dot{J} = 76\text{), with a indicated molto teneramente,}^{328}\text{ George really tries to pour on the calm in his voice to calm Lennie further, the}\]

\[\text{327 Floyd, 198-99.}\]
\[\text{328 Ibid.}\]
tender voice of the dearest friend. He sings, “Oh life will be good when we get us our farm. Everything peaceful, nothing to fear.”³²⁹ It is a return to the real and full One Day Soon motive. George brings it home to Lennie in a way that will calm him further. Thus, Floyd brings the listeners into their unrequited dream. George's, “Oh life will be good when we get us our farm. Everything peaceful, nothing to fear” melody is now widely recognized. Lennie repeats George, singing, “Everything peaceful, nothing to fear,”³³⁰ and the audience is completely emotionally caught up in this, knowing what is coming. It is discomforting, knowing what will happen but knowing it must play itself out. Even if one had no idea about this Steinbeck original, it is clearly and painfully made manifest here. George continues, “Look over there, Lennie, like you really can see it.”³³¹ Lennie replies, “Where George. Where?”³³² Lennie takes great pleasure in George's description of their future dream. George sings, “Across the river and over that hill,”³³³ and again, we hear the Life Will Be Good motive. The dichotomy of this moment, with Floyd's motivic tugs on the heart, is almost tortuous to the observer. George continues, and the motive develops with, “... just look for the pasture and green clover field.”³³⁴ Lennie asks again, “Where, George, where? I can't see it yet,” in syncopation within 6/4 and 5/4.³³⁵ George seeks to calm Lennie, while Lennie eagerly takes part in this ritual, perhaps thinking that in his continued search, he is helping George, through the process, of finding their dream.

As we reach Rehearsal 114, Floyd transitions with a poco allargando back to (♩ = 76)³³⁶ from Rehearsal 110,³³⁷ now marked più largamente, as George brings home the theme, “Oh, life

³²⁹ Floyd, 199.
³³⁰ Ibid.
³³¹ Ibid., 199-200.
³³² Ibid., 200.
³³³ Ibid.
³³⁴ Ibid.
³³⁵ Ibid., 201.
³³⁶ Ibid., 202.
³³⁷ Ibid., 199.
will be good when we get us our farm,”338 one more time. Lennie's words and music, here, are only supportive to George's flowing melody, with “I'm lookin', George, still lookin'.”339 The two close it together when suddenly at Rehearsal 115, *Animato* (*♩* = 112),340 (Stage directions: Lennie suddenly sits up on his knees and points, stretching his arm to its full length as if reaching for the horizon),341 Lennie exclaims, “I see it, George! I see it! There, over there!”342 At three measures after Rehearsal 115, slowing to *Allegro maestoso* (*♩* = 100), with Lennie singing a sustained high A,343 we hear from the orchestra the sweeping arpeggiated fullness, in *molto cantabile*, of *Life Will Be Good* motive.344 Lennie sees their future, there, in the distance. See Example 4.5 on page 69. (Stage directions: George raises the pistol and aims at the back of Lennie's head.)345 At Rehearsal 116, Lennie exclaims, “It's our home, George, our home! It's our home!”346 ending on a sustained high B for eight beats.347

On the downbeat of Rehearsal 117, *Largamente assai* (*♩* = 76),348 Lennie has just ended the high B, and George fires the gun. Stage directions read: (As Lennie stands, his arm still outstretched, pointing, George fires. Lennie's body convulses and he staggers upstage. Holding on to George, he slowly falls to the ground, his arm still outstretched and his eyes still full of his vision. George sinks down with him and Lennie dies, falling back in the underbrush.)349

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338 Floyd, 202.
339 Ibid., 201-02.
340 Ibid., 203.
341 Ibid.
342 Ibid.
343 Ibid.
344 Ibid.
345 Ibid.
346 Ibid.
347 Ibid.
348 Ibid., 204.
349 Ibid.
At Rehearsal 118, *Pochettino piu mosso* (♩ = 96), (Stage directions: George hurls the pistol into the underbrush),\(^{350}\) George has killed his friend, with whom he was to spend the remainder of his life. The *Life Will Be Good* motive returns,\(^{351}\) and again at Rehearsal 119, slowing significantly *Lento assai* (♩ = 69),\(^{352}\) *Life Will Be Good* motive is played, one more time, from the orchestra. At Rehearsal 120, slowing further to *Largo e solenne* (♩ = 54), the ranch hands arrive, and after a Grand Pause, we hear the sound of a lone harmonica, playing a theme from Act Two, sung by a ranch hand (tenor) with only the name “Ballad Singer,” “Moving on, always moving on,”\(^{353}\) played now, here, as a solo harmonica,\(^{354}\) which leads to Rehearsal 122, the closing *molto forte* orchestral response, *Molto largamente* (♩ = 80), the *Some Dreams Is So Far Away* motive,\(^{355}\) as the stage goes dark and as the curtain falls.

**Performance Suggestions**

The challenge for the role of Lennie Small, in the final scene with George, actually begins from the start of the fiery and sweeping orchestral interlude\(^{356}\) that leads into the final act\(^{357}\). One has approximately two minutes to first get physically into place where Lennie is to enter for the final scene, get some water, and to rest physically and vocally. The previous scene with Curley's Wife is physically taxing and the author found the best thing was to literally lie down on the stage and just focus inwardly, tuning out the interlude which is full of intensity.

\(^{350}\) Floyd, 203.
\(^{351}\) Ibid.
\(^{352}\) Ibid., 205.
\(^{353}\) Ibid., 81-83.
\(^{354}\) Ibid., 206.
\(^{355}\) Ibid.
\(^{356}\) Ibid., 175.
\(^{357}\) Ibid., 182.
Example 4.5. “I see it, George! I see it! There! Over there!” Act 3, Scene 2, mm. 685-94

(George raises the pistol and aims at the back of Lennie’s head.)
Just as Lennie enters onstage for the final scene, *Bird* motive is heard in the orchestra. I frequently treated that, portraying Lennie, as a bird calling from the trees, or to show my fear in being alone in the woods. The author has come to recognize that this motive has been present throughout the opera and the author now sees it differently, as a reference to the innocent disability of Lennie Small. The author believes his interpretation would have been more effective if he had simply allowed the motive, as Lennie on stage, to be his own essence, to have done less to reflect the music physically.

359 Floyd, 183.
CONCLUSION

Carlisle Floyd often said that he considered *Of Mice and Men* to be his greatest work. It is a universal story that deeply demonstrates, and reminds, of our need for human belonging.

The unique nature of the character of Lennie Small touches audiences in ways that are rare, at least in this author's experience which encompasses singing the role professionally for 22 years. The role of Lennie Small is distinct among operatic roles in contrast to the vastly more common heroic characters in the most well-known operas. This difference, and Carlisle Floyd's successful use of recurring motives to representing universal human themes, winds its way into the heart in profound and long-lasting ways. Audience members often recall *Of Mice and Men* as one of the most memorable operatic performances ever experienced. It is my firm belief that audiences in the future, around the world, will greatly benefit from experiencing this opera.
APPENDIX A. CARLISLE FLOYD'S BIOGRAPHY

Carlisle Floyd is one of the foremost composers and librettists of opera in the United States today. Born in 1926, Floyd earned B.M. and M.M. degrees in piano and composition at Syracuse University. He began his teaching career in 1947 at Florida State University, remaining there until 1976, when he accepted the prestigious M. D. Anderson Professorship at the University of Houston. In addition, he is co-founder with David Gockley of the Houston Opera Studio, jointly created by the University of Houston and Houston Grand Opera.

Considered the “Father of American Opera,” Floyd’s operas are regularly performed in the US and Europe. He first achieved national prominence with the New York premiere of his opera *Susannah* (1953–54) by the New York City Opera in 1956. In 1957 it won the New York Music Critics’ Circle Award and subsequently was chosen to be America’s official operatic entry at the 1958 Brussels World’s Fair. In June 2020, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis stages a brand-new production of *Susannah*, directed by Patricia Racette, who was herself an acclaimed Susannah. The production features soprano Susanna Phillips in the leading role and conductor Gemma New on the podium.

His second opera, *Wuthering Heights*, premiered at Santa Fe Opera in 1958, and continues to have life decades later—a critically acclaimed recording, released by The Florentine Opera in June 2016 on Reference Recordings, was listed in *Opera News’* 10 Best Opera Recordings of 2016.

Based on the Steinbeck novella, *Of Mice and Men* (1969) is another of Floyd’s most performed works throughout the world. It was commissioned by the Ford Foundation and was given its premiere by the Seattle Opera in 1970.
*Bilby's Doll* (1976) and *Willie Stark* (1981) were both commissioned and produced by the Houston Grand Opera, the latter in association with the Kennedy Center. A televised version of the world premiere production of Willie Stark opened WNET’s *Great Performances* series on the PBS network in September of 1981.

*Cold Sassy Tree* (2000) received its premiere at Houston Grand Opera in April 2000. Subsequently, it has been performed by Austin Lyric Opera, Central City Opera, Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Opera Carolina, Opera Omaha, San Diego Opera, Utah Opera, and Atlanta Opera.

Floyd’s most recent opera, *Prince of Players*, premiered in March 2016 as a chamber opera by the Houston Grand Opera. In 2018, the Florentine Opera performed the work with a full orchestra, with Soundmirror recording the performance. The CD is scheduled for release in late 2019. His non-operatic works include the orchestral song cycle *Citizen of Paradise* (1984), which received its New York premiere with world-renowned mezzo-soprano Suzanne Mentzer.

*A Time to Dance* (1993), his large-scale work for chorus, bass-baritone soloist, and orchestra, was commissioned by the American Choral Directors Association.

Among the numerous awards and honors Floyd has received include a Guggenheim Fellowship (1956); Citation of Merit from the National Association of American Conductors and Composers (1957); National Opera Institute’s Award for Service to American Opera (1983); and the National Medal of Arts in a ceremony at the White House (2004). In 2008, Floyd was one of four honorees—and the only composer—to be included in the inaugural National Endowment for the Arts Opera Honors. Additionally, he served on the Music Panel of the National Endowment for the Arts from 1974–80 and was the first chairman of the Opera/Musical Theater Panel.
In 2001, Floyd was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters. He also was inducted into the South Carolina Hall of Fame (2011) and the Florida Artist Hall of Fame (2015). He holds six honorary doctorates.

During the 2015–16 season, Floyd partnered with Opera America to produce “Masters at Work,” a live, interactive webcast exploring the making of an opera.
APPENDIX B. WORKS BY CARLISLE FLOYD

*Slow Dusk* (1948-49) - A musical play in one act

*Susannah* (1955) - A musical drama in two acts

*Pilgrimage* (1955) - Cantata for baritone and orchestra

*Sonata for Piano* (1957)

*Wuthering Heights* (1958) - A musical drama in a prologue and three acts

*The Mystery: Songs of Motherhood for soprano and orchestra* (1960)


*The Sojourner and Mollie Sinclair* (1963) - Opera in one act

*Markheim* (1966) - Opera in one act

*Introduction, Aria, and Dance* (1967) - Orchestra

*Of Mice and Men* (1970) - Opera in three acts, six scenes

*Flower and Hawk* (1972) - Monodrama for soprano and orchestra

*Bilby's Doll* (1976) - Opera in three acts, eight scenes

*In Celebration* (1978) - Overture for orchestra

*Willie Stark* (1981) - Opera in three acts and nine scenes

*Citizen of Paradise* (1993) - Orchestral song cycle

*A Time to Dance* (1994) - For bass baritone solo, chorus, and orchestra

*Cold Sassy Tree* (2000) - A musical play in three acts

*Prince of Players* (2016) - Chamber opera in two acts
APPENDIX C. INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

WNIB Classical 97 Interviews Julian Patrick, 1985

Bruce Duffie interviews Julian Patrick
WNIB Classical 97 Chicago
Telephone interview, November 24, 1985

Julian Patrick is a fine American singer with a low voice. Usually, one notes exactly what category that voice falls into, but as you will see later in this interview, that’s not a question which has an easy answer in this case. He’s been involved with opera for many years and has done a variety of roles in numerous places. Before coming to opera, Patrick was in the chorus on Broadway, and that has made an impact on his view toward music-drama. “The music is important,” he says, “and I want to do it the very best I can, but I think of it as theater. We have a number of fine American operas that should be done on the big stages. They’re done in schools – and there’s nothing wrong with that – but they should be given elsewhere, also. I consider opera to be theater, and that’s the way I always approach it.”

Among his credits are numerous roles in Italian, German, and American operas, including televised productions on NBC of Amahl and the Night Visitors, and a staged performance of Bach’s St. Matthew’s Passion. ”When you stage things for the lens it can be a real drama, and a camera can do many wonderful things you never do on the stage.” When he made this statement, I inquired about using one of these effects for the Hagen/Alberich scene in Göttterdammerung, and Patrick immediately remarked that it would be an incredible project to do the Ring for TV. “All the things would actually work!” He went on to comment that he enjoys seeing pieces of the Ring during a season, but the more it’s done as a cycle, the more complete experience you have.

As it happens, Julian Patrick is indeed involved in the somewhat controversial production of the Ring in Seattle. These performances of Alberich aren’t his first touches with Wagner. He’s done a dozen performances of The Flying Dutchman in Strasbourg under the baton of Alain Lombard. ”It was received well,” he says, “but I’ve not been asked for it again. People expect a darker and heavier sound. I’d like to try it again now that I’m older and more into the style. I find him a sympathetic character.”

Patrick also participated in a completely secularized version of Parsifal in Lyon. ”All the religious aspects were removed,” he said, and then noted that he couldn’t speak about it too much in a magazine or radio interview because his feelings are quite unprintable! It was his only performance of Amfortas, and despite the wonderful cast and conductor, he called it “a complete aberration. I’d like to do it again sometime in a more traditional version. Sometimes the greatest stage directors can come up with an idea that is so far-fetched that they go off the deep end and it’s offensive to virtually everybody. They’ve just gone too far.” How far is too far? ”Good question, no answer.”

There are some roles he does not wish to do again, including Escamillo. “Why on earth does Carmen want to run off with that guy?” Of Seattle, he has a very good feeling not only for
this 

production, but also for *Of Mice and Men* by Carlisle Floyd, which he sang there in the World Premiere production. He calls it “one of the high points of my life.” He later sang the role in Holland, and also feels that *Casanova* by Dominick Argento “deserves to be in every opera house in this country.”

Coming back to Wagner, in November of 1985, Julian Patrick was singing his first performances of Beckmesser in Chicago. At that time, it was my privilege to speak with him at his apartment. When I arrived, he was reading a book on Wagner, so that is where we began our chat.

**Bruce Duffie:** How much do you get involved in the history and letters of a composer when you’re preparing a role?

**Julian Patrick:** When I’m preparing a role, you’ll be disappointed to find out, I don’t really bother myself with that. I’m concerned with the words I have to say and learning the notes that go along with it. I get that organized first because that is what I have to deal with when I get on stage. That is really all I have to communicate with the audience. When I get that done and I get to rehearsals, the director (if he’s worth his salt) has many ideas and lots of background to urge me to do what we want me to do. I try to draw all of my dramatic intents and what I do on stage directly from the libretto. What people say to me and what I say to them determines what happens in the piece. All the other trappings that the director and the designer give me only add an ambiance of what I’m trying to do. They are very important to give that flavor and historical setting for the time, but the most important things are the words and notes.

**BD:** Do you work very hard on your diction, then?

**JP:** I try to. I learned my German in Vienna at the Volksoper, and they expect to understand every word. They paid me a great compliment by saying that from the stage I had no accent whatsoever. I sound (according to them) incredibly authentic, so I’m grateful to their training.

**BD:** Do you work harder at the diction when you know the audience will understand all the text?

**JP:** I try to work hard anyway whether or not they understand it, but I try to do it so that if there is someone there who speaks German, that they will be able to understand it. I do the same in English or French, or whatever language I’m singing in.

**BD:** Do you enjoy doing operas in translation?

**JP:** I like that if it’s a comedy. I think it’s necessary in this country if it’s a comedy. I’ve heard *Die Meistersinger* in English and found it very interesting. It was at the New York City Opera with Norman Bailey as Sachs. If it makes proper sense and reflects what the original has to say, then I welcome it, and I think more operas should be done in English. I’m not one of these people who think the music is destroyed when it’s put into English. I do think it’s unfortunate that the majority of those who translate operas into English do not have English as their first language, and thus don’t have at their fingertips all the many ways we have to express ourselves in the English language. I also believe the American poets should lend their expertise
to the business of making American translations that we’re not embarrassed to stand on the stage and sing. They should make the effort to put good English, beautiful English, into our operatic performances. When the translation has been done by Ruth and Thomas Martin or the Meads or Boris Goldovsky, we always wind up changing and changing words. Everyone comes with their own little pattern of what they want to do. Unfortunately, I’ve not sung any of the Andrew Porter texts. I heard The Valkerie at the English National Opera and I found it very interesting. It’s the first time I didn’t fall asleep during Wotan’s monologue! That’s not actually true – I don’t fall asleep – but you know what I mean…

**BD:** I know you’re joking, but how do we get more people in the audience to not fall asleep in Wagner?

**JP:** That’s a very difficult thing. Unless a person understands what is being sung, it’s very possible to get bored with it. It’s unfortunate to have to say that, but the music is not enough.

**BD:** What do you expect from the audience that comes to hear you?

**JP:** I only want them to enjoy what I’m doing and to understand what I’m doing. That’s about as much as I can say on that topic. You certainly feel it when they understand what you’re doing, and I don’t know how to describe that. There’s something that comes back from them. But I have no particular expectations except that I want them to understand and hopefully like me.

**BD:** Do you enjoy seeing operatic performances?

**JP:** I can still be moved by a good performance. We’re super-critical because it’s our business. The audience may notice the same things, but I understand why. I go with a critical eye, and if it’s good and performed well, I’m just pulled right into it and become totally involved. On the other hand, I cannot listen to this Meistersinger I’m doing. Even the parts I’m offstage for, I cannot listen to or I become too emotionally involved. I think it’s so gorgeous and I respond to it too greatly. I wouldn’t miss a cue, but I would be too caught up in it to come out and do what I’m supposed to do with any credibility. At the end of a performance I’m always up – if it’s been a good one. The adrenalin is still flowing and it takes a bit of time before I can go to sleep… I’ve been seeing this opera for many years and just adore it. Paul Schoeffler was the Sachs I knew from the beginning, and I think he was the best one I ever saw. Thomas Stewart is wonderful, and I think he’s my second favorite, but I’ve never seen him do it until now when I’m doing it with him.

**BD:** Tell me about Beckmesser. How much of a pedant is he?

**JP:** Well, he really is one, there’s no doubt about it. “Ped-ant” (said spitting out the final letter) – that’s a wonderful term for him. He is a stickler for rules. He believes that one should live by them and he does his entire life I believe. I think he’s a stingy man, and I kiddingly say that he lives with this Great-Aunt. He’s been trying to get himself a lady-friend or a bride for some time without any success.

**BD:** Why is he a failure with women?
**JP:** I think it’s because he’s so stiff and ungenerous of himself. Wagner doesn’t make a brutal joke out of what happens to him; Wagner only makes fun of him. There are many people in our own groups who get poked fun at, right? What would we do if we didn’t have our goat to pick at.

**BD:** Is Beckmesser a loveable goat at all or is he to be pitied?

**JP:** I think in the end he’s to be pitied because of the joke that is played on him. You must feel sorry for him. I don’t think may people love him, but they respect him because he’s an intelligent man, very bright. He’s a scholar, he’s the town clerk. I think that his learning is book-learning. Because of all the knowledge that he’s accumulated, he knows a lot but understands very little. Hans Sachs is a very talented man. Walther is a very talented man, but I don’t believe that Beckmesser has any natural talent. He has a mind that grasps onto everything and holds onto it, but when he goes to sing his serenade, he can’t put the poem with a piece of music that makes any sense. He should be able to, but he doesn’t have the talent for that. He’s gotten to be a Mastersinger for some reason, and he’s a good singer who has learned all the rules. He can take someone else’s music and express it truly as it was written while not bringing anything new to it. But when he takes his own ideas about trying to do something with them – which is what the whole opera is about – he falls flat on his nose. He’s vindictive. Perhaps that’s not the right word, but when he sees that Walther is going to try out and be a Meistersinger, nothing pleases him more because he (Beckmesser) will be the marker. He is going to mark all the faults, and before he goes into the box he knows good and well he’s not going to let Walther succeed. If Walther isn’t a Meistersinger, he can’t even compete for Eva’s hand.

**BD:** What would happen to Beckmesser if Hans Sachs decides to compete?

**JP:** There’s a part that’s normally cut – an exchange between them in the last act when Beckmesser says he still cannot make sense out of the song, and Sachs asks him why he doesn’t give up. To this Beckmesser replies that since Sachs is not going to compete, he (Beckmesser) can beat all the others. Sachs was the only competition. Beckmesser has a great deal of conceit. It’s not self-confidence but conceit, and there’s a difference between the two. He’s a very proud man. He has all the faults that we say that people shouldn’t have.

**BD:** Are you a baritone, a bass-baritone, or a bass?

**JP:** Yes! [Both laugh] For American singers, those categories kind of fall by the wayside because in order to make headway in this business, we find ourselves doing many different things. The Germans – and often the Italians – are the ones who have things carefully categorized. When people say I’m a bass-baritone, I just nod my head. When they say I’m a heldenbaritone, I just nod my head. A colleague of mine said, “We’re all whores in this business. We just do whatever they’ll pass us for until we finally decide that we want to have our own say-so about what we do, and we start saying yea or nay.

**BD:** So how do you decide which roles you’ll sing and which you’ll turn down?

**JP:** I do it according to how interesting the opera is and how interesting the character is. I almost
quit this business about ten or twelve years ago because I only had three jobs that year. So when I decided to stay in it, I decided I was only going to do those things that were of interest to me. Friends knew I was still singing well – but not often – urged me to change managements, so I did, but I told them I’d only do what I wanted to do. One doesn’t have to sing for a living.

**BD:** Let’s move over to Alberich. Is he likeable at all?

**JP:** [Laughing] I think you must feel a bit sorry for him. He’s the one who has the guts to actually steal the gold and do something with it – even though it’s all pointed in the wrong direction.

**BD:** What’s his ultimate goal?

**JP:** I think it’s something that happens to him. He is looking for a little love and couldn’t get it, so in anger he steals the gold when he hears what it’s about. His ultimate goal then is power, which is what the whole *Ring* is about – the gaining of, and the misuse or abuse of power.

**BD:** What would he do with the power once it was his?

**JP:** All he wants to do is be a tyrant.

**BD:** Is he sadistic?

**JP:** I don’t know. What do you think? I don’t think that it’s his main aim.

**BD:** Do you like playing a dwarf?

**JP:** I don’t think of him as a dwarf. Because of my stature, I can’t possibly think of making myself look smaller. I play the character. How many dwarfs do you find that can sing Alberich? Since people ask me to do it and it’s obvious that I’m six feet all, they must be willing to suspend belief, too. I don’t try to make myself short, but I do hold my body in such a fashion that people are surprised when they see how big I am when I stand up. [Note: During this, Patrick was scrunching his body on the couch to indicate how it would be done.]

**BD:** Did it surprise you when people offered you this role?

**JP:** As a matter of fact, yes. I’d never even thought of doing it. I auditioned for Speight Jenkins when he took over the Seattle Opera, and I thought he was going to be doing a production of *Tales of Hoffmann*. I’ve sung the four villains a great deal in Vienna and in France, so I sang that for him. Then he asked for something German, so I sang the *Dutchman’s Monologue* – which I’ve also done. Then he told me he wasn’t doing *Hoffmann* and asked if I’d ever thought of doing Alberich. Until then I’d not really paid too much attention to the *Ring* because there were too many other things I had to learn. So Speight told me to look it over. I learned parts of it and sang it for him, and he said he wanted me to sing it if I was interested in learning it. I did the role in the last season of their old production, and the summer before that I did the concert version of *Rheingold* in Washington D.C. (Speight had signed me up well in advance, and word
got around that I was doing it…) But I don’t know the history of these roles and the many different people who have done them. I know some of the people who have done Beckmesser because I’d fallen in love the *Meistersinger* so long ago, but I wasn’t that interested in all the characters in the *Ring*.

**BD:** Did you assume that if you would do a *Ring* you’d be Wotan?

**JP:** I was asked to do Wotan two or three times about nine or ten years ago, and sure, I thought that if I ever got involved in it that I might be doing Wotan. But to those who asked me for it I said, “You’ve got to be kidding me.” Then I thought that maybe they heard something that I couldn’t, so I looked at the *Walküre* Wotan and found that I could sing it. But no one’s asked me since then. Later someone asked me for the Wanderer and I said yes, but it turned out that I had conflicts and couldn’t make the dates. Now that I’ve learned and sung Beckmesser and the three Alberichs, I’ve listened to other performances and recordings and I think, “Gee, I don’t like that – they don’t even sing!” One of the things that has been said to me concerning these parts is that I’m someone who can not only do them, but also sing them rather than bark them. It’s a trap that one call fall into very easily. You have so many words, and for Alberich they’re so alliterative. You might have a string of twenty eighth notes with a different word on each one, and you start to sound like a chicken. It’s easy to start merely speaking on pitch without singing, and I try very hard not to. There’s wonderful music there if you can avoid the speaking trap.

**BD:** Is Alberich a grateful role to sing?

**JP:** I find it so. In *Rheingold*, are you kidding? In a number of places he gets to sing wonderful things like the duet with Wotan. The final curse makes my own hair stand on end, so I must be doing something right. [Both laugh]

**BD:** Do you like the fact that he appears in three of the four dramas?

**JP:** Yes, I do. That last appearance in *Götterdämmerung* is a very unusual sort of piece of music. It’s not like anything else he sings before that. The stage directions indicate that Alberich appears in a sudden shaft of light, kneeling in front of Hagen who is half-asleep. Now is Alberich dead, or is this some of his magic trick used to remind Hagen of what he should do? Or is it Hagen’s dream? Is he a phantom? Is Alberich eternal? It leaves itself open to many interpretations, and I’m just getting into all the Wagner research. And if I do find out what he is, how am I going to convey that to the audience with what I have to say? Perhaps Wagner was using the scene to remind the audience that Hagen is Alberich’s son, and to make the connection that Hagen is to carry on the tradition of what Alberich was trying to do – to gain power over the world. It’s a dramatic device, and no composer is free from that vice.

**BD:** Perhaps the way to do that scene would be to have Hagen close down front and put Alberich upstage away and a little fuzzy.

**JP:** If it works, why not? By the same token, why is Beckmesser in Sach’s shop the morning after the big fight? Wagner needs Beckmesser to “find” the song for his *denouement* and to move the plot along, but there’s really no particularly good reason for Beckmesser to be there. I have to
convince the audience that there is a reason and came up with the pantomime involving the fact that my shoes hurt. I hope that makes it clear to the audience why I am there, but you see how you need to find things in the story to make it all work.

**BD:** Is Wagner a better musician or a better dramatist?

**JP:** Hoo boy! I would hate to say that one was better than the other. The total genius of the man was beyond belief. I’ve always liked Wagner, but the more I learn, the more I find it incredible. The music is so wedded to the drama. In the pantomime we were just speaking of, the music tells you exactly what is in Beckmesser’s mind.

**BD:** Is *Meistersinger* too long?

**JP:** I don’t think it’s too long. The more I work on it, the shorter it’s become! It can get to be too long for the audience if they don’t understand it. You have to make some effort when you go to something like this.

**BD:** Are Wagner parts harder to sing than Verdi or Puccini?

**JP:** I think so. You should sing Wagner the same way that you sing Verdi and Puccini or Bellini. When he wrote the pieces, he didn’t have any “Wagnerian” singers. They were trained in the *Bel Canto* school, and he liked them a lot. There’s no reason why we still can’t do it that way. The “Wagner Singer” is a creation of the past 60 years, and they call them that because they specialize in the parts and can sing them without falling apart in the process.

**BD:** Are you pleased with the recordings that have been made of your roles?

**JP:** I don’t like to listen to my recordings after they’re made. I make my judgment about what was done at that time, and if I thought it was good I stick to my guns. If I think I was lousy, even if others say it was good I still stick to my guns. I get to do what I enjoy the most, and people are crazy enough to pay me for it. I just work hard at my business, and I’ve been fortunate to make a living at it. I would like to sing Sachs someday, though I don’t know that anyone will ever ask me. I would like to do it and can do it, but they will have to hurry up before I quit. I would like to continue to sing as long as I can do it well. When my voice starts to go and I can’t accomplish it the way it should be accomplished, I hope I have sense enough to say “Bye, bye” and let somebody else start doing it. When it gets to that point and people are still offering me work, I don’t know if I’ll have the courage to say no or not. When the fire bell starts ringing and you’ve got the performer’s blood, you want to get out there and try it.

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This interview was recorded in his apartment in Chicago on November 24, 1985. It was transcribed and published in *Wagner News* in July of 1987. It was re-edited, the photos, links and biography at the end were added, and it was posted on this website in 2012. Award-winning broadcaster Bruce Duffie was with WNIB, Classical 97 in Chicago from 1975 until its final moment as a classical station in February of 2001. His interviews have also appeared in various
magazines and journals since 1980, and he now continues his broadcast series on WNUR-FM, as well as on Contemporary Classical Internet Radio.

**Deseret News Interviews Carlisle Floyd, 1999**

Rick Mortensen Interviews Carlisle Floyd  
Published in Arts, Section E of *Deseret News*, January 10, 1999

*Of Mice and Men*: Composer hopes opera connects with audiences

In 1955, New York City Opera Co. took a chance on a new opera by an unknown composer from South Carolina. The opera was *Susannah*, and it became the most frequently performed American opera, boasting more than 750 performances in 231 productions.

The composer (and librettist) was Carlisle Floyd, who went on to write eight more operas, including *Of Mice and Men*, which Utah Opera performs beginning Saturday.

*Of Mice and Men* had its premiere in 1969, by the Seattle Opera company, and like *Susannah*, it has become an audience favorite.

Floyd said he is not a composer who ignores the audience. “It has to be a dialogue between me and the audience,” he said in a telephone interview from his home in Houston. “And I hope that I'm communicating with them in a musical language that reaches them at some level - and, I hope, a fairly immediate level.”

Floyd is known for his assertion that an audience should only have to “show up” to understand and appreciate contemporary opera. But he doesn't bend over backward to be accessible, and he doesn't shy away from musical complexity.

*Of Mice and Men* is riddled with dissonant harmonies and moments of polytonality, which Floyd uses to heighten the dramatic tension in key scenes.

“For serious television dramas, we hear a lot of complex harmonies as background music,” he said. “Audiences take it pretty much in stride - I don't think they do this consciously - if they feel that it's synchronized to what's happening on stage. To me, the dramatic situation determines your musical vocabulary.”

For this reason, Floyd also uses folk music and ballads to suit the lighter, more atmospheric moments of the opera.

Floyd says his current project, an opera based on the novel, *Cold Sassy Tree*, is musically simpler than *Of Mice and Men*, because the story is less intense.
Between *Susannah* and *Of Mice and Men*, Floyd grew as a composer and discovered a wider pallet of sound. However, it was not the music, but the libretto to the Steinbeck novel that he found most challenging.

When Floyd presented the finished libretto and two acts of music to several trusted friends, they all pronounced it dull. Realizing a unanimous verdict of “boring” could mean death to his new work, Floyd started the libretto over, from the beginning, and finished the rewrite some three years later.

“I can safely say that no other work of mine has been as problematic, as trying and occasionally disheartening as *Of Mice and Men*, Floyd wrote in the Winter 1971 issue of *The Opera Journal*. “To be fair, I should also confess that, as is sometimes the case with difficult and willful children, no other opera gave me as much pleasure once it was finished.”

Taking the advice of a friend who suggested Floyd put more of his own spin on the story, Floyd rewrote the libretto without referring back to the Steinbeck text. His goal was to reduce it to its most essential parts, which not only entailed cutting some scenes but adding a few.

For example, Floyd added the opening scene in which George and his half-wit companion Lennie are fleeing from the police. He also expanded the relationship between ranch-boss Curley and his wife by adding an extra scene.

The result is a compact tragedy, held together by thematic leitmotifs that represent things like the “lonely life of a ranch hand.”

Floyd says audiences often get lost in the drama, which doesn't bother him. “The music works on you subliminally, whether you notice it or not.”

“The piece has to be approached from the perspective of character,” said bass-baritone Stephen Bryant, who plays the role of George. “The music is very difficult, and the drama is very demanding as well. As a performer, it takes all you have to offer as an artist, both musically and dramatically.”

In exploring the character of George, Bryant says he calls upon his experience as a father of two boys. “George has to be a parent to Lennie,” he said. “That also gives George a reason for living.

“It's a symbiotic relationship, and a positive one in many ways. I get the opportunity to call on my own parenting skills frequently - of really trying to lay down the law and make sure that Lennie understands what I'm saying.”

However, this opera is a tragedy, and George's parental relationship to Lennie makes the final scene, which is the musical and dramatic climax, all the more tragic.

“George's life is about a mission,” said Bryant. “Lennie is a mission. Their dream (of owning a ranch) is a mission. Then, at the end, he's left with a final, tragic mission, which buries the other two.”
In the Spotlight: Michael Hendrick

Michael Hendrick, who recently sang the role of Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito* in concert with the National Symphony Orchestra, will make his Washington Opera debut in the demanding role of Lennie in Carlisle Floyd's *Of Mice and Men*. The hard-to-cast role of Lennie, described as having “the physique and strength of a giant and a child's mind,” is a role that has won the 6/4 tenor great acclaim in recent performances with Utah Opera and Arizona Opera. Raved *The Arizona Citizen*, “The Tucson Convention Center Music Hall crowd of 1,600 thundered its approval of the work, saving its most enthusiastic applause for tenor Michael Hendrick, who played the lumbering innocent Lennie...Hendrick's Lennie captured in the fullest sense the childlike innocence of this hulk of a man...Vocally, Hendrick was impressive, sporting a big, warm sound from top to bottom, handily projected to the cheap seats.” Opera News wrote, “Michael Hendrick played Lennie as 'just a big kid,' in keeping with the composer's stated intention. His steady, secure tenor captured the young man's physical power as well as his innocence, most affectingly in the barn scene with Curley's Wife, his large stature and boyish face adding to his believability.”

**ML:** After performing the role of Lennie twice before, did you ever think you would be appearing in a third production of *Of Mice and Men*?

**MH:** This is actually the fourth production I've been involved in, since I also covered the role at New York City Opera. I never thought I'd do it this many times. I love this opera. My wife, the soprano Nancy Atkinson Hendrick, says she can sit through every performance of *Of Mice and Men* and never get tired of hearing it.

You're really in for a major experience. The opera absolutely holds your interest all the way through (to) the very last note of the piece. The way the composer uses the music to intensify the drama is so beautiful. I tell you there won't be one dry eye in the house, even for Washingtonians! If anything, it will remind them about their lives back home. Even if they don't relate to bring migrant workers, they'll relate to the heart of the story.

It's about the dream of owning your own life for yourself, having your own home. This is all George and Lenny want. Throughout the opera, they recount this recurring dream they have. It's something that George habitually says to Lennie. It helps Lennie calm down because he's kind of childish- it's like a relationship between a parent and a child. And that dream builds in intensity because it gets constantly applied to a variety of situations, even up to the end when George shoots Lennie before the posse gets to him.

It's a very exciting story and I'll never get tired of doing it. But it's also an exhausting role. Lennie gets beat up in one scene. He kill's Curley's Wife in another scene. He's hardly ever offstage as well. It's one of the more tiring roles I've ever done. It keeps me in good shape.
**ML:** Is it tough vocally too?

Indeed! It calls for many different demands vocally. You have to sing really softly at some points. You have to pull out high notes out of the blue. The opera ends on Lennie's B natural- “It's our home!” - and if you're exhausted by then you're in trouble. Both times I did it before, I would find that the reaction of the people onstage was incredible- not the actors per se, but the stagehands and other people behind the scenes. I have come offstage at the end of the opera, after being shot by George, and everyone backstage is sobbing.

**ML:** How tough is that final scene for you emotionally?

It's not so tough as long as you don't get too involved in the story. You have to have a little bit of reserve. As you're kneeling there and George is telling you to look across the river and see the farm, you can't feel sorry for yourself. You have to stay in the moment. You have to stay relaxed. The more relaxed the better because you've done a lot of singing up to that point.

**ML:** What do you focus on as you prepare the role again?

**MH:** Musically, it's not terribly difficult to come back to, but it's not a walk in the park, either. It takes time to go back and make sure you have it exactly right. Every note is important in it. I know Carlisle, and he's very particular on what he wants.

Dramatically, my approach to the character is that Lennie is not so much retarded- he's more of a big kid. I think I play him as not childish, but childlike. Not a child in the sense that he cries or whines, but he's dependent on George for all of his needs. Of course, all of that is open to what [director] Francesca Zambello wants. I'm looking forward to collaborating with her and getting her ideas, and hopefully she'll be interested in what I have to offer as well. But I can tell you this- you're in for a treat.

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**Louisiana Eccentric Observer (LEO) Weekly Interviews Carlisle Floyd, 2009**

Bill Doolittle, *Louisville Eccentric Observer (LEO) Weekly*

October 28, 2009

Of composers and novelists: Floyd happy to heed Steinbeck's suggestion

Because the John Steinbeck novel *Of Mice and Men* has been required reading for nearly every American high school student for the past 60 years, and armies of academics have pored over every piece of the piece looking for grand truths, there is no shortage of micro-analysis of the story of George and Lennie — especially the grim life and systematic oppression of migrant farm workers in Depression Era California.

But don’t expect a lot of sociological hypotheses when Kentucky Opera presents Carlisle Floyd’s opera *Of Mice and Men* this weekend at the Brown Theatre.
“I’m not preaching any kind of social sermon,” says Floyd, who debuted his version of Steinbeck’s 1937 classic in 1970 and will be in Louisville for the Kentucky Opera staging this week.

Floyd thinks the sociological aspects are implicit enough in the story that he doesn’t need to beat them to death in the opera. And besides, he says, Steinbeck asked him not to.

“In the first version I wrote, I set it very definitely in the 1930s,” says the composer. “I had a whole chorus about the WPA and the NRA and all those governmental agencies that came to the aid of the poor. But it was the one thing Steinbeck asked me to leave out.”

This was just before Steinbeck’s death in 1968. Floyd, a professor of music at Florida State University, had already hit with a successful opera called Susannah. And the movie Of Mice and Men, starring Burgess Meredith and Lon Chaney Jr., had demonstrated the book was perfect for dramatization. So Steinbeck was interested when he heard Floyd was working on an operatic version of his story.

“We worked through my agent and his,” Floyd recalls. “He told his agent to tell my agent to tell me — and that’s the way it came down.”

Floyd retained the California setting but eliminated any reference to time.

“He didn’t want it pinned to a particular period,” Floyd explains. “I never met him, because he had a heart attack while I was working on the opera. But I did meet his wife Elaine, and we went to the opera opening together. She told me, ‘You have dramatized and included what John thought was important to the story.’ Apparently, with all the sociological commentary the book had generated, Steinbeck felt the attachment between the two men, George and Lennie, and what that said, was the important thing.”

And Floyd agrees.

“What Steinbeck is saying, I think, is the companionship that George and Lennie have is infinitely preferable to the absolute solitariness of the other ranch hands, who have made a life out of not attaching themselves to anyone.”

Floyd says his opera has set pieces — arias, duets, etc. — but they are carefully laid within the score by what he calls “orchestral continuity.”

“My objection in musical comedy is I always feel a song coming on,” he laughs. “While the characters are still talking, you can hear the orchestra coming into a song — and I think that breaks the dramatic believability.”

Which is crucial in Of Mice and Men.
“The dramatic through-line,” Floyd says, “is a story in which these two men are trying to save enough money to have a place of their own — because one of them is a grown child, who is almost always getting into some sort of trouble that is unintended. And his friend, who is also his keeper, is always trying to avoid that problem until they can get enough money together to buy a place, a home somewhere, and essentially take Lennie out of the social picture. So it is really a suspense story: Can they do it?”

The suspense is imbued with a sense of foreboding. Even when the story is at its most tender, it seems violent trouble may be waiting around the corner. That tone is set from the start as the opera begins with George and Lennie fleeing the police because of something Lennie has done — touching a young woman’s dress because he is fascinated with its color. A simple-minded giant with his hands too close to a girl. Always trouble.

At the end of the scene, safe for the time being, Lennie asks George to tell him the “story” again.

“Someday,” sings George, “we’re gonna get the jack together and we’re going to have a little house and a couple of acres an’ a cow and some pigs an’ ...”

“An’ live off the fatta the land,” shouts Lennie. “An’ have rabbits.”

Kentucky Courier-General Interviews Michael Hendrick and Rod Nelman, 2009

Andrew Adler Interviews Michael Hendrick and Rod Nelman
The Kentucky Courier-Journal, October 19, 2009

Bass Rod Nelman and tenor Michael Hendrick are indelibly connected to George and Lennie, the pair of tragically aligned characters who define Carlisle Floyd's opera Of Mice and Men.

For more than a decade, the two singers have performed these roles, sometimes separately, and elsewhere on the same stage — a process they'll repeat when Kentucky Opera mounts its production Oct. 30 and Nov. 1 at the Brown Theatre.

Those two performances will test the mettle of both artists, amid one of the most concentrated examples of musical theater in modern American opera.

It has been more than 70 years since John Steinbeck wrote his celebrated novella, and 40 years since Floyd created his opera (to his own libretto). Yet all that time has scarcely diminished the power of Steinbeck's original vision, in which the dreams of two wandering souls are contemplated, deferred and eventually shattered.

“I think of it more as a piece of theater that happens to be an opera,” Nelman said in a recent interview, not long after he'd driven in from his home near East Lansing, Mich. “The music adds to the drama that is already in Steinbeck's book.”
Written during the Great Depression, *Of Mice and Men* chronicles the journey of two men drifting from job to job in search of tranquility. All they want is to be left alone with their slice of home and hearth.

George is an able-bodied, intelligent fellow desperate to settle down. Lennie is an oak tree of a man with the mind of a child. His greatest pleasure is to pet soft things, an affection that one day will bring him doom.

They are, in many respects, creatures of the soil and dusty roads, reflecting themes that Steinbeck would soon return to in “The Grapes of Wrath.”

“It's very close to the earth to me,” Hendrick, who lives in Baton Rouge, La., said of Steinbeck's narrative landscape in *Of Mice and Men*. Indeed, “a lot of times the power of it is not in the big emotional moments, but where nothing is going on except the two of them in the middle of the forest.”

Nelman and Hendrick first appeared together in Floyd's opera eight years ago, singing in a production at New York City Opera just days after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11. Separately, they've performed with such companies as Glimmerglass Opera, Utah Opera and Washington, D.C., Opera, testifying to how *Of Mice and Men* is among the most frequently staged 20th-century operas.

In Miami some years ago, Nelma...
“Not only have our views about the characters changed over the years,” Nelman added, but “the great thing about redoing these roles is having input from other people.” From one performance to the next, “even though it's the same blocking, you always approach it fresh that day, to try to live the drama as it happens.”

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YourObserver.com Interviews Carlisle Floyd, 2013

By Greg Bortnichak
YourObserver.com, March 19, 2013

An interview with American opera composer Carlisle Floyd

March 4, 2013: I am navigating a labyrinth of hallways in the hotel where American operatic composer Carlisle Floyd is staying for the week. He is here to promote the Sarasota Opera's new production of his adaption of John Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men, an opera that, over the last 40 years, has proven to be one of a handful of classic operas to emerge from the last century. His assistant and niece, a fantastically hospitable and quick-witted woman named Jane (she goes by Janie, affectionately), tells me an anecdote in the elevator: A few years back when she was leading young journalists just like myself to meet with (at that time) Senator Barack Obama, it was very important that they followed her closely. If they didn't, secret service would shoot to kill. We have a laugh, and my vague awareness that I am about to step into the most important interview of my career moves into sharpest relief.

For those who are unfamiliar with Carlisle Floyd's legacy, he is the undisputed Father of American Opera. With a career that spans over 60 years, he is an artist of incomparable influence and honors, including a National Medal of Arts from the White House in 2004, an honoree for lifetime achievement in opera from the National Endowment of The Arts, an inductee into the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and the list goes on, and on, and on ... When he began composing opera, there were three opera companies in the whole country that would stage contemporary American opera; now there over a hundred, and several of his operas have become standard repertoire for not only leading opera companies in the U.S., but throughout Europe as well. Born in 1926 in South Carolina, Carlisle Floyd is an 86-year-old living legend who has not lost one bit of that classic Southern charm.

Greg Bortnichak: Mr. Floyd, I understand that before you became a composer, you had aspirations to become a painter. Subsequently, you have handled both the music and the libretti for your works. Could you give us any insight into how being versed in the graphic and language arts helps to inform your composition style?

Carlisle Floyd: In 25 words or less, huh? (chuckles) No, I would just say, as I said a couple times yesterday---people ask me “how did I get into opera?” and for many years I was pretty baffled by it too. It certainly wasn't because of any parental heritage or anything like that, but I think it was just a combination of all of my interests that met in opera ... I started out drawing, so
everybody thought throughout high school that I would go on to painting, but it began to wane in high school. But I also wrote—I was the editor of the school paper and all the things like that, so I felt very comfortable writing and I always had a very high regard for writing. Writing and good literature attracted me from the very beginning. And then I won a scholarship in piano, which determined really which way I was going, and then all my energies were applied towards becoming a first-class pianist ... which I did until my late 20s. And then I did Susannah and never got back to the piano (we all laugh together) in the same way. So I think that being drawn to opera or music-drama or however you want to term it, was just a way of combining all of my interests into one. And it still is. I'm never happier then when I'm working in the theater with the director, with the conductor, with the set designer, with the costumer ... So I think all my interests were met in opera

GB: Do you ever still paint?

CF: No. I keep thinking that when I get old, I'm going to take that up again.

GB: You're probably too busy doing interviews like this, I imagine (we all laugh again). In your 1955 opera, Susannah, you explore themes of false condemnation and accusation being paramount to guilt. Keeping in mind that you composed Susannah during the McCarthy era, those themes seem to be very timely, and pointed with a focus on contemporary American social issues. Of Mice and Men is interesting because the novella is poised in a very specific moment of America's cultural history, yet John Steinbeck requested that you do not reference the 1930s in your operatic interpretation. How did this impact your re-telling of the story, and did it create an opportunity for you to explore the thematic elements of the narrative in new, and perhaps broader ways than the novel? Did the social climate of the late 1960s factor in at all into your re-imagining of the story?

CF: Hmm ... I don't think so. This is the question I get most frequently asked: “Was this (Susannah) in response to the McCarthy era?” And I'm very quick to say, which is honest, that I certainly didn't do it consciously. But at the same time, I lived through that period, which was the darkest period that I've ever lived through in my life, especially in Florida because we had the Jones Committee in Florida, which was out for two things: communists and homosexuals. And equally energetic efforts were made, and a lot of false accusations were made, and I had students who were involved in that, who became involved inadvertently—who had no idea what they were even being accused of, and that really enraged me. One very fine student in particular who was probably my best student at the time was accused of being a lesbian, and she was pulled out into the Dean of Women's office, and she had to find out what they were talking about, she was that naïve. And she still, as a matter of fact, mentions it to me. Because, I think, there was a good deal of trauma in that. And of course, people that I knew were evicted from the university, and even friends; professors. So it was a very bad time to live through, and I felt that it was very wrong and that certainly accusations should not be tantamount to guilt, and so forth, and that it represented a completely monolithic opinion which existed because of fear—fear of being accused and tarred by the same brush, but there was no recourse about it, and that's what was most fascistic about it.
I was a very young professor at the time, but we had to sign documents that we were not, and we would never become communists, and we were all irked at having to do that but we had to do it to save our jobs. Things like that, I think, informed Susannah ... so that aspect of it was never difficult for me to deal with in the opera. When you take what happened in Susannah, it's very close to that: It's a monolithic opinion that everyone is afraid to challenge in any way because of fear of being in league or in guilt of the same accusation. This is something I get asked a lot in Europe about the closeness in theme to the McCarthy period, and I give them the same answer I've given you: It was not something I set out to do; I did not set to write a polemic. But I felt that if a strong moral message came through the drama, then all the better. And unfortunately we still have a problem with this. Not as much as we did in those days, but there are still those elements of society that I find very disturbing. Does that answer your question adequately?

GB: Definitely. There was something else that came to mind too. I'm curious to know, when you and John Steinbeck were in correspondence ...

CF: We worked through our agents, so he would send me messages back and forth that way.

GB: I see ... When you were working on Of Mice and Men, is it true that he asked you not to reference the 1930s?

CF: Yes he did. And it really surprised me---that's the one thing I hadn't figured. I thought he going to take issue with the fact that I eliminated the character of Crooks in the book, which I did because I thought it was the right decision and I wanted to focus on the characters of George and Lennie. I wanted the focus to be on them exclusively. Also, the character of Crooks was not a very pleasant guy and I had no dramatic use for him, but he [John Steinbeck] did not object to that in the least. He did not want Of Mice and Men pinned down to a social message. Later I had the good fortune of going to a performance in New York with Elaine Steinbeck (John's widow) and we talked about this, and she said: “You dramatized what John thought was important in the book.” Which was the whole drama of attachment, and the attachment of these two men, however flawed and imperfect it was ... it was still preferable to the isolation of the other ranch hands who simply had no contact with others.”

GB: Decisive action is another very prevalent theme in Of Mice and Men (especially considering its shocking ending). It seems appropriately timed that you premiered the work in 1970 and have supported productions of this opera in recent years, while the U.S. has been engaged in the Iraq War, one of its most nebulous ongoing military conflicts since the Vietnam war. Is this mere coincidence? Is there anything you wish to impart on your audience about military and/or cultural conflict through this work?

CF: No. I have my opinions about them, but I haven't dramatized them, no.

GB: Of Mice and Men is a work that is unique in a sense because it is most intimately understood by two men: John Steinbeck and yourself. In light of the state of Texas using the character of Lennie Small as a benchmark to decide legal mental retardation in criminal trials (i.e., the “Lennie Small criteria”), do you view Lennie as a character that is afflicted by a cognitive handicap, or do you view him, as Michael Hendrick (playing Lennie in Sarasota
Opera's 2013 production) put it, as a “simple” or “childlike” man who has the capability of overcoming his deficiencies through learning and love? In short, is Lennie sick, or is he just naive?

**CF:** I think he is impaired. I think he has the mental capacity of about a six-year-old. And one of the first things I had to do after I had done the libretto and started composing was to decide how to treat him musically ... I've seen him played as a slack-jawed idiot, and I very much resented that. I don't think that's the character. I think you have to make it understandable in the first scene, why George spends his life with Lennie. Lennie must have some appeal just as a human being, however limited. And I think that's the appeal of a child. And when I first started doing the music, I felt, how do I treat somebody who is weak-minded? But then I thought in the book he keeps saying he is just a big kid, in the book, and that pointed me towards writing music that sounded like a child, that suggested a child or someone very innocent. And so his aria in the first scene is my big chance to win the audience for Lennie right from the beginning because he explains what he loves ... and George asks the perfectly obvious question of, “Why do you want a dead mouse?” and he is very put off by this, but obviously, not Lennie.

**GB:** Isolation is another theme that is widely present in *Of Mice and Men*. I discussed with Michael Hendrick and Sean Anderson the topic of technology, namely mobile phones and how, as Michael put it, “People tend to be always in their own screens, not interacting with others, and that creates a sense of loneliness.” You must have contemplated isolation deeply while completing this work. Are we any more or less isolated today then we were in the late 1960s?

**CF:** *(Long pause ... wistful sigh)* My first feeling was that we are less isolated now. I think because of the '60s and just the things that we have seen ... well like the whole gay thing [with the Jones Committee], for instance. For one, that certainly is a gesture against isolationism and of inclusion with the advances in that, and certainly in terms of the race situation we've come a huge way. Because stigma means isolation of sorts, there is no getting around that. And I think as much as we've come in that direction, I think that we've come a ways in eradicating or at least minimizing the things that do isolate people. I hope that's true at least (chuckles).

**GB:** What about Sean's observation about how technology is impacting the way people interact on a large scale?

**CF:** Well, I think that can be a danger, but as long as people use the social media to contact each other and establish fairly personal relationships, I think that's good. If that means you can't do that face-to-face, then that's questionable.

**GB:** How about you, Carlisle? I see you have an iPad, but do you use a mobile device like a smartphone as well?

**CF:** I couldn't do the thumbs!

_We take a break to order some sandwiches and discuss the Boy Scouts. Mr. Floyd has ham and Swiss._
GB: Perhaps isolation is a universal human scourge, one that we can't avoid. What insight into loneliness do you hope to impart to your audience in *Of Mice and Men*? Have you had any personal revelations about loneliness with your experience composing *Of Mice and Men*?

CF: My only experience, and it's very limited---I had a very social life, thank goodness ... but as a child, my interests were different. So I did everything every other young boy growing up does, I played sports and all of that ... the thing of it was that I was interested in music and drawing and movies and theater and all those in addition to that, so my friends didn't share those things growing up, and I had some sense of the fact of being apart in that respect. It was all taken care of when I went to college and found people who had my interests, and that was ... great. And always has been since. But that's about the only experience I can think of because I had a very close family, and a sister, who is coming down [for the premiere of *Of Mice and Men* in Sarasota], who is 13 months younger and we've been very close all our lives.

Now what was the first part of your question? I don't remember ...

GB: Are you making a statement about loneliness that you wish to impart on the audience through this work?

CF: Yes I am. For George, he has a very big aria, which is the heart of the opera at the opening of the second act, when Slim tells him not to have any illusions about having a home of their own, and he is very discouraging about this ... and he says I've never seen a ranch hand do it---they usually die alone. And George says: “I won't settle for that kind of life. Lennie and I have each other. You lonesome guys, you don't have anyone in your life.” And that's demonstrated most graphically in the scene after the murder of the old dog at the end of Act One just before the curtain ... The ranch hands have all been for the murder of the old dog, and get into the fray of blood lust, I guess you could say, and yet when the actual shot comes, they each go separately to their bunks---they won't look at each other. So that there is no way of communicating something that is deep as grief or guilt in this particular case. And in the first staging, Frank Pizarro did it just beautifully. The light went down and the men just went across [the stage]. It was like a dance almost. They averted their gaze from each other and just sung the ballad, and that was the most prominent allocation of loneliness in the opera. And it was planted there for a reason---they had been all carrying on, rah-rah-ing, being jovial, but when something really serious and something they could really talk about comes up they could not talk. ... So you know that all of this false-heartedness has its very severe limits in terms of any kind of closeness or just response to each other---serious response.

I'm enjoying this very much ...

GB: I'm glad! It makes me very happy to hear that, Carlisle. Okay, one last conceptual question, and then we'll move into one or two fun ones ...

So much of this story hinges on concepts of oppression and freedom, or more specifically, the dream of being free. What in life has helped you to achieve feelings of freedom, and what has hindered them?
CF: I honestly don't think I've ever felt not free. Except as a child, when you're obeying your parents, and they ... what's the expression? Come down on you. Saying you can't do this, you can't do that. I don't think I've ... No, I gave you the right answer. I was just thinking of when I wanted to take piano lessons, and I knew I was going to get a fair amount of ribbing for it, but I wanted to take piano lessons, so I did it. I would walk to my piano lessons across the ball field where I played with my friends, and I got away with a lot. I think it was because I was into just about everything else ... But I had to have had a sense, and I credit my parents with this, to go after what you like or what you feel strongly about. It never occurred to me that if I got ribbing that would deter me---I wanted something more important than baseball for me. Although I played basketball in high school on the team and I played tennis, as a friend of mine used to say, “frequently, if not well,” until I ruptured my knee. So sports were always a part of my life, really. They still are.

GB: I think that's very unique. I tend to think that it is commonplace now in our society for young adults to feel backed into spending a lot of time doing things they don't see the greater good in.

CF: Oh, I think I was very fortunate. Always ... and still am. At my age, to come to Sarasota to see an opera, that is very good fortune!

GB: Mr. Floyd, as an artist with such enduring influence and unique character, you are an inspiration to many. But what inspires you? Are there any contemporary artists, authors, composers, etc., that you find exciting at the moment, or you feel have opened your eyes in ways that are worth mentioning?

CF: I think what I'm most grateful for at this point in my life, is not only the longevity of my career, but the fact that there are two young composers in particular---Jake Heggie and Mark Adamo---who I feel very close to. I've gotten to know Jake very well, and Mark almost as well, and have worked with them a little, you know, but ... they are very generous to me, saying I was something of a model to them. That's the most gratification you can get ... I'm not sure they're the only ones, but Mark calls me “The Father of Us All.” And no other title makes me any prouder than that. I would say that is the most the most gratifying thing in my life right now. When I began writing my operas, there was no American opera, and there were very few American opera companies, and just to see what has happened in my lifetime is just ... extraordinary.

*YourObserver.com Interviews Michael Hendrick and Sean Anderson, 2013*

By Greg Bortnichak
*YourObserver.com, March 15, 2013*

*Of Mice and Men* at the Sarasota Opera: a TWIS (This Week Is Savory)
Spotlight on an American Masterpiece

1937: John Steinbeck published a book that was about as thick as your average hardtack wafer but would become one of the most controversial and frequently censored works of
American literature. Ever. Little did Steinbeck know that he had created a work that in some states of the U.S. would be required reading in classrooms, and in others, would be the final word in courtrooms determining whether or not to execute criminals of questionable mental facility. The book was originally called *Something That Happened*, but after reading the line, “The best laid schemes of mice and men / Go often awry,” in Robert Burns' poem “To A Mouse,” he changed the title to: *Of Mice and Men*.

1970: Celebrated American composer Carlisle Floyd premiered his operatic adaption of *Of Mice and Men* at the Seattle Opera. Born in South Carolina and residing in Tallahassee, Fla., opera's Southern gentleman was about become the undisputed Father of American Opera.

Valentine's Day, 2013: A day when most Americans are scrambling to assemble bouquets and boxes of chocolate, or hoping that someone will give them some modicum of validation by the end of the night, I am preparing to begin my series of interviews for a piece on the Sarasota Opera's 2013 production of *Of Mice And Men*. This opera is a pointed homage to the necessity of human companionship and the ultimate tragedy of isolation, and I am convinced that, inadvertently, Valentine's Day really is a construction meant to drive the majority of people to contemplate loneliness. It seemed appropriate to me, then, that it was on Valentine's Day when I really began to delve into the world of the characters and the creators of *Of Mice and Men*. The story of *Of Mice and Men* primarily revolves around the relationship of George and Lennie, two migrant field workers in the Great Depression who live an extraordinarily barren existence pursuing a shared dream of having a small plot of land where they can someday build their own modest homes. Lennie is a large man of great strength with a child-like infatuation for soft things. He dreams of living off the land and tending to his own rabbits, which he would be free to pet day and night. Lennie's great undoing, however, is his inability to know his own strength and to stand on his own socially. Unlike Lennie, George is small in stature, smart and quick-witted. He yearns to be freed of the indentured servitude of farm labor and for genuine human connection. The story ends tragically, very tragically. But I would be doing you a great disservice by giving away the ending ...

I sat down to begin my interviews with the Sarasota Opera's leads in *Of Mice and Men*---Michael Hendrick, tenor (playing Lennie Small), and Sean Anderson, baritone (playing George Milton) ---feeling very fortunate that, with the amount of emotional energy the roles demand of their singers, these two men were gracious enough to go on the record with me to detail their experiences. After all, this is a drama that is as minimalist as it is all-encompassing. It is designed that way, like a marathon runner, without an ounce of extra weight to slow its impact or fall even a breath out of step with the audience. There are no stock characters in this work. No comic relief. These two men will carry the entire story onstage in almost every scene, giving themselves wholeheartedly to characters that, to varying degrees, live somewhere in all of us.”It is impossible for us to sing while we're crying ... It's important to cry it out so that you can create the feeling instead of feeling it,” Sean Anderson says when asked about his dramatic strategy for portraying George on stage. It is Anderson's first time playing the role of George, and understandably, the man has a lot on his mind. Both Anderson and Michael Hendrick have been in intensive rehearsals for this production and have spent an exponentially greater amount of time offstage solidifying their own relationships with their characters and seeking a greater understanding of the story as a whole. It is the latter which drives my line of questioning.
Both men speak in a manner that is very thoughtful, but not quite contemplative. In fact, it almost seems as if they're venting. Hendrick breathes deeply and exhales slowly: “What's amazing to me about this story is that we live in a day where our phones have become everything... and now articles are coming out about how people tend to be always in their own screens, not interacting with other people, and that creates a bit of a sense of loneliness. Here we are in the 21st century, but yet we have these little devices, and we can we look up anything in the world we want to look up, but so often we are caught up in that insular world of our devices and we are sitting right next to people, and we don't even get to know our own neighbors. To me, this story is really about wanting to connect with someone and to live your life with someone who will take care of you. It's a universal human principle,” Hendrick adds: “I play Lennie as not mentally handicapped, not defective, but as a simple, child-like---not childish---kid in a grown man's body. It hits so close to home with so many people. No one leaves without tears in their eyes because no one doesn't have someone in their life like Lennie.”

Sean joins in just as thoughtfully, speaking to the triumphantly successful and enduring nature of this work: “Modern operas, they have their premiere, and then you never know which ones will stand the test of time ... Every single word that's in this absolutely has to be there. The drama, and the way the music complements the drama, this is exactly what opera should be.”

I left my first set of interviews feeling invigorated, and ultimately stimulated by the concepts an honest discussion of this opera raised. I had to be at work soon, and it was raining, so I rushed off to the bar that pays my bills. Later that night, it was flooded with singles.

*Of Mice and Men* is now playing at the Sarasota Opera, with performances scheduled through Saturday, March 23. Please check back with This Week In Sarasota for the conclusion of this piece, featuring an in-depth look at the work with its composer, Carlisle Floyd. For information on performance schedule and ticketing, please visit [sarasotaopera.org](http://sarasotaopera.org).

_Herald-Tribune Interviews Michael Hendrick and Sean Anderson, 2013_

By Jay Handelman
March 3, 2013

Singing Steinbeck: Sarasota Opera stages *Of Mice and Men*

John Steinbeck’s *Of Mice and Men* may be one of the rare books that high school students don’t mind reading.

The story of the ranch hands George Milton and Lennie Small trying to survive during the Depression when the least transgression can put you out of work touched millions of readers.

Composer Carlisle Floyd read the novel when he was in school, but he didn’t think of it in operatic terms until years later, when he looked at two of his singer friends, thinking they would be perfect as George and Lennie.
Floyd’s version of *Of Mice and Men*, which had its premiere in 1970 in Seattle, opens Saturday as the third (and potentially final) entry in the Sarasota Opera’s American Classics series that previously featured *The Crucible* and *Vanessa*.

The costly series has had some critical success, but mixed results at the box office because the works are less familiar than most produced in Sarasota. Because the operas are newer, they are generally more costly than other, more popular operas because they are covered by copyright laws and require royalty payments. With tightening budgets, company leaders are considering ending the American focus, at least temporarily.

The 86-year-old Floyd, who may be best known for *Susannah* and other works of contemporary Americana, said the “leaness of the story and simple through line, plus vivid characters in highly dramatic situations” helped him see the possibilities of turning Steinbeck’s novel into an opera.

He had the support of Steinbeck (1902-1968) and his publishers when he started writing. His goal was to “maintain the compression of the story and attempt to realize the characters through music,” he said in an interview conducted through e-mail.

One of his earliest decisions involved the musical treatment of Lennie, described as a big, child-like man who doesn’t know his own strength, which is his downfall.

Floyd’s dilemma was solved “when I determined to create music for him that was childlike and direct, taking my cue from George’s referring to him frequently as ‘a great big kid.’”

Floyd made few changes in the story — he did eliminate one character — but found a way to tell the story through music and motifs that recur throughout the opera with changes along the way as the story progresses.

During a recent “Spoken and Sung” program at the Sarasota Opera, several singers performed scenes from Floyd's work after students from the FSU (Florida State University)/Asolo Conservatory acted out the corresponding scene from the play version of the novel.

As emcee Greg Trupiano, the company’s artistic administrator, noted, the biggest change Floyd made may have been altering the price of a farm that George and Lennie planned to buy from $600 to $400 “because four is easier to sing than six.”

The Sarasota Opera production stars two familiar performers. Sean Anderson, a favorite at the company, returns to sing the role of George. He starred in *The Crucible* as John Proctor and as Iago in last season’s *Otello*, among many Sarasota performances. Michael Hendrick, who sang several roles in such productions as *May Night* and *Jenufa*, returns to sing Lennie. Hendrick was a last-minute replacement for (another tenor - name removed by the author), who withdrew to take the lead tenor role of Erik in Wagner’s *The Flying Dutchman* for Los Angeles Opera.
Hendrick is singing Lennie for the fifth time since his debut in the role at Utah Opera in 1999. He most recently performed Lennie at Kentucky Opera in Louisville in 2010. His familiarity with the role was a relief for Anderson, who said he initially worried about what singer would be available at the last minute who could also sing the complex score.

“I was worried they would find someone who was going to be good but hadn’t been learning it for months and months. It could have turned into a nightmare,” Anderson said.

Now, the singers are bonding over their roles as two good friends who try to hold their own and survive in the face of challenges and opposition from fellow workers and bosses.

Unger said he is approaching his staging the way he would any piece of theater, to “tell the story as faithfully as you can to the author’s intentions and make it mean something to a modern audience. It’s the same for any medium, the same process of storytelling and getting performers to hook in emotionally and to be truthful.”

The fact that it is sung in English and tells a tale far more familiar than most of the operas presented in Sarasota may help audiences more easily connect with the story.

Both Anderson and Hendrick said they are working with Unger and conductor David Neely to approach the work as if it were brand new.

“If you come into something with preconceived notions, you end up protecting yourself, and if you do a lot of work way ahead of time, you can’t work as well with the other people on stage with you,” Anderson said.

Audiences know the story, but many won’t recognize the music. Unger said, “It’s not your melodic Puccini, but it’s very powerful and there are some great melodies.”

Anderson said that it is “harder than anything I’ve had to work on. Dramatically it’s a challenge. Most operas tend to have larger-than-life characters, but the power of this show comes from people who are very real, so the challenge is finding a way to present that, the real emotion, the real 1930s Depression era. It’s not taking place in the mythical Chinese-esque world of Turandot. It’s something that people can be familiar with.”

The singers described the score as occasionally dissonant but not atonal, with beautiful and sometimes elegant harmonies and themes that fit the character.

The word dissonant may scare some people, but Hendrick said the music is highly approachable. “I think people will feel drawn to it musically. I have never heard of anyone who is turned off to this piece. This is a true American opera and I think they will feel so naturally inclined to it because of the universality of some of these things, having a purpose in life, wanting to be with someone you can share your life with.”

And, Unger adds: “having a dream. That’s what drives all these characters who are evolved enough to have a dream.”


War Horses Blog, William Burnett Interviews Carlisle Floyd, 2014

By William Burnett
War Memorial Opera House, San Francisco Opera, September 27, 2014

William Burnett: Often, I ask artists whom I interview about their childhood interests in music. That you were an accomplished concert pianist from an early age is well known. My question is what were some of the piano pieces you performed in recitals at the height of your concert pianist career that were your proudest accomplishments?

Carlisle Floyd: When, at around age 26, I made the decision to devote myself full-time to composing, I was performing Prokofiev’s Seveth Sonata, Mussorgsky’s Pictures at an Exhibition, Beethoven’s 110th Sonata and Ravel’s Gaspard de la Nuit.

W.B: You had decided that you had to choose between the piano performance and musical composition.

CF: Actually, I had never thought about composing. The process always mystified me. In fact, my chief talent was my ability to draw. My family and friends had thought that I would become an artist. But, in time, I became interested in composing opera, because opera encompassed so much that I liked – music, dramatic writing, and art. To perform as a solo pianist, I had to spend six or seven hours a day at the piano. When I decided I wanted to compose operas, it was not an option to continue as a concert pianist, especially since I was also determined to write the opera libretti myself.

W.B: You and I are both are descended from Methodist ministers who worked on the church circuits in Upcountry South Carolina in the early 20th century. In your childhood, did you spend a lot of time with the folks in the rural communities to whom your father preached?

CF: Oh yes, it’s a society in which I feel comfortable.

W.B: How much of New Hope Valley is a product of your own experience?

CF: The area that I grew up in is not necessarily a very small rural community like New Hope Valley. My father had churches in the rural towns, because the circuit minister would have one central church and then several outlying churches. He would hold two or three services a day, alternating between the smaller community churches. Everybody, including myself, of course, would be expected to attend services.

W.B: Your earliest operas Slow Dusk and Susannah take place in the rural South. Susannah is an established hit. I understand that there is new interest in the short work Slow Dusk.

CF: Yes. Slow Dusk is being revived by a small company in New York City on a double bill with my opera Markheim. I was very surprised when I learned about this. I’ve not seen Slow Dusk performed in a very long time.
WB: Although the San Francisco Opera lists this as a company premiere, in fact, the San Francisco Opera’s Spring Theater presented this opera 50 years ago (May 1964) at the War Memorial Opera House. You were the stage director for those performances, which starred the imposing cast of Lee Venora as Susannah, Norman Treigle as Olin Blitch, and Richard Cassilly as Sam Polk.

CF: Treigle and Cassilly were very good friends. I knew Lee Venora less well, but she was a very gifted soprano who had covered Phyllis Curtin in the role of Susannah at the New York City Opera. Davis L. West and Thomas Colangelo designed and constructed a new set for the opera. We all considered it a great success.

WB: What are your memories of that performance?

CF: It was a thoroughly pleasant experience. However, I do remember an incident that was my very first experience upsetting a union member. I moved a chair on the stage and it created quite a discussion. I stayed at a hotel at Union Square and walked back and forth every day. When I see from my taxicab the area through which I walked when I was considerably younger, I wonder if I shouldn’t have been more cautious.

WB: Susannah is closely associated with David Gockley, who is now General Director of the San Francisco Opera, but the decision to mount Susannah in 1964 by the San Francisco Opera was made by Kurt Herbert Adler, when he was general director. How did you and he get along?

CF: I liked Adler very much. I got to know him very well during the time I was out here in San Francisco staging the opera. His record speaks for himself. He built the San Francisco Opera into a wonderful, forward-thinking international company, which has promoted great singers early in their careers. Later, Adler and I both sat on the board of directors of the National Endowment for the Arts. I recall that he would fly across the country on the red-eye special to attend endowment board meetings.

Adler was so venerated that the rest of the panel used kid gloves whenever he was there. He would say, “Don’t be so formal around me, just call me Kurt.” However, so many people worked with him or for him in other venues where they were never comfortable calling him Kurt, that they resorted to “Mr. Adler” anyway.

WB: Sometimes people refer to Susannah as a folk opera, but I think of it as a dramatic opera that employs certain musical themes that evoke the mountainous regions of the Southern United States.

CF: I don’t use the term folk opera. My feeling is that it is part of a general idiom that I use for setting the location. When you hear the overture, you know you are in rural America. But, I haven’t extorted any genuine folk material. I call my music folk-like, designed to set up a feeling that you are in a particular place at a particular time in history.

WB: I’ve often thought that there is much to compare between Susannah and Porgy and Bess. There was only 20 years between Porgy and Susannah. George Gershwin and DuBose Heyward
were writing about a community on the South Carolina coast, and *Susannah*, even if set in Eastern Tennessee, could very well have been placed in a rural part of the South Carolina Upcountry.

**CF:** I believe that one common element to both operas is that both Gershwin and I wrote original music that sounds like it could be folk music. In fact, you know that there were New York critics who were confounded as to whether Gershwin had incorporated traditional Negro spirituals into *Porgy* or had invented them.

**WB:** *Susannah* contains idiomatic music for a square dance, for Sam Polk’s folksy “jaybird” song, a couple of rousing church hymns and haunting arias from Susannah and Sam that to me evoke Appalachian plainsong. How were you inspired to write these different musical “sounds”?

**CF:** It all came very easily to me. I always use each sound in a stylized way, although perhaps the least stylized is the first of the congregation’s hymns. However, I don’t think you’ll ever find any other music that sounds like the congregation’s final hymn.

**WB:** When you first started composing, there was some hostility to your style of composing. Would you comment?

**CF:** Yes, I would say in the 1960s and 1970s, there seemed to be three camps of composers, those that followed the musical theories of Schoenberg, those that wrote in the tradition of Stravinsky or Hindemith, and one that was influenced by native materials and by more accessible or popular kinds of music. The so-called American Operas, of which *Susannah* was considered one, would be considered as part of this latter group.

**WB:** You would agree that *Susannah* would have been considered in the same group as the works of Aaron Copland and Douglas Moore.

**CF:** Certainly, Copland was considered the leader of the movement. Douglas Moore preceded me, although he did not compose *folk-like* materials to the same extent as I did. We considered him the Dean of American opera composers. He was always encouraging and most generous towards me. I also met Virgil Thomson in Tallahassee, when he came down to Florida State University to attend a Gian Carlo Menotti play. His advice to me was “Continue to be fecund”!

**WB:** Frequently, I get to Houston Grand Opera, where your participation with David Gockley in creating the HGO Studio is celebrated. Would you give me your thoughts on that endeavor?

**CF:** I do regard the HGO Studio as a great accomplishment. Many consider it one of the two or three best of its kind of young artists programs in the world, comparable to the program created at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden. It has gone far beyond what David and I had expected. What I am most proud of is that we were the first people to demonstrate that a year-round program of continued instruction in opera could be successful. HGO Studio included coaching in vocal performance, language, and movement. It quickly became a model to be emulated, although few companies approach it as comprehensively as does the HGO Studio.
WB: Originally, it was a joint project with the University of Houston.

CF: It was. In fact, HGO Studio would not have happened without the financial and educational support from the University of Houston. It was such a new and costly idea that there was considerable opposition, both within the university and opera company, that it took a lot of work from David and myself to pull it off. Finally, UH agreed to pay half the budget, the Houston Grand Opera the other half. The instruction took place at UH. I worked with the HGO Studio between 1977 and 1992.

WB: How did the happen that Houston Grand Opera took over the entire program?

CF: In the early 1990s, financial pressures at the University of Houston required its withdrawal from the project. Faced with the prospect of closing HGO Studio down or of absorbing the full costs of it, David, very bravely and with great farsightedness, went to his board and convinced them to fund the entire project.

WB: You seem to have a high regard for the Houston Grand Opera.

CF: Six of my operas have been presented at Houston Grand Opera, and it is there that my next opera, *The Prince of Players* will be presented.

WB: You have been a close observer of David Gockley through the years at Houston and San Francisco, What do you think will be his legacy?

CF: I think the chief legacy is his support of the operatic efforts of contemporary composers, in particular the young composers he sees on the horizon. David mounts very fine productions of standard works. He began his career as an opera singer, and I believe that that gives him an insight and a fine ear for the voices of the singers he hires that a non-singer would find hard to match. He has a theatrical sensitivity, and he understands what will make a great visual scene. We’ve known each other for almost 40 years and have become faster and faster friends. He was so much my anchor in Houston, that it took me a while to adjust to his having left there. Let me give you an example of how he has supported my operatic efforts.

WB: Please do!

CF: When I first read Olive Ann Burns’ book *Cold Sassy Tree* I found it so touching and hilarious. I began to wonder if there might be an opera there. I contacted David and asked him to read it. He said it was on his bedside table, and he wanted me to do an opera on it. I kept re-reading the book until I found a way to create my own libretto. We proceeded with a commission from Houston Grand Opera. He was very patient with me, then not so patient, but he wanted to be sure he had first crack at the opera. Working with David is such a joy. When we came to the production, he gave me a list and said, “Here are ten top directors, choose whomever you want to direct the production.” He is that sensitive to every aspect of the production.

WB: What did you think of the new production of *Susannah* being mounted by the San Francisco Opera?
CF: My first impression of the sketches was unfavorable, but those sketches gave no sense of what the opera would look like with the scrims and projections. But every concern that I raised at the beginning was addressed and exceeded.

I regard this as the most beautiful set for Susannah I have ever seen. It is so imaginative and experiential. Because it all works so well, it is the greatest compliment that you can pay the opera.

The constant flow of projections makes the need for big physical sets unnecessary. Watch the scene at the baptismal creek. It opens with a projection of the sun on the bubbling creek. There is so much detail. When the lights go up, you see that the creek really consists of only two lines and all the water is just an illusion created by the embedded projections.

WB: What are your thoughts on the cast that David Gockley has assembled for you?

CF: I’ve never seen a more committed actress as Patricia Racette. I had first been introduced to her when she created the role of Love Simpson in my opera Cold Sassy Tree. She has the acting abilities of the soprano Teresa Stratas. Her voice is in full bloom and is incredible. I find Raymond Aceto to be very convincing as Olin Blitch.

I had never worked with Brandon Jovanovich before, and frankly, although I knew he had good looks, I did not expect him to be such an extraordinary and committed actor. David wants his productions to be exquisite. He attends to the smallest details. Since new productions have many opportunities for small mishaps, he made sure that this one was very well-rehearsed. We’ve worked on six operas together. To see Susannah in this beautiful opera house in this unparalleled production is wonderfully satisfying.

WB: Now that Susannah has joined the performance repertory of the “main” San Francisco Opera season, which of your other works would you regard as appropriate for the War Memorial Opera House?

CF: My opera Of Mice and Men is the most frequently performed after Susannah and should be done here. I think another one that would work well is my comedy, Cold Sassy Tree, which, by the way, was dedicated to David Gockley.

There are two whose work has especially impressed me – Jake Heggie and Mark Adamo.

WB: I’m on record as saying that I believe that Heggie will write the great 21st century American opera.

CF: He will be joining me for the opening night of Susannah here.

WB: I had a very interesting interview with Mark Adamo, who, like you, writes his own libretti, as to the importance of the rhythm of the phrases that he writes to be sung. I raised the example
of Vincenzo Bellini and his librettist Felice Romani for “Norma” (the opera that is in rotation her with *Susannah*) who wrote at a time when the rhythm of each line was considered critical. I’ve made the observation that the rhythm of what is to be sung is crucially important in an opera, and those composers who neglect it, and produce what is essentially a “sung play,” often diminish their efforts. By the way, Adamo agreed with me. Do you agree also? Obviously, *Susannah* abounds in rhythmically sung speech patterns.

**CF:** I like to use the term “prosody” for what you are describing. I think those modern composers who ignore an opera’s prosody do so at their peril. I’m reminded of my first meetings with Mack Harrell, who created the role of Olin Blitch, but before that sang the role of Nick Shadow in the American premiere of Stravinsky’s “The Rake’s Progress.” Harrell found the part of Shadow to be quite a trial for him, precisely because the rhythmic structure was so difficult. He said that it was so much harder to learn to sing a role that ignores speech patterns.

**WB:** I assume he had no trouble with the prosody of Olin Blitch’s role.

**CF:** You are right. I actually had offered to alter any phrases that he found awkward, and he said, that, no, it was fine just as I composed it. Every phrase had a purpose.

I have been very conscious of the speech rhythms in my operas. I regard the speech rhythm to be the connective tissue between the words. I try to use words that fit a pattern, that are musical and expressive, but do not sound mechanical. Above all it should have a speech rhythm that is like the rhythms that the audience would speak.

**WB:** I am looking forward to your next opera, *The Prince of Players* about the English Restoration actor Edward Kynaston, which is scheduled for the Houston Grand Opera’s 2015-16 season. What is it like to compose a new opera at this time in your career?

**CF:** When Verdi was late in his composing career, he said he couldn’t composer more than two hours a day without tiring. Since I write my own libretti, I’ve found that over my lifetime it’s taken me about two and a half years between operas. I completed *The Prince of Players* in about the same amount of time as my other works, but I found it much harder and much more fatiguing than ever before.

**WB:** How did you choose the subject for your opera?

**CF:** I had seen Jeffrey Hatcher’s play and his 2004 film *Stage Beauty*, loosely based on the late 17th century English actor Edward Kynaston, one of the two greatest actors of his time, who was noted for playing female parts at the time when all actors on stage were male, regardless of the gender of their character. The actors who played women were accomplished in a complex set of hand gestures, that is as complicated to learn as are the roles in Japanese kabuki theater. Samuel Pepys in his famous *Diary*, remarked that Kynaston would appear as both the most beautiful woman and the most handsome man. There is the report of one performance when the curtain had to be held because the Desdemona had to shave.

**WB:** What attracted you to the story?
CF: I became intrigued about the impact on Kynaston of an order by King Charles II requiring that no male actors play female parts. The enactment of King Charles’ ban on men playing female roles was a personal disaster for Kynaston.

Certainly, the material provided me with a fresh start, in that nothing I had written before is like this story. The setting in the era of the restoration of the British monarchy is a change of pace for me. The Restoration theater became extremely popular in reaction to the time previous to it when all social life in England was controlled by the Puritans. The Restoration actors were like our rock stars.

But I was also intrigued by the analogy to the end of the silent film era, in which certain actors could not adapt to the transition between silent and sound films, and, possessing voices of a kind that did not sound right in “talkies,” were forced into retirement.

WB: What about his story did you find “operatic”?

CF: There is a mix of human drama, that includes Kynaston’s despair, and a period of his dissolution when he is performing as a woman in the dives that existed at that time. But there is abundant opportunity for comic scenes, including very bawdy ones. In the end, late in his career, he discovers that be successful in men’s roles. In the opera, Kynaston begins a play as Desdemona, and ends it as Othello.

WB: 2015-16 is, in opera-season planning terms, right around the corner. Do you have your lead singers in mind?

CF: In fact, we have a new member of the HGO Studio, an Australian baritone, Morgan Pearse. He is phenomenally good looking and has an androgynous appearance that fits my idea of what Kynaston would have looked like.

WB: I deeply appreciate that you have spent an hour with me for this interview on the day of the new production’s premiere.

CF: I enjoyed the time very much and look forward to our meeting again.

San Francisco Opera Magazine Interviews Carlisle Floyd, 2014

By Robert Wilder Blue
Opera Blog, San Francisco Opera Magazine

American Icon: Carlisle Floyd Talks About Life and Opera

On February 24, 1955, when the final curtain came down on the world premiere of Susannah, Carlisle Floyd’s life changed forever. Until then, the young pianist and assistant professor at Florida State University had no plans to devote himself to composing operas. But,
with that moment, the disparate influences and events of his life came together to make his
destiny impossible to ignore.

**Beginnings**

Carlisle Floyd was born in 1926 in Latta, South Carolina. From an early age, he
demonstrated creative leanings. At four, he showed exceptional skill in drawing; by seven he was
writing short stories. At eleven, he turned his focus to the piano, though practicing had to
compete with daily chores and football, basketball, baseball, and boxing. Carlisle’s father,
Carlisle, Sr., known as Jack, was a Methodist minister and the family obeyed Christian doctrine
(as interpreted by Jack) to the letter. Church attendance was mandatory. There was no reading
the newspaper funny pages on Sunday. Alcohol and cigarettes were forbidden. Idleness was a sin
and work came first, though Carlisle’s mother, Ida, put down her foot when it came to
prioritizing piano-practicing time.

By the time Carlisle was in high school, Ida recognized her son’s talent and convinced
Jack to trade in their old piano for a better model. Jack drove Carlisle eighty-five miles from
Bethune, where the family had moved, to Orangeburg for weekly lessons, despite gas rationing
imposed because of World War II. Around this time, Floyd saw his first opera, *Carmen*,
performed by the touring Charles L. Wagner Company. He was far more impressed by Sergei
Rachmaninoff’s piano recital in Columbia a few weeks later.

Floyd earned a scholarship to Converse College, where he studied with Francis Bacon.
“He came of that group in the 1930s and ‘40s,” said Floyd, “that we might say today was
militantly American, which happens when a country is trying to establish its
musical independence. He felt we should develop our own culture out of our own materials. I
was indoctrinated with that early on and it never occurred to me to question it.” Bacon gave
Floyd the best advice a young composer could hear: “Write what you want to write.”

On his first trips to New York in the 1940s and ‘50s, Floyd took in original Broadway
productions of Inge’s *Picnic*, Miller’s *Death of a Salesman*, Williams’s *A Streetcar Named
Desire*, among many others. “I loved the theater,” he said. “They all were writing in this
super realistic manner, yet they were poetic also. I wanted to emulate that.

“Opera never attracted me in those days,” said Floyd. “I didn’t like how it was done.
drama had lost out. It was dominated by European artists; Americans were considered second-
class. Yet, American singers started a revolution in opera, many of them under the tutelage of
Boris Goldovsky [impresario, teacher, and founder of the New England Opera Theater]. Boris
made singers conscious of their acting. That was part of the new emphasis on drama and
theatrical realism. Up to that point, audiences thought of opera as the singer with the spear and
the horned helmet.”

**Susannah**

In 1952, Floyd met Nathan S. “Sam” Blount, a graduate English student at FSU. Blount
suggested they team up as librettist and composer and offered the idea of an opera based on the
biblical Apocrypha story of *Susanna and the Elders*. Blount and Floyd identified with the story of a heroine who was wrongly accused, a timely parallel in that era of McCarthyism and patriotic paranoia.

Floyd was attracted to the subject because it focused on religious hypocrisy. “It struck fire immediately. We had the idea of updating the action and placing it in the remote Tennessee Valley during the summer revival meetings.” But Blount procrastinated and did not present a draft of a libretto. Floyd was so anxious to get moving on the project, he wrote his own libretto in ten days.

Looking back on his life up to that point, Floyd seemed destined to write *Susannah*. “I suppose I was,” said Floyd. “I drew on many aspects of my own experience for it.” Floyd was well familiar with the conservative teachings of the Methodist church and had been forced to attend revival meetings as a child. He had grown up among self-righteous adults who were quick with a judgmental comment or a critical remark, his father providing the closest example.

Floyd completed the score in March 1954. “With the confidence of a twenty-seven-year-old,” recalled Floyd, “I went to Karl Kuersteiner, dean of the School of Music at Florida State, and told him I’d written an opera and I’d like to see it done there. It’s the kind of brashness you have when you begin a career [he laughs].” Kuersteiner was impressed with *Susannah* and gave Floyd the authority to engage professionals in the lead roles.

“I was at the Aspen Festival that summer,” said Floyd, “and Phyllis Curtin and Mack Harrell were on the voice faculty. I knew of Phyllis’s career, her dedication to new music, and most recently, her sensational *Salome* at New York City Opera. I called her up one evening and she invited me over to play through *Susannah*."

Curtin, who grew up in Clarksburg, West Virginia, less than a day’s drive from Floyd’s birthplace, had an immediate identification with the character of Susannah. “I remember I was tired when he asked me,” recalled Curtin, “but I told him I’d love to hear it. We read through *Susannah*, and I fell in love with it. I didn’t grow up in the hill country of West Virginia for nothing! I called Mack and told him there was something he had to hear. Carlisle and I went through it again for him and he loved it as much as I did.” They found they both had the same two weeks free the following February and agreed to do the piece.

As preparations for the premiere got underway, FSU president Doak Campbell asked to read the *Susannah* libretto. After doing so, Campbell and his wife deemed the opera unsuitable for presentation. “That was a very unpleasant and troubling episode,” said Floyd. “They withdrew the funds and suddenly everything was uncertain. [Campbell] was vehement in making accusations that I had written it for the sexual excitement and objected that Susannah must have become pregnant as a result of the encounter with Blitch. He didn’t understand the story at all. I finally called on him directly. I explained that the story was about Susannah’s innocence, and he saw he was wrong and allowed the production to move forward.”

**Opening Night**
“I won’t say that the success of Susannah was unexpected,” said Floyd, “but, it was on a scale I hadn’t planned for. My parents sat with the Governor and his wife at the performance. FSU President Campbell was not planning on attending, but when he found out the Governor and his wife were giving the opening night party at the Governor’s mansion, he and his wife were suddenly available.” Audience and critical reaction was nearly unanimous: Susannah was a success. Plans for a New York production began immediately. Erich Leinsdorf had just been appointed music director of New York City Opera and scheduled the opera for the 1956 fall season.

In another twist of fate, Harrell and NYCO (The New York City Opera) were in a dispute about the baritone’s contract. Unwilling to wait for resolution, Harrell had accepted another engagement. “Norman Treigle took the role,” said Floyd. “From that point he made it his own. He was Olin Blitch.” Susannah won a New York Critics’ Circle Award and was performed at NYCO for five consecutive seasons. As part of the United States’ participation in the 1958 Brussels World Fair, NYCO and Susannah were selected to represent the American performing arts.

“I’ve been enormously pleased with Susannah’s staying power over the years,” said Floyd. “People always respond to something that is human and direct without apology. Certainly, that’s the staying power of the Williams and Miller plays. I don’t think anybody nowadays talks about the expressionistic thrust of Death of a Salesman. What sustains it is the fact that it is profoundly human.”

Did Floyd’s complicated relationship with his father give him any hesitations about Susannah? “That’s a logical question to ask. I have to say, it did not. My father was supportive of me from the time I started studying piano in high school,” said Floyd. “Yet, he was also critical. He was in the opening night audiences at FSU and in New York and saw many performances in different places. He never said anything to me about his feelings on the opera. It wasn’t until years later when [Floyd’s wife] Kay asked him about his reaction the first time he saw the revival scene. He said, ‘I almost left.’ Kay adroitly responded that she could see how someone who felt seriously about revival meetings would react like that, which cooled things down. I believe he thought it was an accurate depiction of a revival scene. I still thunder on about that. I don’t want even a hint of parody, with people screaming and rolling around on the floor. I want something solemn and frightening, which is the way I saw it through the eyes of a child. Anything else diminishes the power of the scene. It becomes easy for the audience to say, ‘oh look at those poor, benighted people,’ and not see themselves.

A Fortunate Meeting

On July 9, 1971, Floyd attended a new production of his most recent opera, Of Mice and Men, and met David Gockley, the 28- year-old general director-designate of Houston Grand Opera. After the performance Gockley pitched his ideas to the composer over Jack Daniels at Floyd’s hotel: new productions of Susannah and Of Mice and Men, to be followed by a new opera.
“When I met David, he looked like a college sophomore,” recalled Floyd. “What impressed me was his seriousness and his strong intent. He wanted me to do an opera for HGO for the bicentennial. I had several offers from other companies but had not committed myself yet. When David asked me, I decided to say ‘yes.’ “David has been a marvelous champion,” said Floyd. “[He] wanted first crack at any opera I wrote and then always gave it a wonderful production. We’ve done six operas together [Susannah, Of Mice and Men, plus world premieres of Bilby’s Doll, Willie Stark, the revised version of The Passion of Jonathan Wade, and Cold Sassy Tree].”

How does Floyd feel about being labeled an outsider throughout his career? “It depends on what you mean by outsider,” he began. “If you mean someone who doesn’t follow musical fashion, I would certainly plead guilty to that. I found a certain kind of music congenial to me; it never occurred to me to write music that was academically acceptable. I’m by no means the only so-called outsider. I think I have quite a bit of company these days. One of the first things young composers who come to work with me say is that they want to write music people will like, and that’s a thoroughly commendable attitude if it doesn’t mean pandering. Verdi and Handel wrote very likeable music for their publics.”

It’s impossible to deny that Floyd has spent his career working in a genre that exists on the sidelines of American culture. “The artist is something of an outsider in America. I have always felt that America does not value its artists. There is something inherent in our democracy that tends to want to level. We are a curious nation because on the one hand, there is no country that extols the nonconformist, the rugged individual, more than we do. Yet, there is huge pressure toward conformity. That same kind of duality exists in the oppression of the arts.” Floyd is working on a new opera based on the life of Edward Kynaston, the last British male actor to appear on stage as a woman during the 17th century English Restoration. He continues to be motivated by the possibility of communicating a story directly to an audience. “When I was starting out, I said I wanted to create operas in which the drama was tight and forward moving, as you found in theater and film. I would hope an audience would be absorbed by what they are witnessing on stage and see what I am presenting as a deeply human experience.

“When Willie Stark had its premiere at the Kennedy Center, Illinois Congressman [Sidney R.] Yates was seated next to me. After the opera was over, he said to me, ‘I was looking forward to having a doze at the opera. I didn’t blink.’ I told him he could not have given me a greater compliment.”


By Randall King
Published in Winnipeg Free Press, April 22, 2016

Opera doesn't often host migrant farm workers: Steinbeck story a change of pace from classics
It was a gift that American tenor Michael Robert Hendrick has previously performed the role of gentle giant Lennie in American composer Carlisle Floyd’s adaptation of John Steinbeck’s *Of Mice and Men* in Utah, Kentucky and Florida.

At least it was a gift to the Manitoba Opera company when the previously cast Anthony Dean Griffey had to bow out due to a back injury. Hendrick was on an extremely short list of performers capable of playing the role and available for the Winnipeg performances.

“That happens all the time,” Hendrick says in a phone interview, citing multiple scenarios in which performers might have to bow out for reasons that may include the common cold, a potential calamity for an opera star.

“That’s why I always carry Purell with me,” Hendrick says.

In opera repertoire, *Of Mice and Men* is a relatively new product, premiering in 1970 in a Seattle Opera production. Such works don’t always get the respect they deserve from audiences, Hendrick says, citing his own experience of a production for Sarasota Opera in 2013 (in which, again, Hendrick stepped in to replace a previously cast performer at the last minute).

“Many subscribers phoned in threatening to cancel their subscriptions,” Hendrick says, saying many subscribers of a certain age are mainly interested in seeing the great classics before they die.

For Hendrick, those people only cheated themselves out of seeing a great work by Floyd based on a great work by Steinbeck, who also documented the plight of migrant farm workers in California in the novels *The Grapes of Wrath* and *In Dubious Battle*.

The character of Lennie is developmentally disabled, surviving under the protection of his friend George (baritone Gregory Dahl) when they find work as ranch hands in Depression-era California. The two dream of raising enough money to buy a place of their own, but those plans go astray due to their abusive boss, Curley (Joel Sorensen in his Manitoba Opera debut), and a fateful encounter between Lennie and Curley’s Wife (played by soprano and ex-Winnipegger Nikki Einfeld).

To contemporary sensibilities, the roles of Lennie and Curley’s Wife are potentially problematic as they can be portrayed in broad stereotypes, Lennie as the idiot man-child, and Curley’s Wife as a nymphomaniac neurotic. Both actors say they try to mine the humanity of their characters. A key moment for Hendrick is a scene in which George explains away his friend’s disability by claiming Lennie had been kicked in the head by a horse as a child.

“Later, between them, he says, ‘I wasn’t kicked in the head by a horse, George.’” Hendrick says. “It’s a funny moment but it says so much about their relationship.”

Einfeld also strove to reveal the damaged psychology of Curley’s Wife, too easily portrayed as a predatory seductress.
“Like Lennie and George, she has her own dreams of Hollywood stardom,” Einfeld says. “But her reality is that she is alone and isolated on this ranch among all these men, and she is a tragic figure.”

*Of Mice and Men* will be sung in English with projected titles and is two hours and 20 minutes including an intermission. Composer Carlisle Floyd, 90, is expected to be in attendance.

The story behind *Of Mice and Men* — the crushing poverty and desperation of migrant workers who fled the Dust Bowl to find work in California — is told in an exhibit of photographs by Dorothea Lange on display at the Centennial Concert Hall’s Piano Nobile gallery until May 15.
April 21, 2021
Michael Hendrick
Louisiana State University
RE: Of Mice and Men By Carlisle Floyd, John Steinbeck

Dear Michael:

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APPENDIX E. THE AUTHOR AS LENNIE SMALL:
LIST OF APPEARANCES

1998 - New York City Opera
New York State Theater, New York, New York

1999 - Utah Opera
Capitol Theater, Salt Lake City, Utah
Conductor: Karen Keltner; Stage Director: Pamela Berlin
Performances: January 16 (role debut), 19, 22, and 24, 1999

2000 - Arizona Opera
Tucson Convention Center Music Hall, Tucson, Arizona
Conductor: Kirk Muspratt; Stage Director: Anne Ewers
Performances: February 11, 12, and 13, 2000

2001 - Washington National Opera
John F. Kennedy for the Performing Arts, Washington, D.C.
Conductor: Karen Keltner; Stage Director: Francesca Zambello
Performances: October 20, 25, and 31; November 3, 6, 9, and 12, 2001

2009 - Kentucky Opera
Brown Theatre, Louisville, Kentucky
Conductor: Joseph Mechavich; Stage Director: Michael Cavanaugh
Performances: October 30 and November 1, 2009

2013 - Sarasota Opera
Sarasota Opera House, Sarasota, Florida
Conductor: David Neely; Stage Director: Michael Unger
Performances: March 9, 12, 14, 17, 20, and 23, 2013

2015 - Phoenix International Festival of Voice
Parish Field, Festival Stage, Phoenicia, New York
Conductor: Elizabeth Scott; Stage Director: Albert Sherman
Performance: August 1, 2015

2016 - Manitoba Opera
Centennial Concert Hall, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada
Conductor: Tyrone Patterson; Stage Director: Michael Cavanaugh
Performances: April 23, 26, and 29, 2016

2020 - Louisiana State University (LSU) Doctoral Recital No. 2
LSU Recital Hall, Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Act One, Scene 1
Pianist: Patricia Bretas; George: Brandon Hendrickson, baritone
Performance: October 16, 2020
APPENDIX F. THE AUTHOR AS LENNIE SMALL: PRESS REVIEW EXCERPTS

Utah Opera, Salt Lake City, Utah (1999)

“Tenor Michael Hendrick was awe-inspiring as the half-wit Lennie. He brought the pathetic, gentle giant to life on stage, and presented his struggle honestly and nobly. His clear, pure voice range with guileless pathos, and he appeared to be about 9 feet tall.” (Deseret News, Rick Mortensen, 01/11/1999).

“Tenor Michael Hendrick plays Lennie, a large, childlike man with a habit of loving smaller creatures to death. His Lennie is ‘just a big kid,’ in keeping with the composer’s intentions. With his large stature and boyish face, Hendrick is dramatically persuasive as well as musically secure.” The Salt Lake Tribune, Catherine Reese Newton, 01/18/1999).

“Diane Alexander... and Michael Hendrick, who plays Lennie, turn in spectacular performances.... Hendrick steals the show as Lennie. Hendrick, a tenor (a surprise because I imagined that Lennie would be a bass for sure), melts his rich voice into Lennie’s oafish mannerisms seamlessly. Utah Opera scored big by getting him to come and play this role.” (The Daily Universe, Brigham Young University School of Communications, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Peter Thunell, 01/19/1999).

“Cast members were uniformly well-suited to their roles, musically and physically, and clear enunciation minimized dependence on projected titles. Michael Hendrick played Lennie as ‘just a big kid,’ in keeping with the composer’s stated intentions. His steady, secure tenor captured the young man’s physical power as well as his innocence, most affectingly in the barn scene with Curley’s Wife, his large stature and boyish face adding to his believability.” (Opera News, Catherine Reese Newton, 05/1999).


“The Tucson Convention Center Music Hall crowd of 1,600 thundered its approval of the two hour and 15-minute work, saving its most enthusiastic applause for tenor Michael Hendrick, who played the lumbering innocent Lennie. There were many great performances last night, chief among them those of Hendrick. Hendrick's Lennie captured in the fullest sense the childlike innocence of this hulk of a man. In the opening scene, when George tells Lennie that despite the trouble he causes, George will stick by him, Hendrick dances around like a 4-year-old with a balloon. When the puppy, that Lennie too vigorously strokes, dies, Hendrick throws its lifeless corpse to the ground like a spoiled child. And when George tells Lennie at the close to look across the river and see the farm they'll someday have, Hendrick's fidgeting feet tell a tale of uncluttered, childlike joy. Vocally, Hendrick was impressive, sporting a big, warm sound from top to bottom, handily projected to the cheap seats.” (The Tucson Citizen, Daniel Buckley, 02/12/2000).

“Heading the powerful, unforgettable cast is tenor Michael Hendrick as Lennie Small. Hendrick projects an indefatigably naive figure, a character of kitten-like sanguineness capable of transformation into pantherish fury. Floyd gives him music equal to the sensibility, simple constructed but all over the range and very exposed. The score frequently calls for Lennie to pull high notes out of the blue, which Hendrick does with impeccable taste.” (The Arizona Republic, Kenneth LaFave, 02/16/2000).

The Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, D.C.

“This Washington Opera production starts two superb singer-actors in the lead roles... Tenor Michael Hendrick as Lennie gives what probably will be regarded as one of this season's great performances. He negotiated Lennie's difficult vocal part with only the slightest sign of strain during last week's premiere. From the standpoint of stage drama, he imbued his character with layers of complexity, joining extremely physical acting to a surprisingly sweet tenor voice that makes Lennie's dark side all the more jarring. Mr. Hendrick's Lennie is clearly good at heart but not in touch at all with normal human boundaries or appropriate behavior, or most particularly with his own strength. Like fellow ranch-hand Candy's worn-out old dog, which is finally put down by a co-worker, there is only one possible ending for a misfit such as Lennie… you'll have to experience this for yourself.” (The Washington Times, 10/27/2001).

“On Thursday at the Kennedy Center Opera House, Michael Hendrick gave a shattering portrayal of Lennie, his face a symphony of child-like expressions, his warm tenor voice rich in nuances. As he approached Curley's Wife (the opera's attention-starved catalyst), Hendrick's hands twitched uncontrollably at the thought of touching her soft hair. And each time he made George tell him about the farm they would have someday, Hendrick knew just how to reveal the most endearing quality of Lennie. Everything about the tenor's movements, everything about the coloring in his vocalism, as he joined in excitedly to sing about the barn and the beautiful trees and the rabbits he could pet, touched the truth of anyone who ever has yearned and refused to give up.” (The Baltimore Sun, Tim Smith, 10/27/2001).

“The loudest (ovation) was justly granted to tenor Michael Hendrick’s endearing portrayal of the childish giant Lennie, who loves to stroke soft, furry things but never
comprehends why they die under his unknowingly brutal caresses. Brilliant, subtle facial expression, clumsy walk and self-conscious hand gestures lent credibility to the character. Solid vocal technique and complete comfort with Floyd’s musical idiom made Hendrick’s performance compelling. No wonder Mr. Hendrick was chosen to receive the Washington Opera Guild’s 2001 Martin and Bernice Feinstein Artist of the Year award at the end of the season.” (Intermission).

“There’s no trouble understanding Michael Hendrick. Ambling about like an outsized toddler, he keeps the slow-witted Lennie’s words clear and finds the right mix of affability and creepiness in the character; we believe his confusion when creatures fall lifeless from his crushingly affectionate grip. Hendrick’s soft singing is quite lovely, yet his plaintive tenor expands to fill the big-bang moments. The climactic final scene, in which George shoots Lennie before a mob can lynch him for his accidental murder of Curley’s Wife, is as affecting here as it demands to be... I’d like to think that the folks at Washington Opera have not wasted effort and expense in bringing a work of this distinction and a production of this intelligence and stark beauty to a town not ready, and perhaps not willing to receive it.” (Washington City Paper, Joe Banno, 11/09/2001).

Kentucky Opera, Louisville, Kentucky (2009)

“Hendrick rendered Lennie with indisputable authority. He could caress a phrase suggesting complete innocence, and then in an instant create a sensation of utter, frightening menace.... Contemporary opera offers few human beings who are so different from each other, yet so intractably codependent. And in bass Rod Nelman and tenor Michael Hendrick, Kentucky Opera has a pair of singers fully capable of translating Steinbeck's inexhaustible yearning into
potent theater.” *(Kentucky Courier-General, Andrew Adler, 10/18/2009).*

“Singing and dramatic intensity were at fever pitch. At the intermission, it was announced that Michael Hendrick (Lennie Small) was “indisposed,” a condition that he had gamely concealed during Act I. Nonetheless, Hendrick sang with plenty of power and gusto, a bit restrained in his acting but turning in a most powerful performance throughout.” *(Opera News, Charles H. Parsons, 01/2010).*

**Sarasota Opera, Sarasota, Florida (2013)**

“In the final tragic moments of Carlisle Floyd’s *Of Mice and Men*, a handsome, well-dressed woman began quietly weeping, continuing without letup until the end of the opera. “I’m sorry,” she said after the house lights came up. 'I knew what was coming but I couldn’t help myself. It was just so powerful.' Floyd’s 1970 adaptation of John Steinbeck’s tragic tale of George, his retarded friend Lennie and their thwarted American dream received a deeply moving and emotionally harrowing performance Sunday afternoon, presented by Sarasota Opera. The production was not only the high point of the company’s American Classics Series, but one of its finest efforts over the last decade...The audience frequently punctuated the performance with spontaneous applause, and the thunderous ovation at the end was by far the loudest and longest heard at any of the four operas presented this past weekend... Michael Hendrick came in at the 11th hour to save the production. The veteran tenor sang with a mellow tone and sweet top notes. Dramatically, Hendrick conveyed the endearing vulnerability of the handicapped man who likes to stroke soft things as well as his propensity to sudden, fearful reactive violence.” *(The Classical Review, Lawrence A. Johnson, 03/18/2013).*
“Tenor Michael Hendrick and baritone Sean Anderson starred as Lennie Small and George Milton, respectively, in the Sarasota Opera production, and it's hard to imagine these two outcasts portrayed any better... As the hulking, childlike Lennie, Hendrick gave a performance that contained both scary violence and tenderness, as in his superbly nuanced Act III soliloquy in which, having just killed Curley's Wife, he waited in the dark woods for his protector once again to save him: 'Hurry up, George, an' find me/I'm so cold.” (Opera News, John Fleming, 06/2013).

“Hendrick, a last-minute replacement for the tenor originally slated to sing Lennie, has made this role his own by slipping into the skin of this lovable but dangerous galoot with such a tight fit, vocally and emotionally, it’s hard to think of him as anyone else. Hendrick, who’s sung everything from Bacchus in “Ariadne” at the Met to Parsifal with the Lyric Opera of Chicago, has a soaring tenor voice that seems endless in range, color, and depth. Yet, his acting is so skilled, his characterization so complete, you forget he’s singing; with remarkable enunciation and body language, he totally personifies Lennie.” (The Observer Group, June Lebell, 03/13/2013).

“Tenor Michael Hendrick and baritone Sean Anderson star as Lennie Small and George Milton, respectively, in the Sarasota Opera production that opened Saturday night, and it's hard to imagine these iconic outcasts portrayed any better. When they yearn for their own “small, shingled house on two acres of land,” it expresses an essential American dream in deeply moving fashion. The two give sensitive expression to male bonding, with Anderson finding unexpected vulnerability in the blustery George. As the hulking Lennie, Hendrick combines child-like tenderness and scary violence in superbly nuanced singing... Carlisle Floyd, 86, looking natty in a double-breasted blazer, took a bow after Saturday's performance of Of Mice and Men.” (Tampa Bay Times, John Fleming, 03/12/2013).
“Their final scene is tragically gripping and bestows the finality this strange work demands. On Saturday evening, that reward was greatly appreciated by a hushed audience as the impressive protagonists (Michael Hendrick as Lennie and Sean Anderson as George) and the superb orchestra, under the direction of David Neely, brought the opera to its inevitable close.” (Sarasota Herald-Tribune, Richard Storm, 03/11/2013).


“The lead pair was very well cast... Michael Robert Hendrick's disturbed, disturbing Lenny was an extraordinarily intense performance...almost always rising excitingly to the cutting climaxes Floyd fashioned for Robert Moulson and pointedly shaping both sung and spoken interventions.” (Opera News, David Shengold, reviewed 08/01/2015).

**Manitoba Opera, Winnipeg, Canada (2016)**

“If there is one reason to see this show, it must surely be Michael Robert Hendrick’s deeply compassionate portrayal of the hulking Lennie. In his MO debut, the American tenor perfectly balanced his character’s emotional vulnerability with volatile, brute strength. It would be so easy to fall prey to mere stereotypes, but Hendrick was wholly believable without ever becoming disingenuous. He also nailed all of Floyd’s wide, dissonant leaps that melt into lyricism as he sang of “living off the fat of the land,” projecting both heartbreak and eternal hope.... Former Winnipegger Gregory Dahl also delivered a strong performance as George, with his robust baritone matching Hendrick’s vocals note for note. His Act I solo, in which he described how his life “would be so simple by itself” created soulful, introspective counterpoint, and when he sang, “One day soon,” during his duet with Lennie, he gave voice to the dreams of
an era... Kudos to MO (Manitoba Opera) for ending its season not with more typical, “safer” operatic grand spectacle, but by peering intimately into the hearts of those who once held - or continue to hold - their own wistful longings for home.” *(Winnipeg Free Press, Holly Harris, 04/25/2016).*

“The leads, George and Lennie, have tremendous chemistry. Last-minute replacement Michael Robert Hendrick owns the role of the intellectually and emotionally challenged Lennie and Gregory Dahl is a nuanced and three-dimensional George...We are lucky here in Manitoba to have a reliable and entertaining company who present two major operas a year. But this production *Of Mice and Men,* which on paper may have seemed a risky venture, should be long remembered as an unambiguous artistic triumph. It was an honour to be among the cheering crowd as the ninety-year-old composer walked on stage to tears and a thunderous ovation.” *(Canadian Broadcasting Corporation / CBC, Lara Rae, 04/26/2016).*

“Making his Manitoba Opera debut, Michael Robert Hendrick's deeply compassionate portrayal of the hulking Lennie, described in today's kinder, gentler terms as a person labeled with an intellectual disability, perfectly balanced his character's raw emotional vulnerability with volatile, brute strength. Hendrick resisted all temptation to fall into easy stereotypes, while also nailing Floyd's wide dissonant leaps and melting lyricism as he sang of “living off the fat of the land,” projecting both heartbreak and eternal hope.” *(Opera Today, Holly Harris, 05/11/2016).*
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Michael Robert Hendrick has appeared professionally on opera stages and concert halls in the U.S. and internationally for 28 years. He made his Metropolitan Opera debut in New York City in 2007 as Menelas in *Die Ägyptische Helena* by Richard Strauss, followed by engagements at the Metropolitan Opera including the title role in *Peter Grimes* by Benjamin Britten; as Bacchus in Straus' *Ariadne auf Naxos*; as Chairman Mao in *Nixon in China* by John Adams (conducted by the composer); and as the Drum Major in *Wozzeck* by Alban Berg. In 2001, Mr. Hendrick was honored at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C., as Washington National Opera’s *Artist of the Year*, for his portrayal of Lennie Small in *Of Mice and Men* by Carlisle Floyd, a role he most recently portrayed in 2016 at Manitoba Opera in Winnipeg, Canada. Later in 2016 he debuted at Vatroslava Lisinskog Concert Hall in Zagreb, Croatia as Waldemar in Schoenberg’s *Gurre-Lieder* with Croatian National Opera and Croatian Radio-Television Orchestra, broadcast live in HD throughout Croatia.

In 2017, Mr. Hendrick returned to Croatian National Theater in Zagreb as the protagonist role of the Prince in Prokofiev’s *The Love for Three Oranges*, performed in Croatian, with returning performances in 2018, including at Bartók Plusz Operafesztivál in Miskolc, Hungary. Also in 2018, continuing into 2019, he returned to Zagreb in the role of Erik in Wagner's *Der fliegende Holländer*. In late 2019, Mr. Hendrick returned to Manitoba Opera, in Winnipeg, Canada, performing as Sam Polk in Carlisle Floyd's *Susannah*.

In 2013, Mr. Hendrick sang at the Teatro dell'Opera in Rome, Italy in the title role of Saint-Saëns’ *Samson et Dalila*. He portrayed the title role in Wagner’s *Parsifal* at Lyric Opera of Chicago and at the legendary Teatro Amazonas in Brazil. Mr. Hendrick's other portrayals as Erik in *Der Fliegende Holländer* were at the famed Palacio de Bellas Artes in Mexico City; at
Sarasota Opera; with South Dakota Symphony Orchestra; and at the Festival Internacional
Cervantino in Guanajuato, Mexico. Michael Robert Hendrick's repertoire ranges from the title
role in Wagner's *Lohengrin*, performed at Kolobov Novaya Theater in Moscow, Russia, to his
portrayals as Don José in Bizet's *Carmen*, performed at New York City Opera; at Palacio de la
Ópera in A Coruña (Galicia), Spain; and at Palacio de Festivales in Santander (Cantabria), Spain.
His most recent appearances at Sarasota Opera include as Florestan in Beethoven's *Fidelio* and
as Canio in Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*. Mr. Hendrick has also portrayed Florestan with Palm Beach
Opera, with Opera Boston, and at The Ohio State University. He appeared as Herodes in Strauss' *Salome* with Oper Wuppertal in Wuppertal, Germany.

Mr. Hendrick has also appeared as Bacchus in *Ariadne auf Naxos* with Seattle Opera,
Pittsburgh Opera, Opera de Montréal, and at Festival Amazonas de Ópera in Brazil, all to critical
acclaim. In Amsterdam, he appeared as Midas in Strauss' *Die Liebe der Danae* with Radio
Filharmonisch Orkest Holland at the Concertgebouw. Mr. Hendrick bowed as Paul in
Korngold’s *Die tote Stadt* with Opéra National de Lorraine in Nancy, France; in the title role of
Mozart’s *La clemenza di Tito* with the National Symphony Orchestra at The John F. Kennedy
Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C.; and as Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte* with
Lyric Opera of Chicago for its mainstage school audiences.

Michael Robert Hendrick's Czech repertoire includes Laca in Janáček's *Jenůfa* performed
at Teatro Cervantes in Málaga (Andalucia), Spain; with Asociación Bilbaina de Amigos de la
Ópera (ABAO) in Bilbao (Biscay), Spain; at Utah Opera, and at Sarasota Opera. Mr. Hendrick
has portrayed the role of the composer Živny in Jánáček’s *Osud* (Fate) at Bard Summerscape; the
tenor soloist in Jánáček’s *Glagolitic Mass* at Bard Music Festival; and at San Francisco Opera, as
the cover for the role of Boris Grigorjevič in Jánáček’s *Kát'a Kabanová*. 
In Russian repertoire, Mr. Hendrick was engaged by Lyric Opera of Chicago to cover the role of Hermann in Tchaikovsky's *Пиковая дама* (transliteration: *Pikovaya dama*, or *The Queen of Spades*); performed Count Vaudémont in Tchaikovsky’s *Иоланта* (transliteration: *Iolanta*) in New York City; as Levko in Rimsky-Korsakov’s *Майская ночь* (transliteration: *Mayskaya noch*, or *May Night*), at Sarasota Opera. With Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, he sang both the role of Prince Vasily Ivanovich Shuysky, and the role of Andrey Schelkalov (a role for bass-baritone), in Mussorgsky's *Борис Годунов* (transliteration: *Boris Godunov*.)

In addition to his opera career, Michael Robert Hendrick is at home on concert stages. The tenor has bowed in Verdi’s *Requiem* with the National (U.S.) Philharmonic; Syracuse Symphony Orchestra; Huntsville Symphony Orchestra; and the Amazonas Festival in Brazil. He sang Kodaly’s *Psalmus Hungaricus* with Detroit Symphony Orchestra, and as the tenor soloist in Mahler's *Das klagende Lied* with Orquesta Nacional de España in Madrid, Spain; with London Philharmonic Orchestra; with Rotterdams Philharmonisch Orkest; and with The Philadelphia Orchestra. Mr. Hendrick has performed *Das Lied von der Erde* with Orchestre Symphonique de Mulhouse in Mulhouse, France; at Teatro Amazonas in Manaus, Brazil; at Brevard Music Festival in Brevard, North Carolina; with Chautauqua Symphony Orchestra in Chautauqua, New York; and with Pensacola Symphony Orchestra in Pensacola, Florida. His appearances as tenor soloist in Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9* have included Baltimore Symphony Orchestra; Pacific (U.S.) Symphony Orchestra; Tucson Symphony Orchestra; Utah Symphony Orchestra; Virginia Symphony Orchestra; and with Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra, with which he has also appeared as the tenor soloist in Mozart's *Requiem in D minor, K. 626*.

A native of LaGrange, Georgia, Michael Robert Hendrick has lived in Baton Rouge, Louisiana since 2000. He and his wife, Nancy, met in New York City in 1997, and were married
in 1999 at St. Joseph's Cathedral in Nancy's native city of Baton Rouge. Their son, George, is currently a computer science major (rising junior), also at Louisiana State University (LSU).

**Professional Theatrical Performances - Professional Opera, 2019 back to 1995**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sam Polk</td>
<td><em>Susannah</em></td>
<td>Manitoba Opera Winnipeg, Canada</td>
<td>2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le Fils</td>
<td><em>Les mamelles de Tirésias</em></td>
<td>Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana USA</td>
<td>2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erik</td>
<td><em>Der fliegende Holländer</em> (The Flying Dutchman)</td>
<td>Croatian National Theater, Zagreb, Croatia</td>
<td>2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince</td>
<td><em>Zaljubljen u Tri Naranče</em> (Love for Three Oranges)</td>
<td>Croatian National Theater, Zagreb, Croatia</td>
<td>2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavaradossi</td>
<td><em>Tosca</em></td>
<td>Live at First, Birmingham, Michigan</td>
<td>2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erik</td>
<td><em>Der fliegende Holländer</em></td>
<td>Croatian National Theater, Zagreb, Croatia</td>
<td>2018</td>
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<td>Croatian National Theater, Zagreb, Croatia</td>
<td>2017</td>
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<tr>
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<td><em>Of Mice and Men</em></td>
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<td>Oper im Park St. Anton am Arlberg AUSTRIA</td>
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Tamino \textit{Die Zauberflöte} Opera at Florham, New Jersey 1998

Don José (c) \textit{Carmen} New York City Opera New York City, New York 1998

Laca \textit{Jenufa} (Janáček) Sarasota Opera Company 1998

Narraboth (c) \textit{Salome} Santa Fe Opera 1998

Spakos \textit{Cléopâtre} Opera Manhattan New York City, New York 1997

Count Vaudemont \textit{Iolanta} Dicapo Opera Theatre New York City, New York 1997

Macduff (c) \textit{Macbeth} New York City Opera New York City, New York 1997

Hoffman \textit{Les Contes d’Hoffmann} Dicapo Opera Theatre New York City, New York 1997

Don Alvaro (c) \textit{La Forza del Destino} Sarasota Opera 1996

Macduff (c) \textit{Macbeth} New York City Opera New York City, New York 1995

\textbf{Professional Concert Appearances, 2021 back to 1995}

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\hline
Doctoral Lecture Recital & Louisiana State University & 2021 \\
\hline
Doctoral Recital II & Louisiana State University & 2020 \\
\hline
\textit{Messa da Requiem} (Verdi) & Houston Musical Arts Society, Texas & 2019 \\
\hline
Doctoral Recital I & Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA & 2019 \\
\hline
\textit{Atonenment: Masada} (Marvin David Levy) & Orchestra Miami & 2017 \\
\hline
\textit{Gurre-Lieder} as Waldemar (Schoenberg) & Croatian Radio Television Orchestra Zagreb, Croatia & 2016 \\
\hline
\textit{Symphony No. 9} & Sinfónica de Minería de Minería Mexico City, Mexico & 2014 \\
\hline
\textit{Symphony No. 9} & Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra & 2013 \\
\hline
\textit{Die Walküre} as Siegmund - Act One & Orchestre Symphonique de Mulhouse, France & 2012 \\
\hline
\textit{Die Meistersinger} & Orchestre Symphonique de Mulhouse, France & 2012 \\
\hline
\textit{Symphony No. 9} & Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra & 2011 \\
\hline
\textit{Das Lied von der Erde} & Orchestre Symphonique de Mulhouse, France & 2011 \\
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<td><em>Das klagende Lied</em> (Mahler)</td>
<td>Orquesta Nacional de España, Madrid, Spain</td>
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<td><em>Catulli Carmina</em> - as Catullus*</td>
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<td>Virginia Symphony Orchestra</td>
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<td><em>Symphony No. 9</em></td>
<td>Pacific Symphony Orchestra</td>
<td>Costa Mesa, California</td>
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<td><em>Psalmus Hunagricus</em> (Kodaly)</td>
<td>Detroit Symphony Orchestra</td>
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<td><em>Symphony No. 9</em></td>
<td>Tucson Symphony Orchestra</td>
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<td><em>Symphony No. 9</em></td>
<td>Virginia Waterfront International Arts Festival 50th Anniversary Celebration of NATO</td>
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<td><em>Symphony No. 9</em></td>
<td>Virginia Symphony Orchestra</td>
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<td>Guest Artist Concerts of Rachmaninoff songs</td>
<td>Newport Music Festival</td>
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<td><em>Messa di Gloria</em> (Puccini)</td>
<td>Hyde Park United Methodist Church Cincinnati, Ohio</td>
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<td><em>Messiah</em></td>
<td>Middletown Civic Chorus, Middletown, Ohio</td>
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<td><em>Symphony No. 9</em></td>
<td>Kentucky Symphony Orchestra</td>
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<td><em>Hymn of the Nations</em> (Verdi)</td>
<td>Sarasota Opera</td>
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<td><em>3 Edgar Allan Poe Songs</em> (Brad Cresswell)</td>
<td>Sarasota Opera</td>
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### Professional Young Artist Appearances, 1998 back to 1993

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<th>Role</th>
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<tr>
<td>Schoolmaster/Dean</td>
<td><em>A Dream Play</em> (Ingvar Lidholm)</td>
<td>Santa Fe Opera</td>
<td>1998</td>
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<tr>
<td>First Armed Guard</td>
<td><em>Die Zauberflöte</em></td>
<td>Santa Fe Opera</td>
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<td>Prince Shuisky</td>
<td><em>Boris Bodunov</em></td>
<td>Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra</td>
<td>1997</td>
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<td>Spakos</td>
<td><em>Cléopâtre</em> Massenet</td>
<td>Opera Manhattan Alice Tully Hall, Lincoln Center, New York City</td>
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### Collegiate and Summer Theatrical Appearances, 1994 back to 1988

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<tr>
<td>Judge Danforth</td>
<td><em>The Crucible</em></td>
<td>American Opera Projects</td>
<td>1997</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Trinity Church Wall Street, New York City</td>
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<td>Guillot</td>
<td><em>Manon</em></td>
<td>Sarasota Opera</td>
<td>1997</td>
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<td>Tailor</td>
<td><em>Königsinder</em></td>
<td>Sarasota Opera</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(Humperdinck)</td>
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<td>Edward</td>
<td><em>Patience and Sarah</em></td>
<td>American Opera Projects</td>
<td>1996</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Paula Kimper)</td>
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<td>Tinca</td>
<td><em>Il Tabarro</em></td>
<td>Sarasota Opera</td>
<td>1996</td>
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<td>Trabuco</td>
<td><em>La Forza del Destino</em></td>
<td>Sarasota Opera</td>
<td>1996</td>
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<td>Jaquino</td>
<td><em>Fidelio</em></td>
<td>Sarasota Opera</td>
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<td>Dr. Caius</td>
<td><em>Falstaff</em></td>
<td>Opera Theatre of St. Louis</td>
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<td>High School Principal</td>
<td><em>Black River</em></td>
<td>Opera Theatre of St. Louis</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(Conrad Susa)</td>
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<td>Maintop</td>
<td><em>Billy Budd</em></td>
<td>Opera Theatre of St. Louis</td>
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<td>Lorimond (c)</td>
<td><em>The Midnight Angel</em></td>
<td>Opera Theatre of St. Louis</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(David Carlson)</td>
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<td>Judge Danforth</td>
<td><em>The Crucible</em></td>
<td>Seagle Music Colony</td>
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<td>First Armed Guard</td>
<td><em>Die Zauberflöte</em></td>
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<th>Role</th>
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<tr>
<td>Pasha Selim</td>
<td><em>Die Entführung aus dem Serail</em></td>
<td>Aspen Music Festival</td>
<td>1994</td>
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<td>Rodolfo</td>
<td><em>La bohème</em></td>
<td>Aspen Music Festival</td>
<td>1994</td>
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<td>Tenor Soloist</td>
<td><em>The Seven Deadly Sins</em> (Kurt Weill)</td>
<td>Aspen Music Festival</td>
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<td>Chorus</td>
<td><em>Black River</em></td>
<td>Opera Theatre of St. Louis</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(Conrad Susa)</td>
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<td>Don José</td>
<td><em>Carmen</em></td>
<td>Aspen Music Festival</td>
<td>1993</td>
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<td>Tenor Soloist</td>
<td><em>Mass</em> (Bernstein)</td>
<td>Aspen Music Festival</td>
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<td>Chorus</td>
<td><em>Billy Budd</em></td>
<td>Opera Theatre of St. Louis</td>
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<td>Lysander</td>
<td><em>A Midsummer Night’s Dream</em></td>
<td>University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music</td>
<td>1993</td>
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<td>Singer/Dancer</td>
<td>Role/Music</td>
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<td>Singer/Dancer</td>
<td><em>Madrigals of Love and War</em> (Monteverdi)</td>
<td>University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music</td>
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<td>Julien</td>
<td><em>Louise</em></td>
<td>University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music</td>
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<td>Ruggero</td>
<td><em>La Rondine</em></td>
<td>University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music</td>
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<td>Chorus</td>
<td><em>Rigoletto</em></td>
<td>Cincinnati Opera</td>
<td>1992</td>
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<td>Chorus</td>
<td><em>Die Entführung aus dem Serail</em></td>
<td>Cincinnati Opera</td>
<td>1992</td>
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<td>Chorus</td>
<td><em>Les contes d'Hoffmann</em></td>
<td>Cincinnati Opera</td>
<td>1992</td>
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<td>Chorus</td>
<td><em>Madame Butterfly</em></td>
<td>Cincinnati Opera</td>
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<td>Chorus</td>
<td><em>Ariadne auf Naxos</em></td>
<td>University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music</td>
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<td>Scaramuccio</td>
<td><em>Zaïde</em></td>
<td>University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music</td>
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<td>Chorus</td>
<td><em>Un ballo in maschera</em></td>
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<td>Chorus</td>
<td><em>Manon Lescaut</em></td>
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<td>Chorus</td>
<td><em>Il barbiere di Siviglia</em></td>
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<td>Chorus</td>
<td><em>Carmen</em></td>
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<td>Don Jose</td>
<td><em>Carmen</em></td>
<td>University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music</td>
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<td>The Frog</td>
<td><em>L’Enfant et les Sortileges</em></td>
<td>University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music</td>
<td>1991</td>
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<td>Lucano</td>
<td><em>Il coronazione di Poppea</em></td>
<td>University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music</td>
<td>1991</td>
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<td>A Guard</td>
<td><em>Iphigenia in Tauris</em></td>
<td>University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music</td>
<td>1991</td>
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<td>Pylades (c)</td>
<td><em>Iphigenia in Tauris</em></td>
<td>University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music</td>
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<td>Eisenstein</td>
<td><em>Die Fledermaus</em></td>
<td>University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music</td>
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<td>Chorus</td>
<td><em>Aida</em></td>
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### Collegiate and Community Concert Appearances, 1997 back to 1989

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<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Performance</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>Chorus</td>
<td>Don Giovanni</td>
<td>Cincinnati Opera</td>
<td>1990</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chorus</td>
<td>Faust</td>
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<td>Chorus</td>
<td>Lucia di Lammermoor</td>
<td>Cincinnati Opera</td>
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<td>Ballroom Dancer</td>
<td>Ring Round the Moon</td>
<td>Berry College</td>
<td>1989</td>
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<td>Russian soloist</td>
<td>Fiddler on the Roof</td>
<td>Brevard Music Center Brevard, North Carolina</td>
<td>1988</td>
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<td>First Muezzin</td>
<td>Kismet</td>
<td>Brevard Music Center Brevard, North Carolina</td>
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<tr>
<td>A Messenger</td>
<td>Il trovatore</td>
<td>Brevard Music Center Brevard, North Carolina</td>
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<td>Brack Weaver</td>
<td>Down in the Valley</td>
<td>Berry College</td>
<td>1988</td>
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<tr>
<td>Captain Ladislas</td>
<td>The Fortune Teller (Victor Herbert)</td>
<td>Berry College</td>
<td>1987</td>
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### Evening of Song, Opera-Music Theatre Institute of New Jersey Founded by Jerome Hines

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<tr>
<th>Performance</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>Fedora, Carmen, and La traviata</td>
<td>Opera-Music Theatre Institute of New Jersey Founded by Jerome Hines</td>
<td>1997</td>
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<tr>
<td>Messiah</td>
<td>Dayton Bach Society Dayton, Ohio</td>
<td>1997</td>
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<tr>
<td>Messiah (complete)</td>
<td>Knox Presbyterian Music Series Cincinnati, Ohio</td>
<td>1996</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mass in B Minor, BWV 232</td>
<td>Knox Presbyterian Music Series Cincinnati, Ohio</td>
<td>1996</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. John Passion, BWV 245</td>
<td>Knox Presbyterian Music Series Cincinnati, Ohio</td>
<td>1994</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Matthew Passion, BWV 244</td>
<td>Knox Presbyterian Music Series Cincinnati, Ohio</td>
<td>1994</td>
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<td>Messiah (complete)</td>
<td>Knox Presbyterian Music Series Cincinnati, Ohio</td>
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<td>Messiah</td>
<td>Hamilton Fairfield Arts Association Hamilton, Ohio</td>
<td>1994</td>
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<td>Chandos Anthem No. 1: &quot;Be Joyful in the Lord&quot;</td>
<td>Dayton Bach Society Dayton, Ohio</td>
<td>1994</td>
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<td>Seven Last Words of Christ (Haydn)</td>
<td>Knox Presbyterian Music Series Cincinnati, Ohio</td>
<td>1993</td>
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<td><strong>Mass in C Minor, K. 427 (Mozart)</strong></td>
<td>Alice Tully Hall, Lincoln Center  New York City, New York</td>
<td>1992</td>
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<td><strong>Symphony No. 9 (Beethoven)</strong></td>
<td>Cincinnati-Conservatory of Music 125th Anniversary Gala, Cincinnati, Ohio</td>
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<td><strong>Christmas Oratorio (Bach)</strong></td>
<td>Knox Presbyterian Music Series Cincinnati, Ohio</td>
<td>1992</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mass in B Minor, BWV 232</strong></td>
<td>Knox Presbyterian Music Series Cincinnati, Ohio</td>
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<td><strong>Stabat Mater (Syzmanowski)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Messiah</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Masonic Cantata, K.623 Laut verkün.de unsre Freude</strong></td>
<td>Cincinnati College Conservatory Philharmonia Cincinnati, Ohio</td>
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<td><strong>St. John Passion, BWV 245</strong></td>
<td>Knox Presbyterian Music Series Cincinnati, Ohio</td>
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<td><strong>Requiem, K. 626</strong></td>
<td>The Vocal Arts Ensemble of Cincinnati Cincinnati, Ohio</td>
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<td><strong>Messiah (complete)</strong></td>
<td>Knox Presbyterian Music Series Cincinnati, Ohio</td>
<td>1991</td>
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<td>Master’s Degree Recital: Mozart, Schubert, Duparc, Britten</td>
<td>University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, Cincinnati, Ohio</td>
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<td><strong>Christmas Oratorio (Saint-Saëns)</strong></td>
<td>Wyoming Presbyterian Church Wyoming, Ohio</td>
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<td><strong>Do You Hear What I hear? (N. Regney and G. Shayne)</strong></td>
<td>Vocal Arts Ensemble of Cincinnati Cincinnati, Ohio</td>
<td>1990</td>
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<td><strong>Requiem, K. 626</strong></td>
<td>Vocal Arts Ensemble of Cincinnati Cincinnati, Ohio</td>
<td>1990</td>
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<td><strong>St. Matthew Passion, BWV 244 - as A False Witness</strong></td>
<td>Vocal Arts Ensemble of Cincinnati Cincinnati, Ohio</td>
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<td><strong>Requiem, K. 626</strong></td>
<td>Berry College Mount Berry, Georgia</td>
<td>1989</td>
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</table>
Reviews (Chronological):

1992 - Mozart: Zaïde - as Soliman
University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, Cincinnati, Ohio

“Tenor Michael Hendrick was sterling as Soliman...” (*The Cincinnati Post*, 02/14/1992).

“The cast heard is a well-trained group with one vocal standout - tenor Michael Hendrick in the role of Soliman the tyrannical sultan. Splendidly outfitted, he more than lived up to his garb with singing that was vibrant, tonally lush and well-projected.” (*Indianapolis Star*, 02/15/1992).

1993 - Britten: A Midsummer Night's Dream - as Lysander
University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, Cincinnati, Ohio

“This Dream was populated by casts overflowing with vocal splendor. A particularly impressive rendering of Lysander by Michael Hendrick” (*Opera News*, 07/1993).

1994 - Puccini: La bohème - as Rodolfo
Aspen Opera Theater Center - Aspen Music Festival, Aspen, Colorado

“Particularly good was Michael Hendrick who sang the role of the star-crossed poet Rodolfo. Hendrick's voice was strong, and in the arias where he expresses his love of Mimi, passionate.” (*The Aspen Times*, 07/23-24/1994).

1994 - Verdi: Falstaff - as Dr. Caius
Opera Theatre of St. Louis, St. Louis, Missouri

“At last, a Caius who can sing!” (*The Village Voice*, New York, 09/13/1994).
“There were fine contributions, too, from Michael Hendrick's Dr. Caius...” *(The Kansas City Star, 07/03/1994).*

“...and Michael Hendrick (Dr. Caius) rounded out Falstaff's court superbly.” *(The New York Times, 06/23/1994).*

1995 - TENOR ENTHRALLS CULTURAL CENTER CROWD

“Out of the commonplace, into the rare. A golden-voiced tenor, Michael Hendrick, enthralled the crowd and transported them far from the mundane. Thanks to him, the future... looks bright. It was Hendrick’s sure command of his high notes and lyrical tone of his voice that captured center stage. He is further along, it would seem, in his artistic maturation and a convincing singer. Simply grand.” *(Sarasota Herald-Tribune, 03/04/1995).*

1995 - Beethoven: *Fidelio* - as Jaquino
Sarasota Opera, Sarasota, Florida

“Michael Hendrick was effective as the frustrated Jaquino.” *(American Record Guide, Sept/Oct 1995).*

“Michael Hendrick (Jaquino) sang neatly.” *(Opera News, 07/1995).*

“Michael Hendrick, a nebbishly Jaquino of good voice...” *(Opera Canada, 1995).*

“Michael Hendrick, a Jaquino of good voice.” *(L'Opera, Italy, July/Aug 1995).*

1996 - Puccini: *Il Tabarro* - as Tinca
Sarasota Opera, Sarasota, Florida

“Michael Hendrick was amusing as the hard-drinking stevedore, Tinca.” *(Sarasota Herald-Tribune, 03/12/1996).*
1996 - Verdi: *La Forza del Destino* - as Trabucco
Sarasota Opera, Sarasota, Florida

“Another comic talent surfaced clearly, with tenor Michael Hendrick in the role of the Muleteer Trabuco in Act II, and as the trinket peddler in Act III.” (*Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, 03/26/1996).

“Outstanding contributions from... especially, Michael Hendrick.” (*Longboat Observer*, 02/22/1996).

“A gem of vocal and histrionic artistry... as Trabuco, is tenor Michael Hendrick.”

1996 - Paula Kimper: *Patience and Sarah* - as Edward White
American Opera Projects, New York City

“Michael Hendrick as Edward White gave a noteworthy performance. The diction was superb. Every word was distinct and understandable. How often can one say that about opera performances, particularly those in English?” (*Metrobeat: Opera Diary*, 07/11/1996).


1997 - Verdi Concert - as Tenor Soloist
Sarasota Opera, Sarasota, Florida

“About noon the Sarasota Opera learned that the tenor scheduled to sing that evening’s concert of Verdi rarities had begged off. In another company, this defection might have caused severe dismay. So, Michael Hendrick sat down with a score of Verdi’s Hymn of the Nations and, a few hours later, could perform it with clarion panache.” (*Financial Times*, London, 03/27/1997).
“The difficult tenor recitative and descant was performed with style and confidence by Michael Hendrick, substituting for an indisposed colleague. One never would have guessed that Hendrick learned the work in less than 24 hours!” Sarasota Herald-Tribune, 03/26/1997.

“On the final Saturday, when the tenor who was to sing Verdi’s “Hymn of the Nations” was indisposed, Michael Hendrick was able to learn the score in a matter of hours and, with the orchestra and chorus, give a totally convincing account of a rarely heard work.” (Opera News, 07/1997).

1997 - Massenet: Manon - as Guillot
Sarasota Opera, Sarasota, Florida

“Michael Hendrick’s prissy, amusing take on Guillot was balanced by colourful singing.” (Opera magazine, 08/1997).

“A special mention to Michael Hendrick, a young dramatic tenor quite promising, who impersonated an imposing, threatening and appalling Guillot de Morfontaine: not quite the peevish old man of tradition.” (OperaWeb, 04/15/1997).


“A marvelous performance in (a) smaller but vitally important role was given by tenor Michael Hendrick.” (Venice Gondolier, 03/1997).

“Michael Hendrick made important contributions.... Michael Hendrick as Guillot is convincing both as a fool and in revenge.” (Longboat Observer, 03/06/1997).

1997 - Massenet: Cléopâtre - as Spakos
Opera Manhattan, Alice Tully Hall, Lincoln Center, New York City

“In the event, the tenor was replaced by Michael Hendrick, who acquitted himself more
than satisfactorily... the queen's new paramour is her former slave Spakos, sung by Hendrick, who displayed a mellifluous, expressive tone that remained pleasant throughout his range, with none of the pushing so common among current tenors.” (Opera News, 10/1997).

“The rest of the large cast was well-prepared and strong-voiced, led by tenor Michael Hendrick as Spakos.” (New York Post, 06/28/1997).


“The singers were uniformly quite strong. My favorite was tenor Michael Hendrick as Spakos, Cleopatra’s other strong love interest besides Mark Antony. Hendrick brought passion to his role and supported it with a clear, well-focused tone. He also evoked sympathy by exploring the full range of his character’s feelings.” (Same cast and company, performed at Sarah Lawrence College, Bronxville, New York, Gannett Newspapers, 06/15/1997).

1997 - Tchaikovsky: Iolanta - as Prince Vodemon
Dicapo Opera Theatre, New York City

“In particular... Michael Hendrick, as the prince himself, came through to an excellent lyrical sweetness in the love duet, and his high notes rang sure.” (The New York Times, 12/22/1997).

“Tenor Michael Hendrick was an ardent Vodemont, whose love is the restorative tonic.” (Opera News, 1997).

1998 - Janáček: Jenufa - as Laca
Sarasota Opera, Sarasota, Florida

“Tenor Michael Hendrick, as Laca, so good in previous seasons, tackles this demanding
and dramatic role with strength and superior talent. He is superb. Bravo.” (The Advertiser, 03/14-15/1998).

“Tenor Michael Hendrick made a believable Laca, sulking and spiteful in Act I as he voices his resentment of his step-grandmother’s unloving treatment of him and cutting Jenufa’s cheek with his whittling knife after she repels his advances. Returning as a reformed human being in Act II and Act III, he shows his true character as a loyal, steadfast person ready to forgive all and marry the shamed Jenufa.” (Sarasota Herald-Tribune, 03/10/1998).

“Michael Hendrick (Laca) brought plenty of vocal stamina, expressive weight and persuasive characterization to the production.” (Opera News, 06/1998).

**1999 - Carlisle Floyd: Of Mice and Men - as Lennie Small**
Utah Opera Company, Salt Lake City, Utah

“Tenor Michael Hendrick was awe-inspiring as the half-wit Lennie. He brought the pathetic, gentile giant to life on the stage, and presented his struggle honestly and nobly. His clear, pure voice rang with guileless pathos, and he appeared to be about nine feet tall.” (Deseret News, 01/18-19/1999).

“Michael Hendrick played Lennie as ‘just a big kid,’ in keeping with the composer’s stated intentions. His steady, secure tenor captured the young man’s physical power as well as his innocence, most affectingly in the barn scene with Curley’s Wife, his large stature and boyish face adding to his believability.” (Salt Lake Tribune, 01/18/1999).

“Sarasota was lucky above all in its choice of tenors. Michael Hendrick sang a convincing Laca with a sturdy, robust voice.” (Das Opernglas, Germany, 1999).

“Michael Hendrick's Laca was a compelling, convincing fellow, with plenty of vocal stamina and expressive nuance.” (Opera magazine, 1999).
1999 - Rimsky-Korsakov: *May Night* - as Levko
Sarasota Opera, Sarasota, Florida

“In the pivotal role of Levko, tenor Michael Hendrick was outstanding, impressive for both his attractive, ample sound and convincing Slavic style.” (*Opera Canada*, Summer 1999).

“Michael Hendrick brought a big voice and lots of style to the role of Levko... a winsome performance.” (*Opera* magazine, Aug 1999).

“Michael Hendrick brings a tender tenor to Levko’s role.” (*This Month on Stage*, Spring/Summer 1999).


“As Levko, tenor Michael Hendrick showed a powerful, even voice with ringing high notes and a great sense of style... It was a triumph.” (*L’Opera*, Italy, 05/1999).

“Michael Hendrick's tenor voice was strong and pure cream.” (*The Longboat Observer*, 04/08/1999)

“As Levko, Michael Hendrick displayed a gorgeous tenor voice, capable of those dulcet pianissimi that melt the heart, as well as ringing, unforced tones in the upper register. He brought down the house in Act III with the tender serenade just before the water spirits emerge from the lake.” (*Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, 03/16/1999)

“May Night was a special treat for opera lovers, proving that opera definitely can be fun. Accolades must go to Michael Hendrick, whose rich tenor in the role of Levko, the mayor's son, dominated the production. He was by turn silly and sensitive at the appropriate moment and was completely captivating.” (*The East County Observer*, 03/25/1999).

“The cast is headed by tenor Michael Hendrick. Levko is a personal triumph for Hendrick. His Act III “Serenade”, filled with soaring head tones that demonstrated his strong
vocal technique, received well-deserved bravos and prolonged applause.” *(Venice Gondolier, 03/1999).*

“Singers made the opera memorable- especially the powerful but lyric tenor of Michael Hendrick- surely destined for stardom.” *(Newhouse News Service, 03/1999).*

**1999 - Kodaly: Psalmus Hungaricus - as Tenor Soloist**
Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Detroit, Michigan

“In tenor Michael Hendrick and the Choral Union of Ann Arbor's University Musical Society, prepared by Thomas Sheets, Gennady Rozhdestvensky enjoyed a vocal force that matched the DSO's glistening effort in all its discipline and all its splendid color.” *(Detroit News, 05/11/1999).*

**2000 - Strauss: Die Liebe der Danae - as Merkur**
American Symphony Orchestra
Avery Fisher Hall, Lincoln Center, New York City

“The young tenor Michael Hendrick as Merkur did solid work.” *(The New York Times, 01/18/2000).*

**2000 - Carlisle Floyd: Of Mice and Men - as Lennie Small**
Arizona Opera, Phoenix, Arizona

“Heading a powerful, unforgettable cast is tenor Michael Hendrick as Lennie Small. Hendrick projects an indefatigably naive figure, a character of kitten-like sanguiness capable of transformation into pantherish fury. Floyd gives him music equal to the sensibility, simply constructed but all over the range and very exposed. The score frequently calls for Lennie to pull high notes out of the blue, which Hendrick does with impeccable taste.” *(The Arizona*

“The Tucson Convention Center Music Hall crowd of 1,600 thundered its approval of the work, saving its most enthusiastic applause for tenor Michael Hendrick, who played the lumbering innocent Lennie. There were many great performances last night, chief among them Hendrick. Hendrick’s Lennie captured in the fullest sense the childlike innocence of this hulk of a man. In the opening scene, when George tells Lennie that despite the trouble he causes, George will stick by him, Hendrick dances around like a four-year-old with a balloon. When the puppy that Lennie too vigorously strokes dies, Hendrick throws its lifeless corpse to the ground like a spoiled child. And when George tells Lennie at the close to look across the river and see the farm they’ll someday have, Hendrick’s fidgeting feet tell a tale of uncluttered, childlike joy. Vocally, Hendrick was impressive, sporting a big, warm sound from top to bottom, handily projected to the cheap seats.” (The Arizona Citizen, Daniel Buckley, 02/12/2000).

2001 - Bizet: Carmen - as Don José
Opera Pacific, Orange County, California

“Hendrick sang... with a rich and subtle tenor that was particularly thrilling in the high range.” (Los Angeles Times, 02/23/2001).

“Hendrick sings powerfully throughout, with intensity and a sense of dramatic build. Nice pealing high notes, security in the lower range, balanced, rounded- an engaged, viscerally connected reading. (He) gave the final act passion and fire.” (Orange County Register, 02/23/2001).
2001 - Verdi: Falstaff - as Dr. Caius
Santa Fe Opera, Santa Fe, New Mexico

“A shining cast...Michael Hendrick was droll as the huffy, trumpet-toned Dr. Caius. If looks could kill, the way he myopically inspected his rival Fenton from top to toe whenever they met would have put the young man into a basket.” (The New Mexican, 07/02/2001)

2001 - Carlisle Floyd: Susannah - as Sam
Opera Carolina, Charlotte, North Carolina

“...strong performance by Michael Hendrick as Sam... Hendrick brought vocal authority to his role. A satisfying evening of music drama.” (Opera News, August 2001)

2001 - Carlisle Floyd: Of Mice and Men - as Lennie Small

“Stunning... the Washington Opera production stars two superb singer-actors in the lead roles...Tenor Michael Hendrick as Lennie gives what probably will be regarded as one of this season's great performances. He negotiated Lennie's difficult vocal part with only the slightest sign of strain during last week's premiere. From the standpoint of stage drama, he imbued his character with layers of complexity, joining extremely physical acting to a surprisingly sweet tenor voice that makes Lennie's dark side all the more jarring. Mr. Hendrick's Lennie is clearly good at heart but not in touch at all with normal human boundaries or appropriate behavior, or most particularly with his own strength. Like fellow ranch-hand Candy's worn-out old dog, which is finally put down by a co-worker, there is only one possible ending for a misfit such as Lennie... you'll have to experience this for yourself.” (The Washington Times, 10/27/2001).

“The loudest (ovation) was justly granted to tenor Michael Hendrick’s endearing portrayal of the childish giant Lennie, who loves to stroke soft, furry things but never
comprehends why they die under his unknowingly brutal caresses. Brilliant, subtle facial expression, clumsy walk and self-conscious hand gestures lent credibility to the character. Solid vocal technique and complete comfort with Floyd’s musical idiom made Hendrick’s performance compelling. No wonder Mr. Hendrick was chosen to receive the Washington Opera Guild’s 2001 Artist of the Year award at the end of the season.” (Intermission, 2001)

2003 - Britten: The Rape of Lucretia - as Main Chorus
New York City Opera, New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center, New York City

“Tenor Michael Hendrick sang with passion as the Male Chorus” (Opera News, Jul 03)

“Mr. Hendrick was most eloquent, his chatty, almost countertenor tessitura just perfect for a somewhat bitchy representative of the Fates.” (Concertonet.com, 04/22/2003).

2003 - Bizet: Carmen - as Don José
New York City Opera, New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center, New York City


2003 - Janáček: Osud - as Živny
Bard Summerscape Festival, Fisher Center, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

“From the opening of Act II Živny dominates the stage, beginning gently and happily, singing quite tenderly as he recalls a loving letter he wrote to Mila and progressing to enraged self-reproach before the catastrophic closing moments. It might seem that there was nothing left to top the melodrama of that closing, but Janáček contrives an even stronger climax at the end of Act III, with Živny's final convulsive outpouring. It's a solo scene lasting well over six minutes, and it takes everything a tenor’s got to give. The tenor of the occasion handled it
wonderfully: Michael Hendrick, a veteran of Chicago Lyric, Washington Opera, and New
York City Opera, commanded both power and pathos, and in addition revealed, in earlier
scenes and calmer moments, a marked sweetness of tone.” (MusicalAmerica.com, 05/29/2003).

“Botstein cast very strongly. In the cruelly exacting high tessitura of the protagonist,
Michael Hendrick revealed impressive stamina and an attractive, powerful “young dramatic”
voice ideally suited to leading Czech tenor roles.” (Opera News, October 2003).

“Michael Hendrick, as Živny, the composer, gained steam throughout the play to
deliver a shattering closing aria.” (Metroland Online, 07/25/2003).

“The tessitura of this tough monologue seemed to suit Mr. Hendrick; after a couple of
acts in which his voice sounded a little strained and grainy on top, he settled here into smoother

“La fin et quelques autres endroits de la partition en étonneront plus d'un, mais, selon
Leon Botstein, il n'est pas certain que Janacek ait totalement achevé la finition de son opéra.Le
chef d'orchestre américain a dirigé Osud avec un sûr engagement et réuni une très bonne
distribution, dominée par la Mila de Christine Abraham et le Živny de Michael Hendrick, tous
deux parfaitement émouvants.” (Le Monde, 08/02/2003).

“Heading the excellent cast was Michael Hendrick as the composer. With a strong tenor
voice hinting at a wail, he was the picture of an intellectual confronted with a life of emotional
suffering. His lengthy final aria was part life confession and part music lecture (“the dissonant
chords of life beat on”). Though the metaphors wore a bit thin, it was a fascinating coda that

2003 - Janáček: Jenufa - as Laca
Opera A.B.A.O., Bilbao, Spain

“Michael Hendrick... sang with vigor and not lacking beautiful color.” (El Correo, Bilbao, Spain, 11/17/2003).

2004 - Strauss: Ariadne auf Naxos - as Bacchus
L'Opera de Montréal, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

“Michael Hendrick performed Bacchus with a noble bearing and a trumpet tone. There are good tenors out there after all.” (The Gazette, Montréal, Arthur Kaptainis, 11/08/2004).

“Michael Hendrick has a strong, estimable heroic tenor voice, silver plated and magnificently constant, and delivers a convincing interpretation of the invaluable Tenor/Bacchus.” (Concertonet.com, 11/08/2004).


2005 - Janáček: Jenufa - as Laca
Utah Opera, Salt Lake City, Utah

“Tenor Michael Hendrick was wonderful. Hendrick’s portrayal is dynamic and poignant as he struggles with his jealousy and hatred of Steva and his passion for Jenufa.” (Deseret Morning News, 01/25/2005).

“Michael Hendrick (as Laca) who loves (Jenufa) but inflicts a disfiguring injury on her... A first-class performance, and equal to a knockout in musical and emotional potency.” (The Salt Lake Tribune, 01/24/2005).
2005 - Puccini: *Madama Butterfly* - as B.F. Pinkerton
Syracuse Opera, Syracuse, New York

**LEAD SINGERS TAKE FLIGHT IN ‘BUTTERFLY’: LIM AND HENDRICK CARRY THE SYRCAUSE OPERA PRODUCTION OF MADAMA BUTTERFLY**

“A pair of stellar singing and acting performances by the two principal roles helped Syracuse Opera's production of *Madama Butterfly* pack an emotional wallop. I only wish I owned the Kleenex tissue concession in the lobby... Michael Hendrick as Pinkerton has a powerful voice that loses no steam in its high register and that can soar well above Puccini's sizable orchestral accompaniment, as in his “Dovunque al mondo” of Act 1 and the “Love Duet”. *(The Post-Standard, Syracuse, New York, 04/30/2005).*

2005 - Strauss: *Ariadne auf Naxos* - as Bacchus
Pittsburgh Opera, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

“The leading male roles are also magnificently performed. Tenor Michael Hendrick as Bacchus steps up to match Eaglen's soaring melodic lines at the end of the opera.” *(The Pittsburgh Tribune-Review, 10/24/2005).*

“In Richard Strauss' opera about an opera, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Michael Hendrick's Tenor was funny throwing hissy fits in the Prologue, but even funnier as an overly dramatic Bacchus in the opera. Soprano Jane Eaglen seems born for the role of the Prima Donna, and Hendrick's booming voice is a sure fit with Eaglen's.” *(The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 10/24/2005).*

2005 - Beethoven: *Symphony No. 9* - as Tenor Soloist
The Baltimore Symphony, Baltimore, Maryland

“...and tenor Michael Hendrick... formed a foursome that scaled Beethoven's almost insurmountable vocal heights with mellifluous beauty, the voices nicely blended and well-

2005 - Beethoven: Symphony No. 9 - as Tenor Soloist
Utah Symphony Orchestra, Salt Lake City, Utah

Beethoven: Symphony No. 9, Utah Symphony Orchestra, Salt Lake City, UT USA “The other soloists... followed tenor Michael Hendrick's exuberant cue.” Salt Lake Tribune, 12/19/2005).

2006 - Verdi: Requiem - as Tenor Soloist
Syracuse Symphony Orchestra, Syracuse, New York

“Tenor Michael Hendrick has at his disposal a powerful voice easily capable of navigating Verdi's sometimes torturous soaring lines. His vocal color is pleasantly warm and, given its somewhat baritone-ish warmth, has surprising strength in the upper register. When it came time for the grand conclusion of this main tenor solo, he nailed it in a decisive and thrilling fashion.” (Syracuse Post-Standard, 02/11/2006)

2006 - Verdi: Requiem - as Tenor Soloist
Huntsville Symphony Orchestra, Huntsville, Alabama

“Four guest singers filed on stage: soprano Kalley Nassief, mezzo soprano Marietta Simpson, tenor Michael Hendrick and bass Kevin Deas. All possess magnificent voices, gifts they put to excellent use on Verdi's Requiem” (The Huntsville Times, 02/26/2006).

2006 - Bizet: Carmen - as Don José
Palacio de Festivales, Santander, Spain

“It was a great triumph at night in a success shared with the tenor Michael Hendrick,
who made a very good Don José ...wonderful singing.” (La Voz de Galicia, Spain, 2006).

“Michael Hendrick made a crescendoing Don José, evolving dramatically in the four acts of the work, but obtaining the most interesting levels in last two, returning one more stunned performance when there is to be a very solid presence for the last part of drama.” (El Diario de Cantabria, 2006).

2006 - Bizet: Carmen - as Don José
Palacio de la Ópera, A Coruña, Spain

“Don José ...vocally demonstrated that he dominated the situation, with an ample and decided registry, of which mère left to certainty in “Parle moi de ma mère”, the pair of Don José and Micaela, or in the final scene of the work.” (El Diario Montañés, Spain, 2006).

“The tenor Michael Hendrick, equipped by temperament (reminds of Jon Vickers) ...hits upon at the tragic final moments at which the work shows the expressive facets that place it in the birth of the verismo.” (ABC.es, Spain, 2006.)

2007 - Korngold: Das Wunder der Heliane - as The Stranger
London Philharmonic Orchestra, London, England

“At the opposite extreme was a young and immensely promising heldentenor in Michael Hendrick. He rode the often in-human tessitura of the Stranger with courage and belief, singing and phrasing with real beauty, not just brawn.” (The Independent, Edward Seckerson).

“Michael Hendrick’s valiant Stranger came good where it really counted, when he implausibly came back to life and blasted the King off his throne.” The Times, London, Neil Fisher).
“Michael Hendrick, a lyric rather than a heroic tenor, delivered a sensitive account of the Stranger’s role, coming into his own when the orchestra was more restrained in the final act.” (*Evening Standard*, Barry Millington).

“Strauss’s strenuous tenor parts such as Bacchus, the Kaiser, and Apollo, also came to mind when considering the part of the Stranger. It’s one of those long and high-lying parts that requires its singer to be heroic, romantic and lyrical all at the same time whilst singing at the extreme reaches of the voice. Pitched against some pretty lush orchestration it’s a beast of a part, and not as well paced as some of the Strauss roles either – Act one is almost continuous for the singer. Michael Hendrick managed pretty well under the pressure, and even if he sounded pretty strained in some of the more ecstatic moments he certainly managed as well as most tenors singing the aforementioned Strauss parts.” (*ClassicalSource.com*, Alexander Campbell).

2007 - **Strauss: Die Ägyptische Helena - as Menelas**
The Metropolitan Opera, Lincoln Center, New York City

“Making your Met debut in such tense circumstances has to be intimidating. Still, Mr. Hendrick saved the day, singing with husky sound and energy.” (*The New York Times*, Anthony Tommasini).


“Michael Hendrick assaulted the stratosphere with steely stamina.” (*Financial Times*, Martin Bernheimer).

“Michael Hendrick has a huge yet expressive voice. He pumped incredible volume and energy into the second act.” (Bloomberg, Manuela Hoelterhoff)

“In Menelaus, we were impressed by the concentration and the absolute accuracy of intonation of the young tenor Michael Hendrick, in a most inhuman tessitura.” (Opéra magazine, France, David Shengold).

“Michael Hendrick, in a debut, under the circumstances, did remarkably well.” (The New York Post, Clive Barnes).

“Michael Hendrick, making his Met debut as Menelas, sang... with ringing tones and assurance.” (GreenwichTime.com, Jerome R. Sehulster).

2009 - Verdi: Aroldo - as Aroldo
ABAO Opera, Bilbao, Spain

“Considering the devilish writing that Verdi made for the main character Aroldo, it is not surprising that few tenors want to get into such severe adventures. On this occasion, the American tenor Hendrick was successful, with significant values in the technique.” (Diariovasco.com, Emecé).

“Tenor Michael Hendrick, Aroldo and main protagonist of the opera, sang with expression, although his vocal production is not particularly bright for this style of that time of Verdi's style of the 19th century. But we must notice that it has a clear expressive validity and a good musical sense.” (Deia, J.A.Z.).

“Good results for tenor Michael Hendrick who sang a committed Aroldo.” (ABC.es, Spain, Cosme Marina).

“To cast Aroldo himself brings up the immediate problem that the big names are not willing to add this opera to their repertoire, knowing that they will probably never have the
chance to sing it again. In this case, the protagonist Aroldo was played by American tenor Michael Hendrick, who made a very good impression as Laca in Jenufa some six years ago. He gave a worthy performance, singing with great honesty and commitment.” (Music-Web International, Jose M. Irurzun).

“As regards the tenor Michael Hendrick... given the difficulty of the role one can say that he handled his role well and contributed to the general equilibrium of representation.” (El Correo, Spain, Nino Dentici).

2009 - Saint-Saëns: Samson et Dalila - as Samson
Festival Amazonas de Ópera, Manaus, Brazil

“In the opera, where artists are balanced on a slant board mirrored throughout Act I, we are surprised by the forceful, determinant Samson- Head of the Hebrews, played by American tenor Michael Hendrick- to rid his people enslaved by the Philistines. From the first, it is evident from the liberated Samson of his determination in helping his people. The interpretive strong tenor voice of Hendrick soothes the suffering of the Hebrews, shows its force after the onset of Delilah, and his anguish between love, faith and beliefs.” (PortalAmazônia.com, Juéara Menezes, 04/24/2009).

2009 - Berlioz: Les Troyens- as Aeneas
Festival Amazonas de Ópera, Manaus, Brazil

“Michael Hendrick, credible in the role of Aeneas, met, despite being ill, the demands of the score.” (Folha de S. Paulo, Jorge Coli, 05/30/2009).
2010 - Strauss: *Ariadne auf Naxos* - as Bacchus  
The Metropolitan Opera, Lincoln Center, New York City

“The American tenor Michael Hendrick, an experienced Bacchus, took over. As it turned out, Mr. Hendrick was grappling with a cold as well. He went on, but he requested the audience’s understanding, a Met spokesman announced from the stage. Bacchus is a relatively short yet notoriously punishing heldentenor role. Clearly struggling, Mr. Hendrick dropped some phrases and skipped some top notes. Still, the basic components of his burly voice came through, and he survived the big final duet with Ariadne.” *(The New York Times, Anthony Tommasini, 02/05/2010).*

2010 - Korngold: *Die Tote Stadt* - as Paul  
Opéra National de Nancy et de Lorraine, Nancy, France

“Finally, a voice of intelligent command in the lead role.” *(Anaclase, Bertrand Bolognesi, 05/10/2010).*

“Two vocal performances, not to mention the feats of strength, is what is required of Korngold's interpreters in Die Tote Stadt, and the first challenge that the National Opera of Lorraine, beyond expectations. Without a Heldentenor, there is no salvation for Paul, unless we sacrifice an artist too docile in his unconsciousness. Without doubt, Michael Hendrick has the stature, content, and the timbre of a dark brilliance.” *(Altamusica, Mehdi Mahdavi, 05/2010).*

“The two main roles deserve the warmest praise. Michael Hendrick, embodies a Paul fragile and poignant: His expressive range and timbre of valour are those of a heldentenor.” *(Concertonet, Sebastien Foucart, 05/14/2010).*

“It is a strong but daring idea of giving *Die Tote Stadt* (The Dead City) without intermission, 2:20 of continuity, often furious, requires only that Paul, the tenor protagonist,
constantly in a tessitura crucifying, lend oneself. The young American Michael Hendrick does, still capable of a piano line that draws tears at the final reprise, as remembered within, the song ‘Glück das mir verblieb.’” (André Tubeuf, 05/19/2010).

“The public greeted with a burst of applause, for the dramatic vocal work of Michael Hendrick, whose generous and powerful program was a sign of vitality of the poor widower and was able to express the character's distress.” Webthea, Jaime Estapà i Argemí, 05/21/2010.

“The Paul of Michael Hendrick... demonstrates his amazing strength to carry to the end and without intermission the terrible writing of the role. His relative awkwardness perfectly suits the character as a neurotic recluse who lives only in memory of his lost past.” (ResMusica, Michel Thomé, 05/12/2010).

**2013 - Wagner: Parsifal- as Parsifal**

Festival Amazonas de Ópera, Manaus, Brazil

“The vocal cast is... reinforced by American tenor Michael Hendrick as Parsifal in a uniform and stylistically impeccable cast. The success was indescribable. The level of quality touches the tenets of magical realism which is so inseparable from South America and is so admired in Spain.” (El País, Madrid), Juan Ángel Vela del Campos, 2013.

“In the middle of the Amazon jungle, floating on the river, from somewhere in the Valhalla, on top of the Venusberg, in an armchair theater he built in Bayreuth, for all points of the planet, Richard Wagner himself would applaud in Manaus: a handful of artists fully understood and staged his posthumous opera, Parsifal, so precise, outstanding. The cast was headed by American Michael Hendrick, in the title role, that of Parsifal.” (La Jornada, Pablo Espinosa, Mexico City, 05/2013).

“GREAT SOLOISTS STAND OUT IN WAGNER'S OPERA: The American tenor
Michael Hendrick was a secure Parsifal, appropriately sized, innocent and heroic ... excellent vocal performance, showing all important predicates as great projection, perfect pitch, expressiveness, beautiful tones and striking presence.” (Movimento.com, Leonardo Marques, 05/21/2013).

2013 - Carlisle Floyd: Of Mice and Men - as Lennie Small
Sarasota Opera, Sarasota, Florida

“Tenor Michael Hendrick and baritone Sean Anderson starred as Lennie Small and George Milton, respectively, in the Sarasota Opera production, and it's hard to imagine these two outcasts portrayed any better... As the hulking, childlike Lennie, Hendrick gave a performance that contained both scary violence and tenderness, as in his superbly nuanced Act III soliloquy in which, having just killed Curley's Wife, he waited in the dark woods for his protector once again to save him: “Hurry up, George, an' find me/ I'm so cold.” Opera News, John Fleming, 06/06/2013).

“In the final tragic moments of Carlisle Floyd’s Of Mice and Men, a handsome, well-dressed woman began quietly weeping, continuing without letup until the end of the opera. “I’m sorry,” she said after the house lights came up. “I knew what was coming but I couldn’t help myself. It was just so powerful.” Floyd’s 1970 adaptation of John Steinbeck’s tragic tale of George, his retarded friend Lennie and their thwarted American dream received a deeply moving and emotionally harrowing performance Sunday afternoon, presented by Sarasota Opera. The production was not only the high point of the company’s American Classics Series, but one of its finest efforts over the last decade. Michael Hendrick came in at the 11th hour to save the production. The veteran tenor sang with a mellow tone and sweet top notes. Dramatically, Hendrick conveyed the endearing vulnerability of the handicapped man who
likes to stroke soft things as well as his propensity to sudden, fearful reactive violence.” *(The Classical Review, Lawrence A. Johnson, 05/13/2013).*

“Hendrick, a last-minute replacement for the tenor originally slated to sing Lennie, has made this role his own by slipping into the skin of this lovable but dangerous galoot with such a tight fit, vocally and emotionally, it’s hard to think of him as anyone else. Hendrick, who’s sung everything from Bacchus in *Ariadne* at the Met to *Parsifal* with the Lyric Opera of Chicago, has a soaring tenor voice that seems endless in range, color and depth. Yet, his acting is so skilled, his characterization so complete, you forget he’s singing; with remarkable enunciation and body language, he totally personifies Lennie.” *(The Observer Group, June LeBell, 05/13/2013).*

“Their final scene is tragically gripping and bestows the finality this strange work demands. On Saturday evening, that reward was greatly appreciated by a hushed audience as the impressive protagonists (Michael Hendrick as Lennie and Sean Anderson as George) and the superb orchestra, under the direction of David Neely, brought the opera to its inevitable close. *(The Sarasota Herald-Tribune, Richard Storm).*

**2014 - Wagner: Der fliegende Holländer - as Erik**

Sarasota Opera, Sarasota, Florida

“This is a cast of such compelling, powerful singers, it’s impossible not to be drawn into their persuasive story. Top among them is Michael Robert Hendrick, the tenor who played such a convincing Lennie last season in Sarasota Opera’s production of “Of Mice and Men.” There, it was his powerful acting and vocal prowess that made us believers. As Erik in this Wagnerian epic, his formidable dramatic tenor takes over, making him a confused, passionate, despairing lover, deserving but spurned.” *(The Observer Group, June LeBell, 02/03/2014).*
“Michael Robert Hendrick as Erik, the hunter and Senta's former lover, delivered many
to a true ringing heldentenor. Spurned and indignant he kept an admirable focus in
tone and character.” (Sarasota Herald-Tribune, Gayle Williams, 03/05/2014)

2014 - Leoncavallo: Pagliacci - as Canio
Sarasota Opera, Sarasota, Florida

“Michael Robert Hendrick took on the tragic role of Canio . . . You’ll remember him as
the brilliant acting-singer whose portrayal of Lennie in the operatic setting of Steinbeck’s “Of
Mice and Men” at Sarasota Opera a few years ago, brought us all to tears. This time, he
brought a depth of character seldom seen in this role. Rather than riding on the gleaming
quality of his voice, as most tenors do in “Pagliacci,” Hendrick added his profound ability to
embody a role, making his Canio more than just a striking voice.” (The Observer Group, June
LeBell, 11/02/2014).

“The Sarasota Opera production is gorgeously designed and movingly acted and sung.
There are no weak links in the large cast – which includes members of the Sarasota Youth
Opera as part of the chorus – but standouts include Michael Robert Hendrick as Canio (who
becomes Pagliaccio in the play) and Marco Nistico as Tonio, the hunchback.” (Bradenton

2015 - Strauss: Salome - as Herodes
Opera Wuppertal, Wuppertal, Germany

“Michael Hendrick with his radiant tenor plays Herod's instinctive desire and, later, the
horror of Salome's handling of Johanaan's head, superbly. (Westdeutsche Zeitung (WZ),
Hartmut Sassenhausen, 04/21/2015).
“The Herodes and Herodias team was also excellent. Michael Hendrick's tenor’s gamut ranges from the buffoonesque to the fully powerful and dramatic.” (Musenblätter, Daniel Diekhans, 04/21/2015).

“Michael Hendrick presents a vocally powerful, characteristically defined and gross, decadent Herodes.” (Opernnetz, Pedro Obiera, 04/19/2015).

“Herodes and Herodias are also of the highest caliber with Michael Hendrick and Dubravka Musović... Hendrick is King Herod with (his) extroverted acting and, in the top register, scintillant tenor. His portrayal of his sexual attraction to his step daughter is absolutely believable. Equally convincing is his portrayal of consternation at the end with which he orders the execution of Salome.” (OMM - Online Musik Magazin, Thomas Molke, 04/19/2015).

“Michael Hendrick is the lustful, delightfully greasy Herod.” (Der Opern Freund, Jochen Rüth, 04/18/2015).

“Michael Hendrick and Dubravka Husovic excelled as a quarrelsome couple Herod and Herodias.” (Deianira das Kulturportal, Fritz Gerwinn, 04/19/2015).

“Salome is an adolescent girl showing her erotic charisma to stepfather Herod (excellent with cutting character tenor Michael Hendrick) specifically in the veil dance, not only to the entire court.” (Wuppertaler Rundschau, Stefan Schmöe, 04/23/2015).

2016 - Carlisle Floyd - Of Mice and Men - as Lennie Small
Manitoba Opera, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

“If there is one reason to see this show, it must surely be Michael Robert Hendrick’s deeply compassionate portrayal of the hulking Lennie. In his MO debut, the American tenor perfectly balanced his character’s emotional vulnerability with volatile, brute strength. It would be so easy to fall prey to mere stereotypes, but Hendrick was wholly believable without ever
becoming disingenuous. He also nailed all of Floyd’s wide, dissonant leaps that melt into lyricism as he sang of “living off the fat of the land,” projecting both heartbreak and eternal hope.... Former Winnipegger Gregory Dahl also delivered a strong performance as George, with his robust baritone matching Hendrick’s vocals note for note. His Act I solo, in which he described how his life “would be so simple by itself” created soulful, introspective counterpoint, and when he sang, “One day soon,” during his duet with Lennie, he gave voice to the dreams of an era... Kudos to MO (Manitoba Opera) for ending its season not with more typical, “safer” operatic grand spectacle, but by peering intimately into the hearts of those who once held — or continue to hold — their own wistful longings for home.” (Winnipeg Free Press, Holly Harris, 04/25/2016).

“The leads, George and Lennie, have tremendous chemistry. Last-minute replacement Michael Robert Hendrick owns the role of the intellectually and emotionally challenged Lennie and Gregory Dahl is a nuanced and three-dimensional George...We are lucky here in Manitoba to have a reliable and entertaining company who present two major operas a year. But this production Of Mice and Men, which on paper may have seemed a risky venture, should be long remembered as an unambiguous artistic triumph. It was an honour to be among the cheering crowd as the ninety-year-old composer walked on stage to tears and a thunderous ovation.” (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation / CBC, Lara Rae, 04/26/2016).

“Making his Manitoba Opera debut, Michael Robert Hendrick's deeply compassionate portrayal of the hulking Lennie, described in today's kinder, gentler terms as a person labeled with an intellectual disability, perfectly balanced his character's raw emotional vulnerability with volatile, brute strength. Hendrick resisted all temptation to fall into easy stereotypes, while also
nailing Floyd's wide dissonant leaps and melting lyricism as he sang of “living off the fat of the land,” projecting both heartbreak and eternal hope.” (Opera Today, Holly Harris, 05/11/2016).

2016 - Schönberg: Gurre-Lieder - as Waldemar
Croatian National Theater and Radio-Television Orchestra
Lisinski Concert Hall, Zagreb, Croatia

“Michael Robert Hendrick sang the Bacchus-esque role of Waldemar with a strong upper register and admirable dramatic insight... This was a heartfelt and powerful performance. Lyrical sections such as “Mit Toves Stimme flüstert der Wald” were especially well phrased. The terrifying monologue when Waldemar confronts God as an equal was electrifying. A clarion top B flat on “Hofnarrn tragen” would have intimidated even the Almighty.”

Bachtrack, Jonathan Sutherland, 09/26/2016).

“HISTORICAL EVENT IN LISINSKI: With the orchestra and choirs of the Croatian National Theatre, Croatian Radio-Television, and the Academy of Music, among the soloist, especially were brilliant.” Michael Robert Hendrick and Dubravka Šeparović Mušović.

(Včernji list, Branimir Pofufuk, 09/26/2016).

2017 - Prokofiev: Zaljubljen u Tri Naranče (Love for Three Oranges) - as the Prince
Croatian National Theater, Zagreb, Croatia (performed in Croatian)

“The role of the Prince was performed by the American tenor Michael Robert Hendrick, the only international guest, who thrilled us not only with his correct interpretation and vision of a spoiled hypochondriac and yet pompous Prince, but also with his excellent pronunciation of Croatian language, on which the opera is performed.” (Klasika.hr, Zrinka Matić, 03/06/2017).
2017 - Marvin David Levy: *Atonement*
Orchestra Miami, Miami, Florida

“The tenor Michael Robert Hendrick shone in 'Masada', no less moved and delivered, where the heroism of the people besieged in the Rock of Masada, Israel, is narrated, and when they are lost, they decide to commit suicide before they fall as slaves of Roman power. The longest of the whole work, inspired by the Jewish funerary chants known as Kaddish, this part demands a lot from the singer, but the tenor passed the arduous test with triumphant colors that ripped the audience's applause the first movement of that part with stentorous “Amen”. (*The New Herald*, Daniel Hernández, 04/25/2017).

2019 - Carlisle Floyd: *Susannah - as Sam Polk*
Manitoba Opera, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

“One might be forgiven a little déjà vu seeing American tenor Michael Robert Hendrick clothed in seemingly the same denim overalls he wore as Lennie during Manitoba Opera’s 2016 production of Carlisle Floyd’s *Of Mice and Men*. Hendrick’s portrayal of Susannah’s protective, whiskey-swilling elder brother Sam Polk grew like a volatile powder keg ready to blow during the opera’s denouement.” (*Winnipeg Free Press*, Holly Harris, 11/25/2019).

“Michael Robert Hendrick, as Susannah’s wise but flawed older brother Sam Polk, is one of the few characters not caught up in monolithic thinking. Everything that Sam says early on in the show in his talks with Susannah are crystalline nuggets of wisdom, and the siblings’ evident mutual love is truly touching.” (*Schmopera*, Neil Weisensel, 11/25/2019).