

Student Work

12-1-1984

The One and only Jesse Starr

Barbee Kay Davis

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/studentwork>

Recommended Citation

Davis, Barbee Kay, "The One and only Jesse Starr" (1984). *Student Work*. 3286.
<https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/studentwork/3286>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UNO. It has been accepted for inclusion in Student Work by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UNO. For more information, please contact unodigitalcommons@unomaha.edu.



FINAL DIRECTING PROJECT ACCEPTANCE

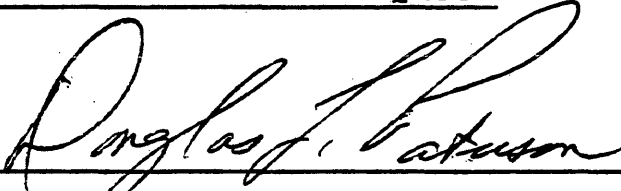
Barbee Kay Davis

Accepted for the faculty of the Graduate College, University of Nebraska, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts, University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Committee

Jesse and the Bandit Queen

Dramatic Arts



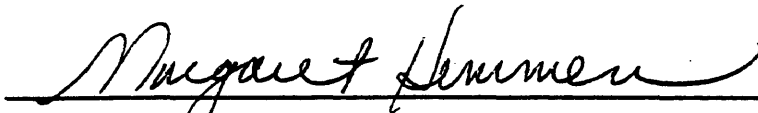
Dramatic Arts

Dr. Douglas L. Paterson



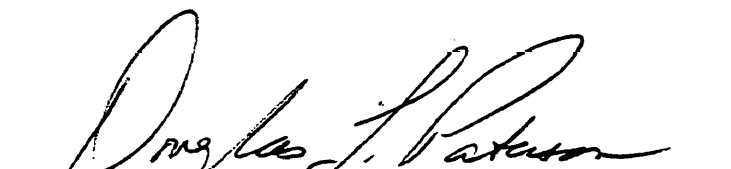
Michael Brooks

Dramatic Arts

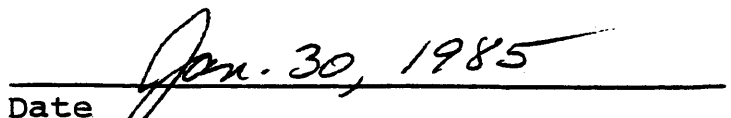


Dr. Margaret Hemmen

Music



Chairman



Date

THE ONE AND ONLY JESSE STARR

A Final Directing Project

Presented to the

Department of Dramatic Arts

and the

Faculty of the Graduate College

University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

University of Nebraska at Omaha

by

Barbee Kay Davis

December 1984

UMI Number: EP74685

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



UMI EP74685

Published by ProQuest LLC (2015). Copyright in the Dissertation held by the Author.

Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

All rights reserved. This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code



ProQuest LLC.
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 - 1346

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Part One - Background. 1-28

Part Two - Direction28-55

Appendices Following Narrative

Introduction

Jesse and the Bandit Queen is a funny, entertaining and touching look at the difference between the myth and the legend of desperado Jesse James and the infamous Belle Starr. Jesse was transformed into legend through his daring bank robberies, especially his unsuccessful attempt in Northfield, Minn. Belle, heroine of the lurid dime novels of the Old West, was often billed as the female Jesse James.

In his fascinating look at these two American folk heroes, playwright David Freeman has used an ever shifting balance of documented historical truth and compelling dramatic fantasy. Many of the events which take place in this play are true: Jesse was for a short time a member of Quantrill's guerrilla army and it is possible he could have ridden with him into Lawrence, Kansas. Cole Younger did ride with Jesse's gang, but the popular legend that he fathered Belle's child, Pearl, has no basis in fact.

Jesse did have both a wife and mother named Zerelda, and the latter did have her arm blown off by Pinkerton men. Belle did meet the "hanqin' judge," Judge Parker, and negotiate an arrangement for her freedom, but later did spend some time in prison for horse stealing. And Richard Fox did inflate tremendously Belle's popularity through his fictional

accounts of her deeds in the Police Gazette.

One of the play's loveliest ironies lies in the fact that although Jesse and Belle were contemporaries, history shows their paths crossed only once, briefly, when Belle was married to Sam Starr and Jesse hid out for several days at the Starr ranch in the Indian Territory (Oklahoma). Yet the American public has long mated them as ideal lovers, justifying Jesse's persistent concern that, "You think you're planning your life, doing what you want to, and everybody gets it wrong."

The following paper is a summary of the analysis, direction, and production of Jesse and the Bandit Queen at UNO. It is arranged in nine sections. The first five concern the background work done in preparation for directing the play. They include script analysis and definition of concept, the influence of Jungian psychological theories, structural changes which deviate from the original script, folk hero patterns which are evident in the life of the historical Jesse James, and relevant biographical information on Belle Starr.

The second half of the paper deals with directing decisions made for this specific production. There are four sections which discuss character choices and relationships; technical choices regarding props, costumes, lighting, and set; an explanation of the degree of authenticity used; and comments on the success of this production.

THE ONE AND ONLY JESSE STARR

On Thursday, September 7, 1876, the celebrated Jesse James met his greatest defeat when he attempted to hold up the First National Bank at Northfield, Minn.¹ Each year, on the second weekend in September, the reenactment of that infamous raid regularly attracts 100,000 people to the historic site. The American public's interest in the legendary exploits of the James gang seems very much alive. So on September 14, 1984, roughly 108 years after that memorable event, we opened Jesse and the Bandit Queen in the Studio Theatre at UNO. The play is an interesting, two-act look at the historical figures involved and their corresponding legends.

Jesse and the Bandit Queen provides a fascinating glimpse into the lives of Jesse, who "invented the Train Robbery,"² and Belle Starr, his fictional soul-mate. It first opened at the New York Shakespeare Festival on November 2, 1975.³ The critics had mixed feelings about the literary significance of the script, but concurred that it was a tour de force for performers Kevin O'Connor and Pamela Payton-Wright, who played all ten roles.

In searching for a Final Project, I was drawn to this script rather than to a more tightly constructed, classical

piece because this script presented a challenge. Certainly thoughtful, innovative direction and staging, coupled with technical ingenuity in lighting and costuming, would be necessary to mold this presentation into an enjoyable, informative and comprehensible evening of theatre.

The director's notes in the script state that the play consists of seven Jesse/Belle scenes and ten biographical ones which occur in a consecutive time sequence. They supposedly begin at the moment Jesse realizes he will be shot, and end as the bullet takes his life.⁴

Although that could form an intriguing and dramatic scenario, a careful reading of the play left me unable to fit the words and scenes of the script logically and cleanly into the literary structure described by the original director, Gordon Stewart. There were many incongruities, the most glaring being Jesse's awareness of the public's reaction to Bobby Ford's betrayal of him. ("It'll have to be a bullet in the back son, and there'll be no praise for you. No glory, no honor for little Bobby Ford.")⁵ How could Jesse, at the moment before his death, know that Bobby Ford's own life would be threatened because of his infamous deed.⁶

Furthermore, if the action of the evening is basically a flashing of Jesse's life before his eyes at the moment of death, why is Belle representing Quantrill, Zee, Bobby Ford, and sometimes even Jesse himself? Why wouldn't Jesse recall

those incidents in his own mind with the actual individuals visualized. And why wouldn't the playwright choose to have them portrayed realistically by different actors?

This rejection of Gordon Stewart's explanation of the script led me to pretend for a moment that I was an audience member watching these two characters, and to ask myself the question, "Who are these people and why are they telling me this?" I felt the answer would form the basis of my concept for directing the production.

One explanation which seemed able to serve as a framework for the scenes and ideas to be presented, without having to change or distort them, was that at the moment the play opens, Jesse and Belle exist in an afterlife on a plane other than our own. The time is sufficiently after their deaths to give them an historical perspective on the strength and veracity of their own lasting reputations. It followed that the time could be the present, and they could, therefore, address the audience directly.

Next, I asked myself, "Why would they want to?" What drive would motivate them to break the silence of 108 years to reach out to these playgoers? I looked to the script and found a core concept to be the exploration of the fine line between myth and reality, legend and fact. One of the major contrasts between Jesse and Belle, as author David Freeman paints them, was that Jesse actually

performed daring deeds which were the well-spring for his legend. His focus was directed toward increasingly risky acts of bravado in a constant attempt to outdistance his own feats. (Belle says to him, "So busy all the time trying to be famous.")⁷ By his actual accomplishments he hoped to earn a place in history.

Belle, on the other hand, was willing to gain her legendary status by supplying the details of her personal exploits to Richard Fox, fully aware that he would greatly exaggerate and glorify them. ("I gave my name to everybody only nobody wanted it except Mr. Richard Fox of the Police Gazette and he just made up a lot of garbage. I guess I added to the confusion but at least it was something. It was more fun being written up in them magazines than never being written up at all.")⁸ Her fame spread quickly with the subsequent exposure in the Police Gazette, and her notoriety rivaled Jesse's.

Through her contact with Jesse, Belle becomes the catalyst for Jesse's increasing concern with his image and how history will remember him. ("There are so many stories about you nobody's ever going to get it straight.")⁹ One of the major threads of character development for him involves the change from being content to do the daring deeds. He progresses to concern for how his legend will be recorded. ("It matters what they say in these things about me. I can't

let this Fox junk be the record of me.")¹⁰ Next he moves to try to document his own actions. ("I'm going to write me a whole goddamn book about me. Up to now I ain't had much control over my life, but from here on in, I am in charge of me.")¹¹

Finally, Jesse succumbs to the "reality" that his story will inevitably be distorted. He decides that the only chance he has to govern his own legend is to personally participate in the inescapable misinterpretation by knowingly altering his autobiography to read as he would, ideally, want to be remembered. ("If Richard Fox can say whatever he wants, so can I. I'm going to put in how I only stole from the rich and give to the poor when they needed it. How the railroads were the robbers stealing land from homesteaders and how I set it right, how I was a man of the people and how they loved me.")¹²

The major premise of the script I decided to emphasize was the delicate balance between myth and reality. Jesse and Belle needed, therefore, to develop their personal characterizations to show the shifting importance of fact vs. legend in their individual lives. Based on this primary theme, it seemed to make sense, structurally, to have Jesse step out of time and out of his legend (represented by a sepia-toned photograph of him which could well have come from a book on Western heroes) and speak directly to the audience. He confides, "Fat now,

yes fat. But once, Oh, once. Actually I never planned to be no bank robber, but a soldier. It just happened. That's the thing, you think you're planning your life, doing what you want to, and everybody gets it wrong."

This speech was constructed out of lines from several later places in the script.¹³ I felt it did not alter Freeman's character's thoughts or concerns. But in a confusing script, the audience had a better chance to follow the plot if they heard Jesse's position clearly stated at the first. They then could watch the biographical events unfold and make more sense of the evening in light of Jesse's opening statement.

Belle needed to similarly step out of her myth to represent herself saying, "When I wasn't pretending to be a desperado of the stage coaches, I wore a crisp white blouse and me and Venus and little Jesse, we took in the races, the circus and the county fair. Except for the gun I always tucked into the folds of my skirt, I was one first class lady."¹⁴ This speech existed, intact, at the end of the script. We merely used it at the beginning as well.

In keeping with the myth/reality theme, we hoped to convey that Jesse and Belle each had an overriding concern for posterity. The fact that an American audience today is more familiar with the movie and pulp fiction versions of their lives than with any authentic accounts of them could then produce a strong enough motivation for them to

want to step out of time and address us directly. This became the form we chose for our interpretation of the piece.

A close look at the mercurial nature of reality seems to be Freeman's point. Jesse and Belle don't present reality, only their own individual points of view. For example, Belle has a cynical perception of Quantrill as a leader. ("You was the only one who ever believed that soldier crap Quantrill dished out. At least all the others knew what they were: bunch of thug outlaws. Nothing more."¹⁵ "Instead (of King of Montana) he made you Queen of the night."¹⁶ Jesse, on the other hand, regarded his idol, Quantrill, as a God. ("Billy Quantrill was the truest, most amazing man I ever knew. When the country tried to crush him down, he just talked to God and went out and started his own country."¹⁷ "You're talking about a true hero."¹⁸)

The structure of the script consists of unrelated scenes which combine to show the major incidents which have been formative for Jesse and Belle. Since the opening scene portrayed them stepping out of their own personal myths, at the end I had the two characters retreat toward the plane of their legend (their self-portraits) and once again repeat their beginning speeches. Belle's speech was already there, we just added Jesse's. This time, however, rather than addressing the audience directly, Jesse and Belle said the lines to one another in the context of the scene.

It was as though, in their last words to one another, they wanted to summarize the important themes of their lives so that at least one person would understand them.

At this point we hoped the audience would have new insight into the meaning of the lines, and a sense that the purpose of the evening was for these two folk heroes to have one final chance to represent themselves. The viewers, ideally, would leave with a sense of the disparity between the legendary heroes and the historical individuals. They could compare how Jesse saw his own life; how others, such as Belle, saw him; and then contrast these more factual views with the folk legends they carried with them when they arrived at the theatre.

The next question I addressed was, "Who is this show about?" There was the possibility that it was only about Jesse James, only about Belle Starr, or that it had a divided focus on both characters. Initially, I decided that it was about both people, as both seem to be mentioned equally in the title. Later, I was to end up with a much different point of view.

After the first few readings of the script, enough to propose it as my final project, I came away with several clear ideas about what was necessary to transform this from a fascinating, but potentially muddled, script into a clean, succinctly presented sequence of ideas. The first order of business seemed to be a structural face-lift involving the minor script alterations already recounted. There needed to

be tighter focus achieved through technical means such as lighting, props, and costumes. These suggested an overall formalistic approach to the interpretation.

But, since Jesse James is a Western hero, it was obvious that a close look at the mythological components underlying the script and close scrutiny of archetypal symbols used would probably be very productive. The unusual closeness of Jesse and Belle for a man and woman in that time period, plus the author's obvious merging of characters (both by having them verbally change roles and physically change clothes) led me to look closely at Jung's animus/anima theories for an interpretative concept. Jung says that every person has both a male side (animus) and a female side (anima). In the process of individuation, psychological "growing up," or fully maturing to become a well-functioning adult, it is vital not only to acknowledge that opposite side of oneself, but to accept and embrace it.¹⁹

* * * * *

According to Jung, the human psyche is bisexual, though the psychological characteristics of the opposite sex in each of us are generally unconscious, revealing themselves only in dreams or in projections on someone in our environment. He gives the anima a feminine designation in the male psyche, (in the female psyche this

archetype is called the animus,) pointing out that "the 'anima-image' is usually projected upon women. It is the 'soul-image,' the spirit of man's elan vital, his life force or vital energy. In this sense, anima is the contra-sexual part of man's psyche, the image of the opposite sex that he carries both in his personal and his collective unconscious."²⁰

Such figures as Helen of Troy, Dante's Beatrice, and Milton's Eve are, by Jung's reasoning, personifications of the anima. He suggests that any female figure in literature who is invested with unusual significance or power is likely to be a symbol of the hero's anima.²¹

Certainly in the 1880's it was not as socially acceptable to embrace or exhibit the feminine side of one's self as it is today, in an age when Boy George is a teen cult figure. However, Jung says the animus/anima division of the personality accounts for "love at first sight" and subsequent passionate and faithful unions. A man who may not even be aware of his own feminine half may instinctively recognize an affinity for a woman who reflects his own feminine patterns. In other words, he is drawn to a woman who is what he would want to be if he were a woman, or who mirrors the feminine attributes he has subconsciously embraced.²²

Despite the reality that Jesse James and Belle Starr met only briefly and had no known sexual involvement, the

romantic novelist and film writer have long paired them as the perfect lovers. Playwright Freeman follows this tradition, and so it seemed fitting to see Jesse and Belle's mutual need and admiration as an outgrowth of their being an anima/animus reflection of one another's hidden half. Both Jesse and Belle have scenes where they take on the persona of the other sex. Jesse loses the feminine side of himself to serve as a decoy for Quantrill (a socially acceptable excuse for donning women's clothes,) and Belle first dresses as a man to rob the Indian (a necessity when women's status and clothing did not aid in illegal terrorizing and provide for quick escapes on horseback.) Later Belle plays Jesse, himself, both in the Wild West show and at the moment of his death.

A principle motif for the characterizations of Jesse and Belle was drawn from Jung's theory. We viewed them as compatible halves who, together, formed the whole of the great American hero and, also, the whole of an archetypal mature, loving and interdependent couple. All subsequent character choices were made to fit into this major image.

Such an interpretation gave new contrast to the scenes between Belle and Jesse and the ones with Zee and Jesse. Zee became more of a nag and whiner, not only because Belle was impersonating her and coloring her version with envy and jealousy, but because Jesse and Zee were not content. We chose to play the Jesse/Belle encounters as the times when

Jesse found intellectual and sexual fulfillment with someone who also understood and needed the same excitement and action he craved.

There then became a thread of plot which we wove to connect Jesse and Belle from the first anima/animus attraction at the Inn throughout the rest of their lives. Although both married others, they remained bound by mutual love and need. As Jesse says simply, but profoundly, "I married Zee, but I never left Belle. I couldn't live with her and I couldn't live without her."²³

This approach also changed the color of the Jesse/Belle scenes which, other than the one at the Inn, we played as pre-sex or post-sex scenes. It served to diffuse some of the anger and irritability which could conceivably be read into the dialogue. Instead, the repartee came out as routine, razor-edged humor, familiar teasing, and comfortable directness which Jesse and Belle consistently employed with one another. The tone of their conversations showed the security and depth of their longstanding relationship. Belle tells Jesse that even though they are not married they have a union that remains as "regular and permanent" as the one he has with Zee.²⁴

With both the major theme of Jesse and the Bandit Queen and the individual characterizations heavily rooted in the concept of myth vs. reality, I next looked for universal archetypal symbols that could be germane. I decided that

the Yin-Yang concept related closely to Jesse and the Bandit Queen on many levels. Yin-Yang is an ancient Chinese symbol representing the union of opposite forces of the Yang (masculine principle, light, activity and the conscious mind) and the Yin (female principle, darkness, passivity, the unconscious).²⁵ Several dimensions of the script revolved around the exploration of two opposing forces which fluxuated within the confines of a whole: anima/animus, reality/myth, actual deed/fictional account, guerrilla heroes/outlaw renegades, security/adventure, love/dependency, violence/compassion, and dominance/submission.

I decided to use the Yin-Yang symbol both as a psychological concept for characterization and as a visual background to the symbolic horse and rider on the posters and programs. On the printed poster the dividing line on the circle was erroneously placed in front of the Jesse and Belle figures. It was also, inadvertently, left off the art work for the program. Ideally, however, Belle, the party symbolically in control, mounted on Jesse/Venus, was to be bursting forth from the pages of a reproduction of the original cover of one of Beadle's Half Dime Novels to attempt to alter their legends as recorded therein.

* * * * *

By this point I was ready to seriously reevaluate the question, "Who is this play about?" I decided it had

the most concise dramatic focus if it was about Jesse James and his process of individuation. Belle Starr was an integral part of that development. Without her, there would not have been the same Jesse, and because of the impact she had on his life, he eventually becomes "Jesse Starr." She is the archetypal woman who represents the Great Mother and the mysteries of life, death and transformation. She also is seen as the Soul Mate, the incarnation of inspiration and spiritual fulfillment.²⁶ Jesse seemingly rejects her ideas, but subsequently uses them as his own. He would never willingly admit, however, how heavily influenced he was by her.

Jesse and the Bandit Queen is significantly not named Jesse and Belle Starr. The bandit queen of the title could refer to both Belle and her formative influence and to "bandit queen" as Belle's teasing label for Jesse, referring to his stint as a lure for Quantrill. ("Lock up your daughters, hide your wives, here comes Jesse James the bandit queen.")²⁷

With this approach, the random scenes take on a clear structural form. Each is about Jesse and someone who was influential in his life. Even the scenes which seem to focus on Belle show episodes which change her in a way that eventually affects Jesse. The scene with Richard Fox leads to her fame through dime novels. This ultimately

motivates Jesse to write his own book. The seduction scene with Eddie ends with Belle saying, "Pearl and Ed went away, and I went looking for Jesse...I married Henry Starr and John Starr and Sam Starr and my babies run off together and I was never happy till my Jesse Starr come back."²⁸

Another structural tightening I used was to acknowledge that even if the scenes were not a moment of death flashback, the dramatic action of the script did, indeed, unfold between the first threat by Bobby Ford and the eventual gunshot. I felt the momentum of the show should build to Jesse's death, certainly the most familiar part of the script to the audience. Then the story is over. Jesse and Belle have finished their appeal for understanding and head back to their platforms to wrap up their philosophies in their final speeches.

However, the script inserted a scene, with Jesse as Belle and Belle playing Eddie, after Jesse's death. In it, Belle/Eddie stabs and kills Jesse/Belle. It was, no doubt, originally intended to show Belle's death as a parallel to Jesse's. But Belle's death at the hands of her own son has no basis in either history or legend. Belle was not stabbed by Eddie, even in rumor. Once having presented the historically fictitious, but dramatically arresting convention that Jesse and Belle were lovers, the remainder of the script had remained relatively accurate. At least the important

biographical information had some validity. It seemed unnecessary to introduce this new, blatantly erroneous material.

If the plot were being drawn as a study of parallel lives, Belle's death would be a necessity. But since I had chosen, rather, to make this Jesse's story, it seemed superfluous and confusing. Furthermore, it was anticlimactic and detracted from the peak of the action: Jesse's death. So, I left it out.

* * * * *

Biographically, Jesse's history fits very accurately into the script and very neatly into the archetype of the American hero. Briefly, he was a product, and later a surrogate representative of the middle class. Standing 5'10" and weighing 165 lbs., he had ordinary brown eyes and dark hair. The only distinguishing physical mark on him was that the first joint of the middle finger of his left hand was missing, a noticeable feature on a left-handed man. Jesse, a Missouri farm boy, had a limited education and could barely read and write. We tried to capitalize on that bit of knowledge whenever he read anything other than his own writing. Contemporaries of Jesse credit his older brother, Frank, with the strategy for the gang. Jesse's claim to fame was for his bravery. They say he "delighted

in deeds of violence," and that there was "not a trace of mercy in his nature." He was variously described as revengeful, sanguine, impetuous, and almost heedless.²⁹

Miss Zerelda Mimms was Jesse's cousin. They were married in the autumn of 1874, and had one little boy and a baby girl at the time of Jesse's death. He was, indeed, treacherously gunned down by Bobby Ford.³⁰

In keeping with the mythological/archetypal interpretation of the script I had chosen, I found that folklore specialists have isolated four cumulative steps in the transformation of an ordinary criminal into a legendary folk hero. Jesse's life neatly follows this pattern typical in the process of the heroization of deviant behavior:³¹

1. He had basic personality traits, physical attributes and the striking activities of a hero. (He was colorful, eccentric, charismatic and did things with a flair.)

2. There was the imputation of traits and activities to the hero that he did not necessarily possess or engage in in real life. The hero is the embodiment of what the group members of the culture most highly prize in behavior and values. He must conform in those areas to the group's standards if they are to accept and revere his behavior. (Jesse was reputed to have been brave, skilled, and self-respecting; he loved his Mother, had a sense of fair play

and displayed manliness rather than effeminacy.)

3. The biographers who left a record of the hero and his deeds were less than scientific. (There were many different accounts of Jesse's exploits, including Richard Fox's. There was both a printed and an oral tradition.)

4. There were villains, the scapegoats, the hate symbols for people who were oppressed and deprived; they were a negative model to be feared and hated. (Jesse repeatedly defies the banks and the railroads, consistently winning over the Eastern/Union conglomerates which his followers despised. (Belle portrays Jesse in the Wild West show as saying, "You sir have an excess of earthly riches and there are homesteaders and little people who have not at all. I am here to set that aright. Now. Stand and deliver.")³²

Dr. Michael Owen Jones, an expert in the field of folklore, has outlined typical life histories of such celebrated public figures as Pretty Boy Floyd Collins, Bonnie Parker, and Clyde Barrow. He also includes Jesse James as an example of a renegade who exhibits a biographical pattern common to all American outlaw heroes:

1. Absence of father during childhood. Jesse's father, Reverend James, left the family to go to California and look after the spiritual needs of those looking for gold. There was some speculation that it was also to escape the

sharp tongue of his wife, Zeralda, but he wrote her loving letters once he arrived. However, he did not return, and eventually Jesse's mother remarried.³⁴

2. Notable childhood experiences which shaped or revealed his character (may have happened to other family members.) Jesse was sixteen when he "took to the brush" with his cousins and brothers. Their hiding for safety was prompted after Federal militiamen, led by Captain James Walley, murdered his cousin Cole's father. He joined Quantrill's band to seek revenge when his mother and younger sister were unjustly jailed.

3. Factors allegedly precipitating deviant behavior. Missouri was a border state during the Civil War, but her sympathies were pro-Confederate. She was, further, a slave state. Kansas and Nebraska, the bordering territories were ready to vote for statehood. It was commonly assumed that Kansas would be a slave state and Nebraska a free state.

However, as the elections neared, the abolitionists began to recruit anti-slavery families to settle in Kansas in an attempt to sway the election to the free state side. Missourian slave owners became concerned with their potential losses should a slave need only to slip a few miles away and over the Kansas line to be free. In this political climate, Missouri guerrilla bands like Quantrill's began

border wars against their Kansas counterparts, such as the group led by the famous John Brown.

Union troops were sent in to try to suppress the fighting, but Army leaders tended to side with the abolitionists, and reprisals were especially harsh for Missouri offenders. With their own crops, livestock, businesses, and the lives of their families threatened, residents across the countryside were quick to offer aid and a quiet hiding place to the groups of their sons, cousins, and neighbors' boys who were striking back at the enemy on their behalf. In fact, these young men became heroes.³⁵

4. Justification of deviancy. Once the war was over, the guerrilla skills were easily transferred to attack a new authority based in the North, the banks and railroads. The gangs continued doing the same deeds they had done during the war years. Then, the raids had gained them social status and the grateful admiration of the people. The same farms and farmers continued to give aid and shelter to the same boys, even though the law rather than the Army was after them. Whether they were running from soldiers, enemy guerrillas, or deputies, Missourians saw no reason to deny sanctuary to their own.³⁶

Quantrill originally fought on the Union side in Kansas, but once captured, he managed to convince his oppressors he had only been spying and his true loyalties

rested with the South. Cole Younger and the other Younger boys, as well as Jesse's brother, Frank, were part of the infamous Quantrill's raiders. Jesse did ride with him for a short time, but he may have been a little young to have joined them for the raid at Lawrence, Kansas. Historians can't document his participation.³⁷

5. A series of escapes in which the hero played a major role. Notable crimes, escapes, and assistance to others. Jesse gained fame as a member of Quantrill's Raiders, for the James gang's bank and train robberies, and particularly for his own almost miraculous escape from the Northfield, Minnesota ambush. Most of the rest of his gang was either killed or captured and sentenced to lengthy prison terms. Playwright Daniel Freeman supports and emphasizes the importance of this point in the creation of a folk hero. In Jesse and the Bandit Queen, Belle as Jesse says, "Only I am Jesse, golden Jesse. Hunt for me, pursue me, chase me across the prairie and I will find you. I am your one true hero and you will love me more when I am dead because this country's greatest fear is not for its heroes, but of them."³⁸

There are many archetypal legends of Jesse's good deeds floating through the word of mouth family histories of Missouri families. To hear the accounts, one would think that every resident of the state between 1865 and 1882 had a personal encounter with the outlaw. One of the

most common tales involves Jesse stopping for a meal and shelter with a widow. She gladly takes the gang into her home, although there is little to share. While there, Jesse learns that the bank is about to foreclose on her house. He gives her the gold to pay off the mortgage and hides while she invites the banker to her home and clears her debt in full. Jesse and his gang ride off, while the widow stands happily and gratefully clutching the deed to her ranch. Down the road, Jesse and his men stop the banker on his way back to town and relieve him of "their gold."³⁹

6. Death by treachery with or without a Judas figure. Bob Ford met with Governor Thomas F. Crittenden at a Kansas City hotel and agreed to "go after Jesse" if the State of Missouri would dismiss certain charges against his brother, Charley, and if the reward of ten thousand dollars offered for Jesse would be paid for taking him dead or alive.⁴⁰ Missouri politicians were being criticized for the lawlessness allowed to flourish freely in their state. It had become an election issue, and Governor Crittenden willingly agreed Ford's terms. ("You know the governor's making speeches about me? A whole speech just about me. How I'm a menace to the community of free peace loving people, or some crap like that.")⁴¹

In October, 1881, one month after his only known contact with Belle Starr, Jesse made a brief visit to his

home in Kearney, Missouri, where he met Charley Ford and agreed to shelter him from the law. No doubt he was keenly aware of how often he had been similarly aided by total strangers. Zerelda, Jesse, and their son and daughter, calling themselves the Thomas Howard family, moved to St. Louis, Missouri in November, 1881. Charley and Bob Ford were their house guests. Biographer Glenn Shirley recounts, "On the morning of April 3, 1881, while the renowned outlaw was standing on a chair brushing the dust off a wall picture, the 'dirty little coward' Bob Ford entered the room and sent a pistol bullet crashing through Jesse's brain."⁴²

* * * * *

Belle Starr had an equally interesting life, even before it underwent "literary enhancement." In fact, it is necessary to consider even more of her detailed biographical information than Jesse's, because more of it specifically relates to an understanding of Jesse and the Bandit Queen.

Belle's age and birth date vary with biographers, but the most reputable scholars seem to place her birth on February 5, 1848. This would make her 17 in 1865, and set the scene at the Inn in that historical year. She died on February 3, 1889, at the age of 41, having outlived Jesse by roughly seven years.⁴³

Belle's family was a successful one. Her father, John Shirley from Louisville, Virginia, married Elizabeth

(Eliza) Hatfield, who was related to the feuding Hatfields of West Virginia and Kentucky.⁴⁴ Belle was born Myra Maybelle, the fourth of five children, and she was affectionately called "May" by the family. It was a nickname she hated. Although Belle did not actually meet Jesse at her father's Inn at Carthage, Missouri, the Inn was a reality.

One of Myra's schoolmates, Mrs. James Brummet, tells her impressions of the girl and substantiates Freeman's characterization of Belle:

"Myra was inclined to flaunt her prominence as a little rich girl of Carthage. She grew up a hotel child, always with an audience. Many flattered her accomplishments beyond their worth, others encouraged her with small gifts and requests for recitals on the piano, and teasing strangers sparked the last bit of fire in her volcanic temperament one minute and spoiled her the next, just to pass the time. Two interests obsessed her: horses and the outdoors."⁴⁵

We enjoyed playing that the Jesse/Belle at the Inn scene showed the first time Myra substituted the more glamorous "Belle" for the hated "May" when asked her name. She was out to impress the young, good looking stranger. As Belle later admits to Jesse, "I was so hot to get out of Carthage and that goddamned hotel, I'd have gone off with any dog that asked."⁴⁶

In 1863, the Shirleys moved to Scyene, Texas (at that time located ten miles southeast of Dallas) to join Belle's eldest brother, Preston. Being 16 years older than Belle, he was married with a family of his own which he had moved south earlier that same year. All the rest of the family soon

followed him in order to escape the battles of bloody reprisal prevalent in Missouri. Belle's third brother, "Bud," had recently been killed in such a skirmish, and John Shirley's business had been ruined by post-war theft and destruction.⁴⁷

Within three years, Myra, now 18, married 20 year old Jim Reed. They were wed on November 1, 1866, in Colin County, Texas. By the end of the year 1867, they moved quietly back to Bates County, Missouri to live with Jim's family and to escape the law in Texas.⁴⁸ Jim continued his illegal activities, mostly robberies, and "holed up" often with a notorious Indian outlaw, Tom Starr, at his ranch a short distance from Muskogee (Oklahoma).⁴⁹

Belle's daughter, Pearl, was born in 1868. Her given name was Rosie Lee Reed. But the dotting mother called the new baby her "pearl," and thus she gained the nickname which was to follow her for the rest of her life.⁵⁰ There is no reason to suspect that this was Cole Younger's baby, as suggested in the script. ("When my father found out I had Cole's baby he tried to kill me.")⁵¹ A popular legend does, however, link Belle and Cole romantically and mention that he fathered her daughter. On February 22, 1871, Belle had a baby boy. He was named James Edwin for his father and another slain brother of Myra's, but he was called Eddie from the first.⁵²

Eventually, John F. Morris, a former peace officer and distant relative of the Reeds, was authorized as a special deputy from Colin County and was sent north to capture Reed and his gang. They were sorely wanted for a San Antonio stage robbery. Reed was killed as he tried to escape.⁵³

Belle next married Sam Starr, old Indian Tom's son. The wedding took place in the early summer of 1880. Belle was 27 and Sam was 23. But as Glenn Shirley puts it, "Belle came out of the ceremony 5 years younger. Now Belle had her most noted appellation."⁵⁴

Sam and Belle had a ranch at Younger's Bend, and many outlaws took advantage of their hospitality until they were less sought after by the law. There is reason to believe Jesse James could have visited Sam and Belle after the Blue Cut robbery in September, 1881, but there is no suggestion that Belle, married just over a year, had any romantic association with him. This is their only known contact and it probably lasted no more than three days.⁵⁵

Belle's love for her horse, Venus, is historically substantiated. ("I had a horse that I loved more than any man. A mare, a brown and white mare. I called her Venus.")⁵⁶ In fact, she allowed no one to ride the animal except herself. Once Sam Starr "borrowed" Venus without Belle's knowledge

and rode her in a hold-up. In the ensuing chase, Venus was accidentally shot and killed, but Sam escaped through a cornfield. Several weeks later, however, both outlaw and lawman appeared at a party together. Belle had been so upset over the loss of Venus that Sam approached John West to reprimand him for shooting the horse. An argument followed, and Sam Starr was shot and killed.⁵⁷

Belle found that, as a woman alone, she would not be allowed to keep title to the ranch at Younger's Bend. Furthermore, since it was in Indian Territory, she needed an Indian husband if she intended to retain her property. In 1887, Belle, now 39, married Jim July Starr, 24. He was Sam's cousin.⁵⁸

Although Belle's name is connected to Blue Duck's in the script, ("You are my Indian boy. Blue Duck, my own cruel Cherokee.")⁵⁹ she was never married to him. Blue Duck was an Indian boy charged with murder. Since Belle had achieved considerable notoriety, and had boasted two Indian husbands, the accused's attorney asked her to be photographed with him. The picture of the two was published May 24, 1886, to renew attention to the convicted killer's plight and his attorney's efforts to obtain a presidential commutation to life imprisonment. It was granted. There is no proof that Belle was acquainted with Blue Duck before she met him in the Fort Smith jail, and she did not see him afterwards.⁶⁰

Other script anecdotes have more factual support. The Judge Parker scene was virtually accurate. Belle did later serve some time in the federal prison at Detroit. And there is an interesting basis for the Rosa McCommas line. (Belle tells Richard Fox, "and in the evenings I became Rosa McComus (sic) --the spitfire of the plains, Queen of the dance hall.")⁶¹

In order to savor the irony of that line, one must understand some background details. The real Rosa was 18 when Belle was 26. Biographer Burton Roscoe says, "Rosa McCommas" was "a schoolmate of Belle's at Scyene" whom Belle disliked because of her superior position "as the daughter of Elder Amon McCommas; pretty, while Belle was little more than plain."⁶²

Later Belle had even more reason to dislike Rosa when her first husband, Jim Reed, had an affair with the younger, more attractive woman. Jim often allowed Rosa to accompany him on raids. Belle was especially incensed when Rosa, who was a less daring, less skilled horsewoman, was mistakenly assumed to be Belle herself.⁶³

* * * * *

With these pronounced geographical backgrounds, the dialect both characters used was a Missouri drawl. Both Jesse and Belle make grammatical errors which we isolated.

Many of them were appropriate for the time and social class from which these personalities sprang.

Specifically, Belle often uses nothing instead of anything, no rather than any, ain't, and the colloquial "this here." Jesse's errors are more frequent and more glaring: whyn't, don't need no, seen us, that don't mean, his self, and they wasn't. As the story unfolds and Belle presents an increasingly tough image, her swearing increases, both because of the desire to shock and because of her long association with Jesse and his cursing.

These speech patterns fit with biographical information to justify character choices in which Belle becomes the smarter, better educated party from a higher social class. The Carthage Academy education can be historically substantiated. Jesse was inferior, intellectually and educationally, and acted more on impulse.

This polarization of intelligence and schooling set up a hidden sub-plot substantiating the concept that Belle was a crucial part of Jesse's development. The motif we played was that Jesse was aware that Belle was smarter, but his masculine ego wouldn't let him admit it. So Belle would give advice which he would angrily and loudly reject, but at the same time he would adopt the ideas as his own.

Belle quickly learned how to plant ideas in Jesse's mind. One of the best examples is the shaving scene. Belle

says, "Me and a few selected friends and that does not include you, are going to stop us a train. A whole goddamn train full of money."⁶⁴ Jesse's competitive nature is aroused, and with a "Now that's a first class A number one idea. You don't have many but when you do, it's A number one,"⁶⁵ which we had him throw off with only half a thought, he arrives at his own brilliant idea. "Belle I think maybe I'm going to invent me the train robbery."⁶⁶ He does not acknowledge in any way that it was identical to Belle's idea which she had presented only seconds before.

Belle stands behind him in loving amusement. She has accomplished what she set out to do, which was to divert him from banks. They were becoming increasingly dangerous to rob. ("Well now that every stripe suit banker in the country's waiting for you, what're you going to do? Them banks is nothing but great big mouse traps. (You) Squeakie little mouse. Banks is all played out. Done.")⁶⁷ This scene shows her in her soul-mate role as the "incarnation of inspiration,"⁶⁸ and illuminates how influential she was in shaping Jesse.

Out of this idea for character relationships we further began to develop the idea that another Yin-Yang fluxuation was in terms of who held the power at any given moment. With Jesse and Belle the answer to that question changed frequently. Tying this struggle for power into

the earlier idea of appearance vs. reality, we analyzed the scenes to decide, first, who seemed to have the power on the surface of the scene, and secondly, who really had it. Then we selected the exact moment at which the power shifted, and further pinpointed when each character became aware of the change. This was most beneficial in providing a solid understructure for the acting in the seemingly random scenes.

With the exception of the Quantrill encounter, Jesse is usually in power in all of his scenes with secondary characters. Likewise, Belle is usually in control of her scenes. Even with Judge Parker, although he appears to have the upper hand, Belle in reality is controlling what happens to her own best advantage. Only when Jesse and Belle appear together do they each have someone who challenges them and is a worthy adversary in the game of power. Therein lies another thread which binds them to each other.

Certainly the idea to plot the power flow of the script provided the key to unlock the interpretation of the horse/rider scenes. Those tableaux, which end both Act I and Act II, are dramatically riveting, but somewhat enigmatic. If my initial, self-defined goal was to present a clear, coherent story to the audience, I felt it was imperative to motivate those scenes logically. As they were obviously focal points at the end of each act they had to culminate something.

We chose to have them be an insight into the progress of the power struggle. At the end of Act I, Belle has been picking at Jesse verbally, suggesting that with all the publicity Jesse has lost track of who he really is. He takes it for awhile, seemingly engrossed in the Police Gazette, until she strikes a nerve. Then he grabs her wrist and says, "I know who I am Belle. It's other people including you who have trouble figuring it out."⁶⁹

Soon after, Belle regains the upper hand with the help of the straight razor. But Jesse is physically stronger, and is able to take her over to the bed and mount her like a horse. In a flamboyant show of power he says, "I am the real Jesse. The only one. Only I am Jesse..."⁷⁰ But Belle has the last word, "Starr. Jesse Starr. The only Jesse Starr."⁷¹ She means that although he can overpower her with brute strength, he is only the other half of a relationship in which she is dominant. (Symbolized by the man taking the woman's last name at marriage, rather than vice versa.) This struggle for power seems to be the only unresolved dramatic tension which flows across the intermission to await final resolution in Act II.

At the end of Act II, we reprised the initial speeches Jesse and Belle used to establish their characters. The glaring difference this time was that they spoke them directly to one another as a part of the scene. When the partner

finally understood , Jesse and Belle's driving need to represent themselves to the audience was dissipated. They turn to head back to their polarized extra-terrestrial planes to spend the rest of eternity separately. But Belle, significantly not Jesse, takes control and says, "Come, Venus." Jesse knows what she means and willingly comes to join her center stage. He voluntarily becomes her horse, Venus, and allows her to mount.

For his last words, he chooses, "Jesse Starr," and by that he admits he knows she has been the formative influence in his life. He acknowledges that in the union of horse and rider, he is indeed the horse while she is the one who holds the reins. She has always controlled the direction both of them would go. Jesse has given Belle a most precious parting gift in that he has finally said what she has always wanted him to say, and finally realizes the one thing she has always wanted him to know.

For her last words, Belle returns the gesture by saying the one thing that Jesse has longed to hear from her lips. She lovingly and graciously says, "The only Jesse Starr." She is saying that although she was a part of what Jesse became, he is nonetheless unique, special, and memorable.

Both of them have won, because they have stopped trying to hoard power, now seeing the happiness possible

by sharing it. They combine their different but equally valuable strengths to form a whole as a horse and rider. And so they are able to escape separate, lonely eternities and are, instead, able to live together as one in our memories. We have joined them as the perfect lovers and the wholeness of Yin/Yang and the myth of the American hero is completed.

* * * * *

The only question left is that of the relative strength of reality vs. myth. The author clearly resolves the script to make the point that what people want to believe is infinitely stronger and longer lasting than truth. I felt the play, though intriguing, had some glaring problems, and I found concurrence from some of the New York critics as they evaluated the original production. Many spots are "interesting" which is a euphuism for unclear, confusing and structurally weak.

If one directs Jesse and the Bandit Queen honestly, it necessitates sitting down and pinpointing specifically where each character transition occurs. Many places are extremely obvious; others are maddeningly elusive. A second, and even more frustrating task is to decide line by line what time frame the character is in and who he is talking to at any given moment.

The playwright sometimes has Jesse and Belle address the audience directly and set up the up-coming scene with an explanatory monologue. But the device lacks consistency. With the addition of the beginning and ending speeches and careful dissection of confusing, poorly notated diatribes, we were able to use a semblance of the author's pattern throughout. I think that the structural clarity we attempted was instrumental in helping the audience see more than an entertaining blur of costumes, props, and acting virtuosity.

After the initial tidying of the form, I tried to supplement the literary framework through technical means. As initially written and performed, according to Samuel French's staging notations, the props were moved about the stage in a rather random fashion. For example, while talking about the business at hand in Scene 3, Jesse might arbitrarily be instructed by the script to move costumes and props about the stage in order to set up for the following scene or other subsequent scenes.

As both an actress and a director, I find myself more comfortable as things approach realism. Particularly with a wandering script, I felt any landmarks of logic I could provide for the audience would help. I hoped to leave their minds free to watch the story rather than to be preoccupied with trying to figure out what was going on.

So we worked within the frustrating, but challenging, guideline that although props for future scenes must, indeed,

be set up on stage in full view of the audience, we would realistically motivate all prop and costume handling. We wanted to make it appear to be a necessary and believable part of the scene in which it occurred. The logistics were mind-boggling (no doubt the reason the problem was side-stepped in earlier productions,) but I think the show's ability to hold interest was aided by the convention in which the audience never saw anything pre-set, yet everything was at the actor's fingertips when he needed it.

Similarly, the costume changes in the published script took place at distracting moments. For example, it is all well and good to have Belle portray Quantrill by adding her shawl, but if she spends the last of the preceding scene at the Inn draping herself in a "baldric-like manner" the audience might well spend the time thinking about her actions rather than listening to the important plot points of the scene.

Stretching our imaginations, skill, and sense of timing, we sought to make each costume change occur unobtrusively. Our goal was that each character would have a specific costume to identify him, and he could be visible in it only at the moment the actor transformed himself into that role. Any onstage, visible changes within a scene had to be realistically motivated.

Furthermore, our costume choices were affected by the script which pointedly emphasized that people relate

to legends found in their collective unconscious more easily than they do to historical accuracy. As a model for the appearance of Jesse and Belle, we chose the look of the cowboy moview of the 1950's. That would, no doubt, be the source of the audience's preconceived ideas about Western men and women in the 1880's. Authentically costumed, Belle's hosiery would have been black cotton stockings held up by garters. That did not give us the glamorous image we sought and the garters would have made lumps under her close fitting riding skirt, so we unself-consciously used black nylons.

Similarly, Jesse would have worn a brown or black wool coat when he had his picture taken and a long "Union soldier" looking overcoat or a poncho for riding with his gang. But we needed one costume piece that said cowboy hero and could be appropriate for both the picture and the scenes when he comes in off the trail. It had to identify Belle as Jesse in the Wild West show and in the role switches at the end of Act II. It also had to be equally appropriate for Belle to wear in the "Rain robber" scene and for Jesse to use for Judge Parker.

We chose a brown suede jacket similar to the one traditionally worn by the ranch foreman in the old cowboy movies. That seemed to correspond best to what the audience might picture on Jesse James, despite its historical inaccuracy.

Ideas from numerous pictures of authentic cowboys were combined to give us the inspiration for the rest of Jesse's outfit. We even looked carefully at the way they stood when they posed for their pictures and attempted to recreate a common stance for Jesse's photo.

Richard Fox needed to be easily identified as an Easterner, so we used a plaid coat, a derby, and had him smoke a big cigar to again tie into the RKO or Republic image of the wheeler-dealer from the East. Scarvey McCargo had outrageous fringe on his jacket to instantly trigger a show business image. In the same scene, Jesse, played by Belle, was costumed with a theatrically oversized, crimson satin neckerchief.

The script called for Jesse to wear chaps, but the technical difficulty inherent in his getting them on and off quickly and easily led us to abandon them. Had Jesse established his image in chaps, Belle would have had to put them on each time she portrayed Jesse, and the size difference between the two performers would have made that a serious problem. The characterization did not seem to suffer in any way because Jesse did not wear chaps. Although we had to forego that touch of authenticity, we were lucky enough to have a left-handed actor to play the left-handed Jesse James. We were even able to find a left-handed holster, which was what the real Jesse would have worn.

With both Jesse and Belle, the speed and ease with which costumes could be changed held equal importance with design. Belle, especially, had to be able to layer all her costumes over one another in order to change almost instantly. Her wine velvet dress was chosen first for its similarity to her illustration on the cover of Bella Starr, the Bandit Queen or the Female Jesse James, but then altered to give more of a film heroine image. Both the bodice and skirt needed to be quickly removable, and large enough to fit over all other costumes. The wine red color is an archetypal symbol for blood, which seemed appropriate for the lawlessness of Belle's character.

The costume plot called for Zee to be recognized by Belle adding a "wine colored half inch velvet ribbon" to her hair. That didn't seem a dramatic enough change in her appearance to allow the audience to realize Belle was now playing Jesse's wife, so we substituted a housecoat type wrapper. It was designed to cover most of Belle's vividly colored dress and also to tie into stereotypical housewife imagery.

Several scenes seemed to need a costume not listed in the script. "Rain robber," which showed Jesse and Belle just after a holdup, if played at all realistically necessitated a more practical feminine riding outfit than a wine velvet dress. Whatever was chosen also had to be compatible with

the brown suede jacket of Jesse's which Belle was to wear.

We added a dark green wool pant/skirt, a camisole undergarment, and a riding blouse. Belle's riding clothes, at least the culotte skirt and camisole top, were actual garments from the 1880's. Belle is shown wearing a similar skirt in a painting published in Belle Starr. There is also a bronze statue of her in Bartlesville, Ohio that shows the accuracy of the length and fullness of the culottes. A divided skirt was a functional necessity for the scenes where Belle gets astride Jesse's shoulders or back.

The corset attached to a camisole suggested by the script became a separate boned costume piece in our production. For the sake of the actress' comfort, it was worn only in Act II. The addition of the trail clothes alleviated any need for the terre cotta, cotton-eyelet, knee-length pantaloons listed in the costume plot, so they were cut as well.

Belle was to wear a floor length cape over her main dress, but we could find no pictures or written descriptions which connected the real Belle Starr with capes. It was an awkward garment to manipulate, and was used exclusively at the beginning and the end of the show. When trying to include the cape, the flow from scene to scene was disrupted as the performer tried to find a way to pick it up or to get rid of it. It was not possible to motivate its handling realistically, so we cut it.

Instead, Belle established the shawl as her trademark, much as the suede jacket was Jesse's. It had a home atop her piano, and was used for young Belle at the Inn and for her impersonation of Quantrill. Later, Jesse made use of that bond between the shawl and Belle when he assumed her identity.

Colors chosen for Jesse and the Bandit Queen stayed primarily within the color palette of nature: browns, beiges, golds and greens. The neutral set blended well with these hues, and Jesse and Belle had a character bond drawn by harmonious colors. The exceptions to this color scheme were the oranges for Fox and Scarvey which placed them as outsiders or characters in conflict with Belle.

Other deliberate exceptions were Belle's wine dress and her purple dance hall garb. By choosing vivid and unusual colors for a woman of that period, we wanted to make a comment on the brazenness of Belle's character. The final deviation from natural colors was in Zee's wrapper. It was originally intended to make her appear drab compared to Belle. However, it ended up with pink ruffles which made her appear to be a sweet, feminine mistreated wife. That costume worked against the characterization of a whining, nagging mate who drove Jesse back to Belle again and again.

A third technical device I attempted was to distinguish between three types of scenes with lighting changes. My

re-shaped script fell neatly into scenes in which Belle and Jesse do monologues directly to the audience, scenes in which they are together playing themselves, and scenes in which they interact with secondary characters. Those in the first category were blocked to fall in the throw of tightly focused specials, for a spotlight effect. The second type of scene was lit with realistic, apparent white. Character scenes called for a distinct amber cast.

Behind these specific lighting choices lay the concept that the speeches to the audience were attempts to communicate directly. Jesse and Belle, at those moments, needed to be free from the distractions of time, place and set. A spotlight effect, illuminating only their bodies, was selected as a way to help isolate them. When Jesse and Belle did their biographical scenes, we hoped to convey that somehow we were able to look in on their lives as they were actually in the process of living them. These portions of the play, therefore, called for the most realistic lighting. By contrast, the episodes when Jesse and Belle portrayed important people in each other's lives illustrated occasions when we, in essence, looked into their psychological scrapbooks. In an attempt to capture that mood, the color changed toward that of a sepia-toned portrait to suggest the flashback in time.

Technical limitations made the implementation of the lighting design less than ideally effective, but I think with

more sophisticated equipment it would be a valuable enhancement to the acting transitions.

It was never our intention that the subtleties of meaning underlying the lighting changes would be fully comprehensible to the audience. For the actors, however, accenting the character shifts by visual means other than their own physicalization and costume adjustments gave them a more precise way to time the transitions. It also helped them select the acting focus for the scene, i.e., speaking directly to the audience or to another character on stage. In amber-colored scenes the acting style could be broader for the secondary characters, but it had to return to a more realistic interpretation for the Jesse/Belle meetings. Disciplining ourselves to minutely pinpoint a lighting structure forced us to make clearer acting choices. This, in turn, enabled the audience to follow more easily. Even without being a party to the subtext of the lighting decisions, they knew they were being cued that a new scene was beginning when the lights changed.

The fourth technical attempt to clarify the stage action for the audience involved careful arrangement and use of the stage. Jesse's area lay to the stage right half of the set. His desk and rocker were permanently down right and his "eternal plane," or "Jesse platform," as we more mundanely labeled it, was up right.

When Belle played Quantrill, who imprinted himself strongly on Jesse's life, she stood on Jesse's series of platforms on the second level. (R-2) When she made the transition from her amateur actor impersonation of Jesse in the Wild West show to realizing that to many people her side show version was their only contact with Jesse, she moved from her own second level left platform to Jesse's. Then as she assumed the role with more believability, she moved to the up right plane which represented Jesse in his ultimate place as a legend. Jesse and Zee played their scenes with his space opened out to include the "Howard platform." (USC) This also became the Howard house when Belle came to visit in Scene 15, and when Bobby Ford shot Jesse.

Belle had the left side of the stage designated as hers, and the piano was her most important piece of furniture. She is there in the scenes when Jesse visits her at the Inn, it is her bedroom for the shaving scene, and it becomes her dance hall in Scene 18.

When Jesse and Belle met for their mutual scenes, they came together at the bed center stage or in the neutral area down stage center. Jesse assumed a position of power as Judge Parker behind his own desk, and Belle took the witness stand against him, strongly and confidently, from the piano which was her own home ground.

The Wild West show occupied center stage, both USC and DSC, and included both the Jesse and Belle series of rising platforms. That became the "acting" area. As a result, Jesse used the identical area to act out his own version of "the death of Jesse James."

The potentially confusing transition toward the end, when Jesse became Belle to tell about his own death, proved easier to bring off when the actor could put on Belle's shawl, mount Belle's platform and stand in front of her larger than life portrait. Few audience members should have had trouble figuring out, "he's suppose to be Belle." Conversely, when Belle put on Jesse's jacket and stepped up to the picture on the Howard house platform, and Jesse pulled a gun and reenacted the identical staging of the earlier scene in which Bobby Ford threatened him, the repeated staging hopefully helped ease and clarify the character switches.

Parallel staging for effect was also deliberately used for the first major scene, "Belle at the Inn," and the last major scene at Belle's, "Dance Hall." We hoped to make clear to the audience the cyclic nature of the relationship, and that the characters had "come full circle" in the plot.

* * * * *

In Jesse and the Bandit Queen, the author attempted to make use of two major symbols with varying degrees of success.

One was boots, the other was the horse/rider sexual imagery. Both Jesse and Belle have boot monologues. Jesse says, "Boots are the thing. High ones, hand tooled and with silver heels. Boots make the difference. Billy said to me, you got to have the boots or you don't travel with Quantrill."⁷² Belle echoes, "Riding boots, marching boots. All hand tooled. Boots are the thing. Boots make the difference. The first time I even put on man's clothes, I done it to fool some damn Indian..."⁷³

This is a thinly disguised attempt to say, "clothes make the man." Moreover, the author's final conclusion supports that message because he decides that appearance is far more important than reality in the long run. But the boot imagery ends with these two speeches, and we were unable to find much of a way to enhance it. We did make as much as we could of Jesse's coming into the Inn carrying his boots, clapping with them, and showing his lack of social breeding by putting them on Belle's piano. Belle throws them on the floor and Jesse rushes over to pick them up to be sure they're not scratched. When Belle wants him to leave, she holds out his boots.

In the parallel scene at the end, the boot business was identical, up to Belle's reaction to the boots being placed on her piano. She still notices, but as a mark of character growth and as a commentary on the mellowing of

her personality, she shrugs and lets them stay without comment. When their confrontation occurs, Jesse immediately heads for his boots. However, despite all this focus, the boots seemed less than organically connected to any meaningful boot symbolism.

We were able to make more meaningful use of the horse/rider imagery. There is the obvious sexual imagery we hoped to capture in, for example, the sensuality of the shaving scene. The scene ends with Jesse physically overpowering Belle and mounting her. I have already discussed the idea of the rider having power and control over the animalness of the horse. There is wildness and freedom symbolically associated with horseback riding. But more specifically, this was a better integrated image than the boots because it is already a part of the American wild west imagery.

The common picture of horse and rider joining as one is used as an analogy to the sexual union of man and woman joining as one. It is deliciously enhanced here because the horse's name is Venus, Goddess of Love. And a further interesting layer is that Venus was, indeed, Belle Starr's horse's name.

This sort of authenticity was important to us, so in choosing music I looked first at the Ozark folk tune suggested in the script, "Bright Morning Stars Are Rising."

However, the recommended rendition from the National Geographic Society's Music of the Ozarks album, even though it was authentic and recorded on location by old-time folksingers, seemed too rough and jerky a version to allow the lyrics to be heard.

I much preferred Judy Collins slower, more plaintive rendition in her album Running For My Life. It seemed more in keeping with the words, which suggest the folk philosophy that the souls of the dead become bright morning stars. I found this to be the perfect lead-in to the stars/legends Jesse and Belle (Starr) stepping out of their extra-terrestrial place in the heavens to address the audience. It was intriguing to note that the planet Venus is also known as the "Morning Star."

At the end of the play, a repeat of the same music provided an obvious auditory cue that Jesse and Belle's time with us, their "day in the sun," was almost over. Judy Collins sings, "Day is dying in the west."⁷³ I felt the music set a mood for the show that would have been hard to achieve by any other means.

All of the other pre-show, intermission and post-show music was related. A major source was the previously mentioned album, Music of the Ozarks. It is an on-site recording of the folk songs of the Ozarks which would have been very prominent at the time Jesse and Belle lived there. The singers were residents of the area, living less than 100 miles at the most from Carthage and John Shirley's

Inn. They were either old enough to have been alive when Jesse lived, or were born within a few years afterwards. All learned these songs from their families and neighbors.

The second source for incidental music was another theatrical piece about Jesse James, Diamond Studs. This musical has several songs which recount the legend of Jesse and elaborate on some of the exploits also mentioned in Jesse and the Bandit Queen. With special permission from Samuel French, Inc., I was able to use selections from this show.

A further attempt to introduce authenticity was made with the set. The limited space available led us to use platforming which took the action up to the highest level possible considering the ceiling height. Four pictures were free-hung against black velours as a background.

In the script, only one picture frame is mentioned. The New York production used only that single frame, and it was empty. I chose instead to have it filled with a picture of the actual Howard home where Jesse was living when he was shot. As the representation of reality, it was the smallest of the four pictures, consistent with the author's theme that reality is the least important, least significant facet of one's life when compared to myth and legend.

The next largest set piece was the picture of the Wild West show poster, representing the carnivals, dime

novels, and books and movies which have perpetuated the Jesse/Belle popularity. The poster was a copy of an actual one used to advertise Pawnee Bill's Historic Wild West Show. It was suitable to be used as it stood, with only one minor change. In the phrase "Beautiful Daring Western Girls and Mexican Senoritas..." we substituted so it read, "Beautiful Daring Western Girls and Belle Starr, in a contest of Equine Skill." An insert photo of an unidentified woman was already there, and could easily be assumed to be a picture of Belle. Focusing specifically on her "equine skill" was yet another tie to the major horse/rider imagery already established.

From a similar poster of the day we added, "Genuine Gauchos from the Pampas of South America." Jesse had read from the Police Gazette that he and Belle were supposed to be "riding the wild Pampas together." Having established him as a character with little education, he pulled special audience focus to the line by stumbling over the pronunciation of Pampas.

The prop book used in the Richard Fox scene had a reproduction of the actual book, Bella Starr, the Bandit Queen or the Female Jesse James, by Richard Fox, for its cover. We were even able to find the pulp novel story from which Jesse reads at the beginning of Act II. "The masked outlaws had spread themselves along the line of the train. 'Well Frank, everything seems to be working all right,' Jesse

remarked. 'I was sorry we had to shoot Jack Farley,' said Frank."⁷⁵ The actual story printed in Jesse's day read, "The masked outlaws had spread themselves along the line of the train...Well, Frank, everything seems to be working all right, Jesse remarked...I was sorry we had to shoot Jack Farley."⁷⁶ Even the "Stand and deliver"⁷⁷ of the Wild West show was authenticated in the Police Gazette.⁷⁸

The final two pictures were the most prominent, as they were deliberately bigger than life. They were the portraits of Jesse and Belle, not as they really were, but as the modern audience wants to see them. Belle, for example, was large-boned and particularly ugly. Belle says of herself, "say Belle Starr's got a face like a hatchet, a son who won't listen and she hates the sight of mirrors."⁷⁹ But we wanted a young, pretty Belle who brought to life the picture of the legend the audience secretly envisioned.

* * * * *

I was very pleased with the success of this production. If I were to do it again, I would like to add more movement of light so that characters could be subtly preceded by light as they moved to a new scene. I think greater lighting control could add additional focus to monologues. Scenes which were especially difficult were those where one sepia-toned scene abutted a second. We attempted to differentiate

by starting with a lower level, but distinguishable amber cast, then suddenly and noticeably intensifying it for the second transition. A better solution, if technically feasible, would have been also to change the size and shape of the area being lit and the direction of the illumination. The low angle of throw necessary in the UNO Studio Theatre and the small number of dimmers available, plus the limitations imposed by the board, made those techniques unavailable this time around.

The proximity of Jesse/Bobby Ford to Belle/Jesse made it advisable, after experimentation, to cut the use of wadding in the gun. With a larger stage I would prefer to use a more realistic gunshot. For safety's sake, the actress playing Jesse wore a suede coat over several layers of costumes and a protective corset. She further took the shot in the back to avoid any danger to her face or eyes. Although Bobby Ford was really only 8' from Jesse when he shot him, Jesse turned his head when he heard the pistol cock, and the bullet hit him over his left eye.⁸⁰ For stage use I felt the shot in the back was equally effective.

I would prefer more width to the acting area so that more forceful and vigorous crosses could be added. Also, more height for the platforming would be advantageous. But the intimacy of the Studio was most appropriate for the size of the production.

I was proud of the performances of Bill Lacey, who portrayed Jesse, and Laura Marr, who portrayed Belle. Their acting abilities brought the show alive, and more than made up for any technical limitations. The two of them formed a cast which was a director's dream: inherently talented, well-trained, reliable, hard working, creative, and ideally receptive and responsive to direction. A gigantic portion of the success of Jesse and the Bandit Queen is tied directly to the skill and commitment to the project Laura and Bill brought to each rehearsal.

Bill's command of dialects and the ability to alter the physicalization of each role was most effective. He was able to capture the voice and movement changes of a young Jesse and have them grow consistently to become the more mature voice and body patterns of Jesse in his 30's. The switch from the Missouri drawl to the Eastern seaboard speech pattern of Richard Fox was impressive. Fox also had a new and unique set of gestures and internal body rhythm.

In a brilliant bit of acting, Bill made a distinction between the embarrassed young Jesse playing a woman of the night when he was Quantrill's decoy, and the character of Belle which he assumes near the end of Act II. Both were women, but the real one was quite different from the parody. Judge Parker had yet another accent, speech pattern, set of unique personal eccentricities and body rhythm.

Laura was equally creative and effective in portraying her range of characters. Quantrill's vocal level and accent pegged him instantly as a Southern politician capable of swaying Bill's eager young Jesse. Using a different body stance, she became the grizzled old Union soldier. A most challenging task was to make a distinction between Zee and Belle, especially since both women play opposite the same Jesse whom they love. With a change of vocal tone, character attitude, and physical gait, Laura made each woman unique.

Sly Bobby Ford, as Laura played him, was also very threatening. But he was believable, as were her appearances as Jesse. She was even able to consistently show the fine line transition between a bored Belle playing Jesse as a caricature in the Wild West show and Belle getting truly swept up in her own impersonation.

In addition to their outstanding performances as multiple characters, I will always be grateful for the unflaggingly positive attitude Laura and Bill brought to each rehearsal. There was no script point too obfuscated, no character transition too elusive, no costume change too challenging, or no prop movements too complex but what their position was that together we could solve it. The assumption was always that there was a way to surmount any obstacle.

Both Laura and Bill were able to take last minute costumes and props and make the handling of them appear

as effortless and natural as if they had been rehearsing with them for days. They worked long hours on their own to achieve the easy, totally believable relationship between Jesse and Belle which was so effective in the final production. Never once did they come in without the assigned section of the script virtually letter perfect. Each provided costume pieces from his own wardrobe and gave freely of his time to shop for, or locate both final and rehearsal costumes. They helped to assemble rehearsal props from their own things and contributed hard to locate items for actual use in the production.

It was a pleasure and a joy to work with these talented performers whose dedication to Jesse and the Bandit Queen equalled my own. As a result of their hard work and that of the set designer, Dennis Vesper; the costumer, Janet Sussman; the prop mistress, Jane Keller; the stage manager, Lin Holder; the lighting technician, Rod Freeman; the program compiler, Robin Lewy; and the poster designer, Sharon Grady; all parts of the show came together. I felt the evening, as a whole, was very successful and well-received by the audiences.

Although the eventual outcome was very good, the project was not without its problems. Many of them were unique to this particular production and would not necessarily happen in other attempts to mount this script. For example, the set designer was contacted and given a script in April, and early meetings were held. We didn't want to make any definite decisions until I was sure of the concept I had for the show and he had had an opportunity to look at the script more closely. In the intervening months, however, we both were thinking of a set which would ultimately be a specific rendition of general plans we had made at those first meetings. Specifically, that it would be a series of platforms with two high stands for Jesse and Belle. The treatment of the platforms would involve rustic materials, be fairly neutral in color and use four picture frames hanging along the back to enhance individual scenes.

When it was time for the detailed set meetings, the set designer's wife had a baby. We were delayed in arriving at a final floor plan for a week or so. Meanwhile, rehearsals began. As we had been asked not to use more than a six week period for rehearsals in order to equal the time other graduate students had had for productions, it was not possible to lose that week waiting for a finalized floor plan. Therefore, I sketched out a rough plan which seemed workable

within the requirements set forth by the action in the script. When the designer brought in his final plan, we had minor adjustments to make because the height, number, and size of platforms changed. We made those adjustments without much problem. By that time I had worked enough with the script to see that the Jesse/Belle photos, the Wild West poster, and the Howard house photo could represent important parts in the script. The set designer was happy to agree to those.

A second inconvenience was the late arrival of the props. There were unusual items involved, such as a live gun and a left handed holster. Since the University in Lincoln had done the show the semester before, we could rent many of the hard to locate props from them. However, it was necessary to wait until school opened down there to gain access to their storage area. Once those became available, props were quick in arriving.

Lighting presented yet another problem. An outside lighting designer agreed to do the project. He also held down a full time job so it was difficult to find a time that he could see the rehearsals. He had a script about six weeks before the production and designed his lighting plot from it. Since Laura and Bill had very tight schedules due to their involvement with work, school, and other theatrical productions, our rehearsals had to occur when they did.

As time drew closer and closer to add the lights, I became concerned because the lighting designer had yet to see

a rehearsal. We had blocked scenes into such specific areas, and since each scene needed to be lit with both clear and amber I was worried that it would be impossible for him to know how to design the areas. So I attempted to write out each scene, the portion of the stage we used for that scene, and lighting changes that occurred as we changed from character to character, and any specials or unusual effects that seemed necessary. I hoped the designer could use that knowledge to do his plot and cue sheets even though he was totally unfamiliar with our production.

When the time came to hang and focus the lights, he discovered that one of the portable dimmer packs was not operable and he had only 18 dimmers instead of the 24 for which he had designed. He made that adjustment in conjunction with me, because I had to describe the action of the play and suggest possible ways to group instruments. We hung and tried to focus, but one of the dimmer packs was smoking badly. We added time to the schedule and came back to finish hanging and focusing, finishing in time to do the regularly scheduled rehearsal with the actors.

As we went into the cue to cue tech, I discovered that the lighting designer had no cue sheets or notes in which he had planned the lighting cues. Never having seen the show, he had little way to begin to create the lighting on the spot. I began to try to talk the lighting board operator through some sort of a slow progress through the script so that the

designer could see areas and set levels or make other technical adjustments to the lights. We took a break and he did not return. Eventually I called him at home and he said he was not coming back to the show.

The only thing to do was to try to finish the dry tech myself. The board operator was taking notes in the booth and trying to run the lights as well. It was a less than ideal situation. We did finish teching the show, however, and the operator was going to come in the next day and practice the cues. Just before dinner the next day I received a call saying he could not make out his notes and could not run the lights from what he had. I called Michael Brooks and an outside board operator and we went into the studio on a night when we had not scheduled a rehearsal.

During that evening, I tried to call out lighting cues which Michael subsequently recorded. He also had suggestions for what would work best, look best, and be the easiest to run. I set up a time before the next rehearsal to go through the cues with the board operator, and arranged for the stage manager to stay in the booth during performances. I took over her management duties.

We did have the lighting rehearsal before the next acting rehearsal, but the operator felt the cues were too difficult. The next day, I rewrote the cues to be easier but tried to sacrifice as little as possible

in terms of the concept of the show. That evening we ran lights with the show. The operator still felt the cues were too taxing, but promised to come in the next day and practice them.

The next day, I arrived at the theatre several hours before curtain and found out that the operator had misplaced the cue sheets and they were not to be found. Ordinarily we were Xeroxing them every night, but the preceding night the operator was late for his ride and could not wait to have them duplicated. I sat down and rewrote the cue sheets from scratch, making them as simple as humanly possible. I color coded them for operation by two people, the operator and the stage manager. They were as simple as they could be unless we totally dropped the concept of changing to the amber light for the flashback sequences and merely turned the lights on at the beginning of the Act and off at the end.

We did do the run of the show with the amber changes, but the lighting never ran as smoothly as it might have had we not had such unusual and unique setbacks. I see no way that these problems could have been anticipated and avoided without the knowledge gained from hindsight. At the time we just did the best we could.

Unusual circumstances also surrounded the design and construction of the costumes for Jesse and the Bandit Queen. The original costumer was contacted and given a script in April. She was quite excited about doing the show. We had further meetings in August and fabric was purchased. Due to budget problems at the university, the personnel involved changed and a new costumer did my show as her first assignment in Omaha.

We had several very detailed costume meetings in which we drew up written lists of the costumes needed, colors, how they must function, and special needs due to the action of the script. I explained the concept of the show, stressing that we were not after historical realism but rather movie fantasy. I had later meetings in which I saw costume sketches, watched any changes drawn in on the sketches, and then approved them.

From that moment on there were problems. Costumes did not match the sketches, nor were they similar enough to serve the same function. They were inexcusably late. This was an unusual show, and the actors needed the actual costumes very early to practice timing and to make sure the changes would work. I stressed this repeatedly to the costumer, but the costumes were never completed. On opening night I came in several hours early and finished the sewing. Earlier I had shopped and purchased many things on my own.

The actors brought things from home, and the day of the performance Bill finally went out and purchased his own hat.

On her behalf, this costumer was more familiar with Opera than theatre. Her previous experience had been with that sort of performance, where costumes can be added up to curtain time because they only enhance the production. Our situation, where the costumes are a vital part of the action of the script and their function crucial to the success of the evening, would be difficult to believe unless the costumer was thoroughly familiar with this script.

Despite all the technical concerns, we did not ever miss a rehearsal with the actors or change the original purpose of any scheduled rehearsals. All the technical problems were solved by my working individually with the crew outside of the regularly scheduled times or by doing the work myself.

Fortunately, we were right on schedule with the performance portions of the show and the actors could continue with their work. I continued to give notes and work with them, but I will never know if my contribution would have been greater or if I would have been able to tidy tiny last minute details had I not been tired and distracted by the costumes and lighting.

On the positive side, this graduate project was to be a learning experience for me. By circumstances combining as they did, I did much more on the set, lighting, costumes,

and props than usual. That means I learned more about each of those areas than I would have had they gone flawlessly.

Looking back, I can honestly say that if I were to begin the project again I would probably do the same things I did the last time. Most of the time those procedures would lead to a well-coordinated show with all members of the technical staff fully aware of the concept we were all working to present. But I've also learned that when your best efforts to anticipate problems and set up good communication fail, all you can do is pitch in and do the best you can.

APPENDICES

END NOTES

BIBLIOGRAPHY

MUSIC

JOURNAL

LIST OF SOUND CUES

HISTORICAL PHOTOGRAPHS

POSTER

PROGRAM

PRODUCTION PHOTOGRAPHS

REVIEWS OF NEW YORK PRODUCTION

SHEET MUSIC USED

PRODUCTION ANNOUNCEMENT

AUDITION NOTICE

PROMPT BOOK

REHEARSAL SCHEDULE

END NOTES

¹The Northfield Bank Raid, 8th ed. (Northfield, Minnesota: Northfield News, Inc., 1980), p.6.

²"Were You Right? Or Wrong?", World-Herald, 24 June 1984, sec. E, p. 6.

³Joan Marlowe and Betty Blake, ed., New York Theatre Critics' Reviews, Vol. 36 (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, Inc., 1975), pp. 103-105.

⁴David Freeman, Jesse and the Bandit Queen, (New York: Samuel French, Inc., 1976), p. 59.

⁵Ibid., p. 6, p. 57.

⁶Gene Smith and Jayne Barry Smith, The Police Gazette, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), 23 September 1882.

⁷Freeman, Jesse and the Bandit Queen, p. 20.

⁸Ibid., p. 7.

⁹Ibid., p. 37.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 31.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid., p. 42.

¹³Ibid., p. 6, p. 29, p. 41, p.58.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 6, p. 58.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 16.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 15.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 12.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 55.

¹⁹Wilfred L. Guerin, A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature, (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), p. 179.

²⁰Ibid., p. 180.

²¹Ibid., p. 181.

²²Ibid., p. 179.

²³Freeman, Jesse and the Bandit Queen, p. 29.

²⁴Ibid., p. 54.

²⁵Guerin, Critical Approaches to Literature, p. 159.

²⁶Ibid. p. 160.

²⁷Freeman, Jesse and the Bandit Queen, p. 51.

²⁸Ibid., p. 51.

²⁹James William Buel, The Border Outlaws, (Concinnati: Forshee and McMakin, 1881).

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Dr. Michael Owen Jones, "The American Hero As Jesus Christ," lecture presented as an introduction to the record, "They Laid Poor Jesse In His Grave," or "I Took Jesse As My Savior You Take Him, Too," to a Folklore class at the University of California at Los Angeles, Spring, 1972.

³²Freeman, Jesse and the Bandit Queen, p. 40.

³³Jones, The American Hero As Jesus Christ.

³⁴Carl W. Breihan, The Complete and Authentic Life of Jesse James, (New York: Frederick Fell, Inc., 1953), pp. 1-45.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Freeman, Jesse and the Bandit Queen, p. 40.

³⁹"Carroll County Historical Society Quarterly," (7 September 1962), pp. 6-11.

⁴⁰Glenn Shirley, Belle Starr and Her Times, The Literature The Facts and The Legends, (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982), p. 148.

⁴¹Freeman, Jesse and the Bandit Queen, p. 50.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid., pp. 33-34.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 39.

⁴⁶Freeman, Jesse and the Bandit Queen, p. 15.

⁴⁷Shirley, Belle Starr and Her Times, pp. 61-62.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 72.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 118.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 73.

⁵¹Freeman, Jesse and the Bandit Queen, p. 15.

⁵²Shirley, Belle Starr and Her Times, p. 93.

⁵³Ibid., pp. 115-121.

⁵⁴Ibid., pp. 140-141.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 148.

⁵⁶Freeman, Jesse and the Bandit Queen, p. 6.

⁵⁷Shirley, Belle Starr and Her Times, p. 215.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 218.

⁵⁹Freeman, Jesse and the Bandit Queen, p. 22.

⁶⁰Shirley, Belle Starr and Her Times, pp. 195-197.

⁶¹Freeman, Jesse and the Bandit Queen, p. 25.

⁶²Shirley, Belle Starr and Her Times, pp. 111-112.

⁶³Ibid., p. 114.

⁶⁴Freeman, Jesse and the Bandit Queen, p. 30.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Guerin, Critical Approaches to Literature, p. 160.

⁶⁹Freeman, Jesse and the Bandit Queen, p. 31.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 34.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Ibid., p. 12.

⁷³Ibid., p. 22.

⁷⁴Judy Collins, Running For My Life, Elektra/Asylum Records, 1980.

⁷⁵Freeman, Jesse and the Bandit Queen, p. 35.

⁷⁶William H. Forbis, The Cowboys, (New York: Time-Life Books, 1973), p. 221.

⁷⁷Freeman, Jesse and the Bandit Queen, p. 39.

⁷⁸Smith, The Police Gazette, Introduction.

⁷⁹Freeman, Jesse and the Bandit Queen, p. 37.

⁸⁰Buel, The Border Outlaws.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Breihan, Carl W. The Complete and Authentic Life of Jesse James. New York: Frederick Fell, Inc., 1953.
- Breihan, Carl W. The Day Jesse James Was Killed. New York: Frederick Fell, Inc., 1961.
- Buel, James William, The Border Outlaws. Cincinnati: Forshee and McMakin. 1882.
- Campbell, Joseph. The Hero With A Thousand Faces. New York: The World Publishing Company, 1970.
- "Carroll County Historical Society Quarterly." 7 (September 1962):6-11. (Mimeographed.)
- Cray, Homer. Jesse James Was My Neighbor. New York: Sloan and Pearce, 1949.
- Crittenden, Henry Huston. The Crittenden Memoirs. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1936.
- Forbis, William H. The Cowboys. New York: Time-Life Books, 1973.
- Freeman, David. Jesse and the Bandit Queen. New York: Samuel French, Inc., 1976.
- Fox, Richard K. Bella Starr The Bandit Queen or the Female Jesse James. New York: Richard Fox, 1889.
- James, Jesse, Jr. Jesse James, My Father. New York: Frederick Fell, Inc., 1957.
- Jones, Dr. Michael Owen Jones. "The American Outlaw Hero As Jesus Christ," lecture presented as an introduction to the record, "They Laid Poor Jesse In His Grave," or "I Took Jesse As My Savior, You Take Him, Too." to a Folklore class at the University of California at Los Angeles, Spring, 1972.
- Jung, Carl. Man and His Symbols. New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1969.

- Love, Robertus. The Rise and Fall of Jesse James. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1926.
- Marlowe, Joan and Blake, Betty, ed. New York Theatre Critics' Reviews, Vol 36. New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, Inc., 1975.
- The Northfield Bank Raid. 8th ed. Northfield, Minnesota: Northfield News, Inc., 1980
- Ottenheimer, I. and Ottenheimer, M. Jesse James; A Romance of Terror. Baltimore: I. and M. Ottenheimer, 1910.
- Roscoe, Burton. Belle Starr, "The Bandit Queen." New York: Random House, 1941.
- Ryland, Charles S. Brand Book of the Denver Westerners. Denver: Brand Publishing Company, 1957.
- Settle, William. "The James Boys and Missouri Politics." In Missouri Historical Review, pp. 412-429. Edited by Floyd C. Shoemaker. Columbia, Missouri: State Historical Society of Missouri, July, 1942.
- Settle, William A. Jesse James Was His Name. Hartford: Park, Inc., 1899.
- Settle, William A., Jr. Jesse James Was His Name or, Fact and Fiction Concerning the Careers of the Notorious James Brothers of Missouri. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966.
- Shirley, Glenn. Belle Starr and Her Times, The Literature The Facts and The Legends. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982.
- Smith, Gene and Smith, Jayne Barry. The Police Gazette. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972.
- Train and Bank Robbers of the West. St. Louis: Belford, Clarke and Company, 1882.
- Visitor's Guide to Northfield. Northfield, Minnesota: Northfield News, 1984.
- "Were You Right? Or Wrong?" World-Herald. 24 June 1984, sec. E, p.6.

MUSIC

Collins, Judy. Running For My Life. Los Angeles: Elektra/
Asylum Records, 1980.

Mozart, Wolfgang A. Sonata in C Major. (Piano solo)

Music of the Ozarks. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic
Society, 1972.

Wann, James. Diamond Studs. New York: Samuel French, Inc.

JOURNAL

JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN

Tuesday, July 31, 1984.

First rehearsal. Read thru with Bill and Laura. We talked about concept, structure and archetypal symbols. Got their conflicts so I could make out a rehearsal schedule.

Sunday, August 5, 1984

Second read thru. Discussed characterizations. Broke script into scenes and named them. Handed out rehearsal schedules.

Tuesday, August 7, 1984

Blocked scenes 1 through 3. After initial blocking, ran it for continuity. The amount we planned to cover fit neatly into the three hours allocated.

Thursday, August 9, 1984

Blocked scenes 4 through 7, ran them. Went back and ran 1 through 7 for continuity. All goes smoothly.

Friday, August 10, 1984

Blocked and ran scenes 8 through 10. There was no time to go back and run through scenes from earlier rehearsals, but we accomplished exactly what we were scheduled to do for today.

Sunday, August 12, 1984

Blocked and ran scenes 11 through 13. I'm keeping all blocking in my own script as well as asking the stage manager to record it.

Monday, August 13, 1984

Had a costume meeting with Kenda Slavin. Made a specific list together of items, colors, etc. Blocked and ran scenes 14 through 16.

Tuesday, August 14, 1984

Finished blocking the show with scenes 17 through 19. There has been a slight rearrangement of platform levels which will necessitate some re-blocking.

Thursday, August 16, 1984

Changed rehearsal to 11:45 - 2:45 for the actor's convenience. Re-blocked necessary parts of Act I, then worked on character transitions and physicalizations.

Monday, August 20, 1984

Worked a few spots on Act I, then reblocked Act II. All is going well. We have missed the stage manager who went on vacation with the prompt book in her possession.

Tuesday, August 21, 1984

We ran scenes 1 through 3 off book, then immediately ran them again for memory imprinting. Added rehearsal props. Actual props were due today, but are not available.

Wednesday, August 22, 1984

Ran scenes 4 through 7 off book, then ran them again. Added props. Manipulation of costumes and props can make or break us. We began yesterday using rehearsal costume pieces, too.

Thursday, August 23, 1984

Off book on 8 through 10. Laura and Bill are amazingly reliable about having lines down when planned, and letter perfect. We need our actual props and costumes, but are making do with fakes.

Friday, August 24, 1984

Off book on scenes 11 through 13. Props are partially coming from Lincoln's theatre department. They cannot be picked up until next week.

Sunday, August 26, 1984

Scenes 14 through 16 are now memorized and props added. A few minor adjustments had to be made in the transition from imaginary objects to real ones. If I did this show again, I would use rehearsal props from the first blocking rehearsal, and rehearsal costume pieces as well. Few shows are so reliant on manipulation of objects as this one, and it is virtually impossible for three people to mentally place and move them with unflinching accuracy.

Monday, August 27, 1984

The entire show is off book. All prop and costume blocking is complete. Physical distinctions between secondary characters become clearer each rehearsal. The last week has reinforced my belief that the department needs a movement class. My performers are agile and quick to learn, but are not equally experienced in "stage choreography." However, we did get the physical business worked out satisfactorily.

Tuesday, August 28, 1984

Went over rough spots which needed special attention. Ran Act I for continuity. Worked on internal pacing of the act. We need actual costumes badly for timing purposes. We can't get any secure flow until we know whether the costume manipulations which occur on almost every page or two, need to be tightened or stretched.

Thursday, August 30, 1984

Run Act II for sequence and flow. We are right on schedule in character growth. The music underscoring for the end of the act will need to be added before we can finalize the timing there.

Sunday, September 2, 1984

Running the show with no stops and no prompt on Act I. The real props have arrived and are marvelously helpful. We worked clean-up, especially guarding against making the Jesse/Belle scenes all anger.

Tuesday, September 4, 1984

Act II today with no stops, no prompt. No problems. Worked on weak spots, especially making Zee bitchy, not an appealing victim. It is increasingly frustrating to meet such passive resistance from the costumer.

Thursday, September 6, 1984

Ran the show. All goes well. The lights are not completed because the board has six dimmers inoperative. The design for 24 must be reduced to 18. We can't test because the board isn't installed.

Saturday, September 8, 1984

No actors. Lights hung and focused. Board smokes, so we can't test too long. Bob says to go ahead and use it.

Sunday, September 9, 1984

Dry tech was lengthy. Lighting designer came in with no design, no cue sheets. Actors had a fast line through in a dark room. We tried to do a cue to cue for lighting, but operator asked to stop until he could practice.

Monday, September 10, 1984

No actors. Board operator could not decipher his notes from Sunday. I came in with Mike Brooks and an outside board man and re-designed the cues from scratch. Designer has resigned.

Tuesday, September 11, 1984

Board operator felt the cues were too hard. I re-designed them to be simpler, and for more help from the second person in the booth, the stage manager. Color coded the dimmer movement so each person could easily distinguish his own plan.

Wednesday, September 12, 1984

Board operator lost the only copy of the lighting cues. This is technical dress rehearsal. I sat down and spent four hours rewriting them. "Curtain" was 30 minutes late. Costumer has yet to finish costumes. I will take over. Bill will buy his own hat. Technical problems are keeping me from final direction of show. I am working cue to cue with the lighting people before and after shows. The lighting will not be as hoped, but we need to strive for adequacy.

Thursday, September 13, 1984

Dress rehearsal. The show is technically weak in the area of lighting due to operator errors. It throws the actors off when they have to walk into darkness or have light changes occur out of sync with character transitions. Had the lighting gone smoothly and not pulled my time from directing, the show would have been even better. I almost wish we had done it with lights on, lights off. The acting is too fine to spoil with sloppy lighting.

Friday, September 14, 1984

Opening! I went in and spent the three hours before curtain personally completing the costumes. The show went very well. Bill and Laura were outstanding. The audience seemed to follow the show well, laugh in the right places, and enjoy themselves. Afterwards, people were most complimentary.

ALBUM ORDER - MUSIC OF THE OZARKS

Side One

Bunker Hill (Inst.)
Down In the Arkansas (Vocal)
Flop-Eared Mule (Inst.)
Harrison Town (Vocal)
Banks of the Ohio (Inst.)
Angel Band (Vocal)
Utah Carl (Vocal)
Wildwood Flower (Inst.)
Old Bell Jones (Vocal)

Side Two

Bright Morning Star (Vocal)
Guitar Medley (Inst.)
Trail to Mexico (Vocal)
Run, Johnny, Run (Vocal)
Knoxville Girl (Vocal)
Cripple Creek (Inst.)
The Arkansas Traveler (Inst.)

PRESHOW

Bunker Hill (Inst.) 1:14
Knoxville Girl (Vocal) 3:09
Guitar Medley (Inst.) 2:00
Carry Me Back To Old Virginia (Vocal) Cut 1 on Diamond Studs tape
Jesse James (Vocal) Diamond Studs tape
Cripple Creek (Inst.) 1:15
Bright Morning Star (Vocal) 3:40 Taped from Running For My Life
Add a break before the last verse

INTERMISSION

Wildwood Flower (Inst.) 1:32
Harrison Twon (Vocal) 2:32
Flop-Eared Mule (Inst.) 1:04
Angel Band (Vocal) 2:26
Northfield, Minn. (Vocal) Cut 9 on Diamond Studs tape. Use music
through "Been On the Job Too Long."
Bunker Hill (Inst.) 1:15
Cripple Creek (Inst.) 1:15
Jesse James (Vocal) Diamond Studs tape

END OF SHOW

Bright Morning Star (Vocal) Running For My Life. Under end of Act II
Arkansas Traveler (Inst.) 3:14 1st verse 35 sec.
Jesse James (Vocal) Diamond Studs tape to "Oh, where are
Wildwood Flower (Inst.) 1:32 our dear fathers,"
Guitar Medley (Inst.) 2:00 which is 5 sec. into
verse two

PAWNEE BILL'S HISTORIC WILD WEST

AMERICA'S NATIONAL ENTERTAINMENT



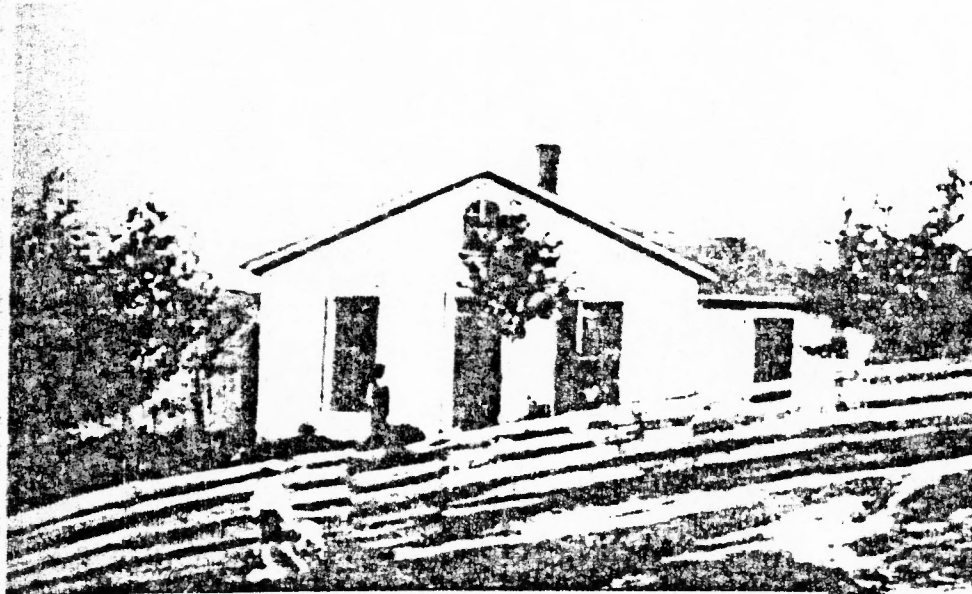
BEAUTIFUL DARING WESTERN GIRLS AND MEXICAN SEÑORITAS IN A CONTEST OF EQUINE SKILL.

NO DISAPPOINTMENT POSITIVELY GIVING TWO GRAND AND COMPLETE PERFORMANCES EACH DAY RAIN OR SHINE

AMERICA'S NATIONAL ENTERTAINMENT



A FEATURE OF THE WORLD'S FAIR. GENUINE GAUCHOS FROM THE PAMPAS OF SOUTH AMERICA.



Photographs of the house in St. Joseph, Missouri, where Jesse James was killed in 1882. Top picture was taken in 1882; lower photo in 1937.



THE LATE MRS. ABRAHAM LINCOLN,
WIDOW OF THE MARTYR PRESIDENT.

dreadful night in Ford's Theatre, in Washington, when her husband was shot down at her side by the assassin Booth. She was undoubtedly insane, and died in a manner that gave her friends and relatives great annoyance. She was considered the most unfortunate of all the lady occupants of the White House, as she was very decidedly the most *outré* in her manners. She was in consequence very unpopular among a large proportion of what is known as the "best society." Although she came from a fine Kentucky family, her manners as the lady of the Executive Mansion were brusque and irregular to a degree that provoked much unfavorable comment during the years of the war. Her funeral took place from the First Presbyterian Church of Springfield, Ill., on the morning of July 19. The body, which was embalmed, was placed in the crypt next to that of the husband of the deceased in the National Lincoln Monument, and was hermetically sealed in a lead case. Visitors from many cities attended the funeral, and there was a long procession of carriages.

AUGUST 5, 1882

AN INVASION

Talk about locusts, you fellows out West! You would be in New York. This year we have Jews and more Jews—whole shiploads of them. The Russians are a-rushin' things on us in the line of Hebrews. They are swamping everything. Locusts! You would just drop into this new Jerusalem and look

at the noses that surround us. This isn't one Jew but a whole crowd of Jews. The sight would knock all the poetry out of Shakespeare or any other man.

AUGUST 5, 1882

THE FORD BROTHERS

Bob and Charley Ford, the slayers of the renowned Jesse James, will hold levees at Bunnell's Museum in this city for one week, beginning September 18. They will give exhibitions of how they did up Jesse James and sold his cold meat for the reward of \$10,000.

As the "Jesse James Avengers" are said to be upon their track, the museum will be put in a state of defense. Manager Starr will wear an armor-lined shirt and will be seated on a Gatling gun while taking tickets. Any suspicious person attempting to pass him will be put on the deadhead list.

SEPTEMBER 23, 1882

THE WOOERS OF FORTUNE

The extent of stock speculation in the metropolis is startling. This species of gambling has found high favor among women lately and brokers' offices are not complete now unless they have special parlors for the transaction of business with ladies. The old and the young cluster there and study the tapes with eager interest in the exciting fluctuations of the market. Schoolteachers risk their savings, and widows their pin money or the life insurance of the dear defunct, and moldy relicts even come mumbling in to throw their annuities on the altar of the fickle goddess of luck.

The wolves win, of course, and the lambs and the sheep are generally shorn. Gentlemen speculators have long since learned this truth and know that when fortune smiles they will temporarily be regulars at the tony restaurants and sip the amber vintage of champagne. When fortune frowns they drink their beer and eat their free lunch at the saloon sideboard.

SEPTEMBER 23, 1882



This is the earliest known photograph of the famous outlaw Jesse James, showing him ready for dangerous work at the age of 17, in the year 1864. This picture was taken one year after he had been jabbed with bayonets when he refused to report on the whereabouts of William Quantrill, the Southern guerrilla leader. He had joined Quantrill's band in indignation when his mother and younger sister were unjustly jailed.

Copyright 1953 by Frederick Fell, Inc. All rights reserved. For information, write to Frederick Fell, Inc., Publishers, 386 Fourth Avenue, New York 16, New York. Manufactured in the United States of America by H. Wolff Book Manufacturing Co., New York. Format by Sidney Solomon.



Frank James in 1871. From the appearance of the photograph and the one of Jesse James (note identical chair in both) it would appear that the James boys, on a holiday, got dressed in their Sunday best and went to the local photographer to have their pictures taken.



Jesse James at the age of 28, a year after he was married to his attractive cousin Zee. Note the beard and mustache which were fashionable at that time.



Jesse James in the year 1870. At the age of 23 he was obviously thoughtful and determined. He had survived war wounds and border hatreds and had long since relinquished the illusions of youth.

The Many Faces of Jesse James



W. Ross Collection, University of Oklahoma Library
Jesse James the Guerrilla



Union Pacific Museum, Omaha, Nebraska
Jesse James



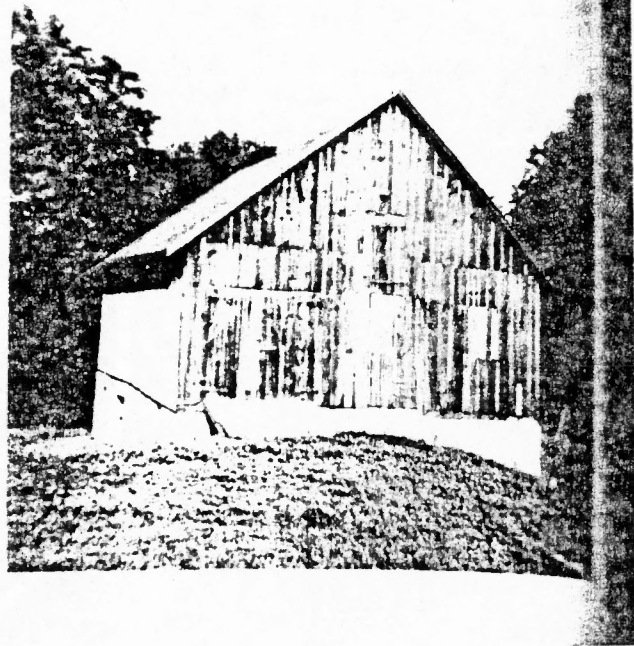
The Kansas City Star
Jesse James: The One and Only



Library of Congress
Jesse James as Portrayed in *The National Police Gazette* Soon After His Death



William Clarke Quantrill, the Missouri guerrilla chief on the side of the South during the Civil War, was as idealistic as he was ruthless. Frank and Jesse James joined his band in their 'teens and learned from him the hardy profession which they later put to use as outlaws.



This is the barn on the Stigers' property in St. Joseph, Missouri, where Jesse James and other guerrillas hid gunpowder from the Federals at the beginning of the Civil War.

Mrs. Zerelda James Samuel, the high-principled mother of Jesse and Frank, never wavered in her loyalty to the South nor in her belief that her sons were righteous men.



This photograph is of Mrs. Zerelda Samuel taken at the Samuel home near Kearney, Mo., October 1877 by Howard Huselton of Kansas City, Mo. Note that Mrs. Samuel's right arm is missing, mute testimony to the accuracy of the bomb which probably intensified Jesse James' desire to lead a life of crime.



At the age of 67 Frank James joined with Captain Kit Dalton of the same age, trying to run a Wild West Show. They advertised that they had both been Confederate soldiers and border outlaws, as well as guerrillas under William Quantrill.



Here are the front and rear views of the James home at Kearney, where the Pinkerton detectives threw a bomb, killing Jesse's half-brother and tearing off his mother's right arm. Jesse and Frank, suspecting that they were being followed by these detectives, had ridden out of town only an hour or two before this unwarranted attack.



Myra Maybelle Shirley, the future Belle Starr, about the time of her marriage to James C. Reed in 1866

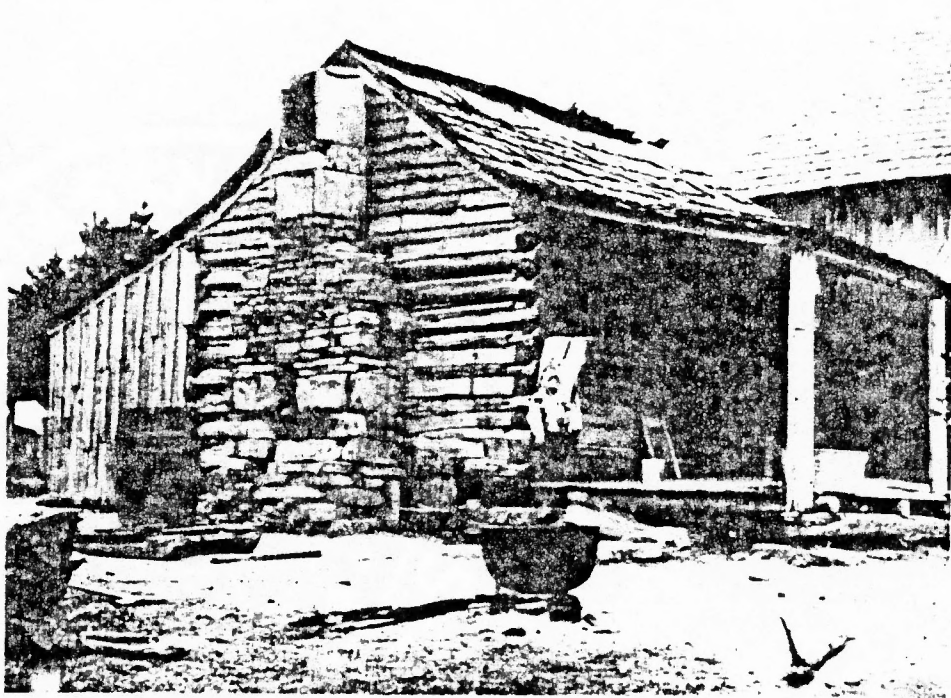
Soon after Rosie Lee's birth, Myra's brother, Edwin Benton, was slain by Texas officers. The Fox opus says "summer of 1867" and attributes the "unfortunate tragedy" to Edwin's "natural recklessness".



*Myra Maybelle Reed about the time of her marriage to Sam Starr in 1880.
Courtesy of Thomas Gilcrease Institute of History and Art, Tulsa,
Oklahoma.*



Belle Starr's house at Younger's Bend



Another view of Belle Starr's Younger's Bend home in 1888

Cole Younger



Pearl Reed — Belle
Starr's daughter.



Belle Starr and Blue Duck



Ed Reed—Belle
Starr's son



James Edwin ("Eddie") Reed, son of Belle Starr.



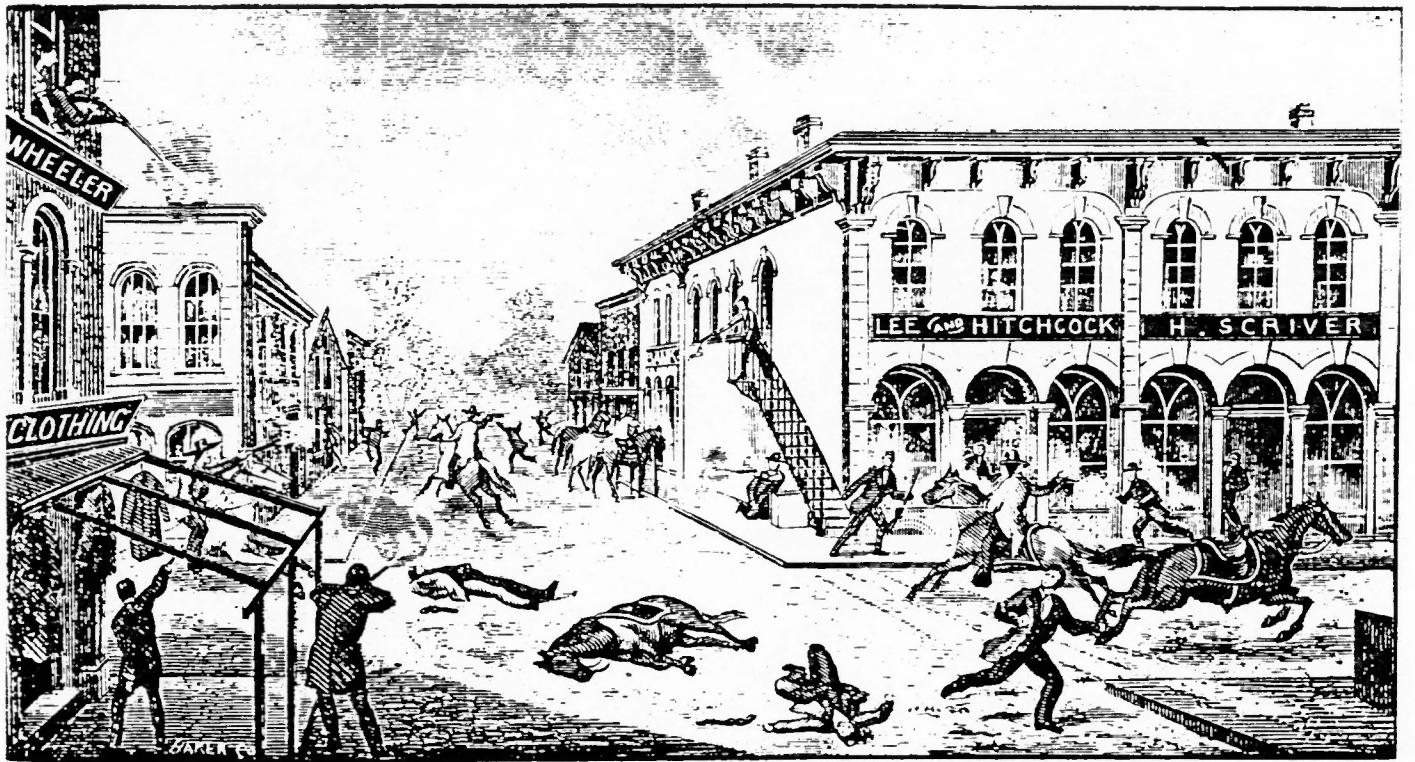
A SHOOTING STARR.

**THE WESTERN ASTEROID, "JIM" STARR, ALIAS "JIM JULY," WHO RECENTLY
GOT LOADED WITH LEAD AND DIED.**

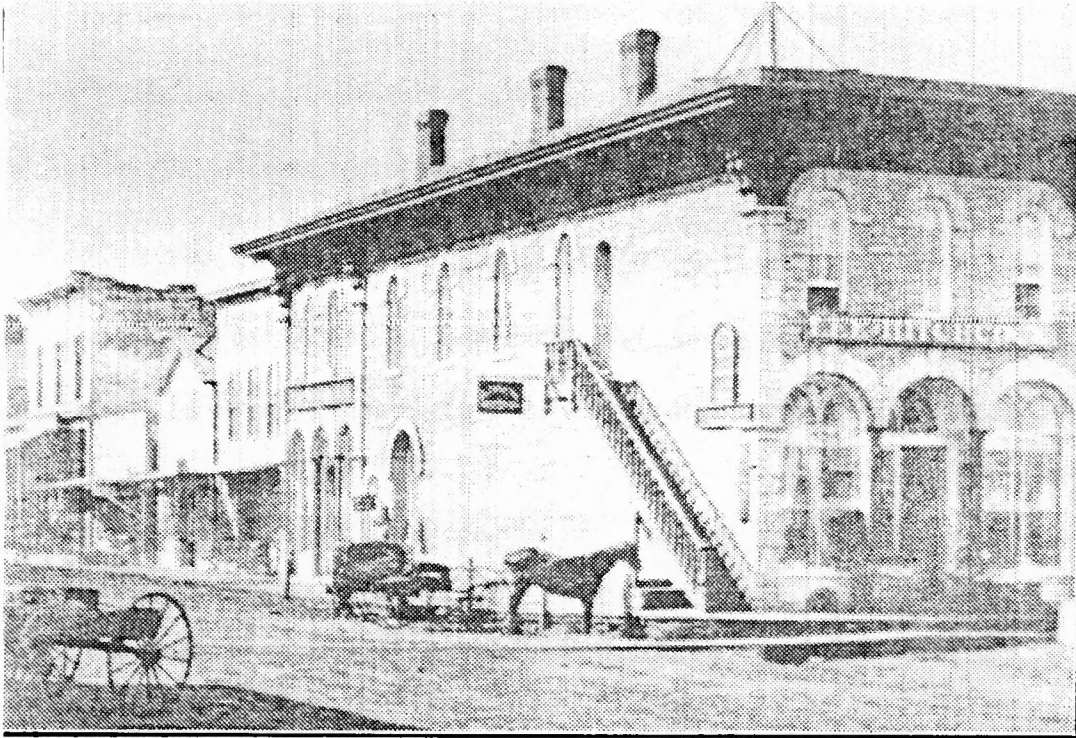
*Bill July, alias James July Starr, Belle's last husband. From a portrait
sketch in the National Police Gazette, February 15, 1890.*



Isaac C. Parker, Fort Smith's "Hanging Judge," who sentenced Sam and Belle Starr to brief terms in the House of Correction at Detroit, Michigan.



WOODCUT OF RAID

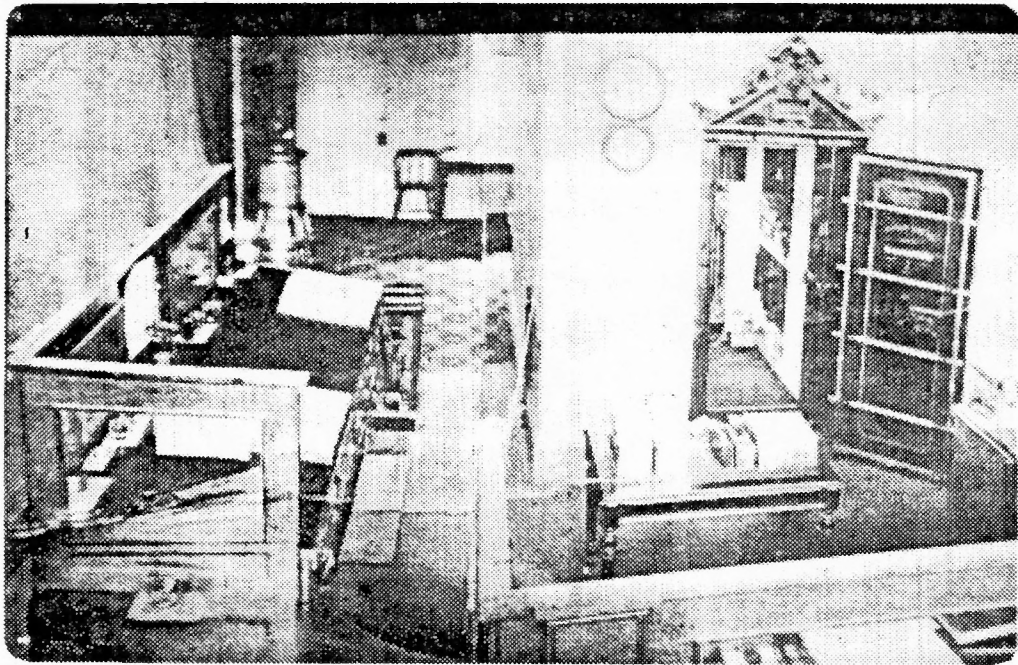


WHERE THE RAID TOOK PLACE — BANK WAS LOCATED WHERE THREE ARCHES ARE, JUST LEFT OF CENTER OF THE PICTURE.

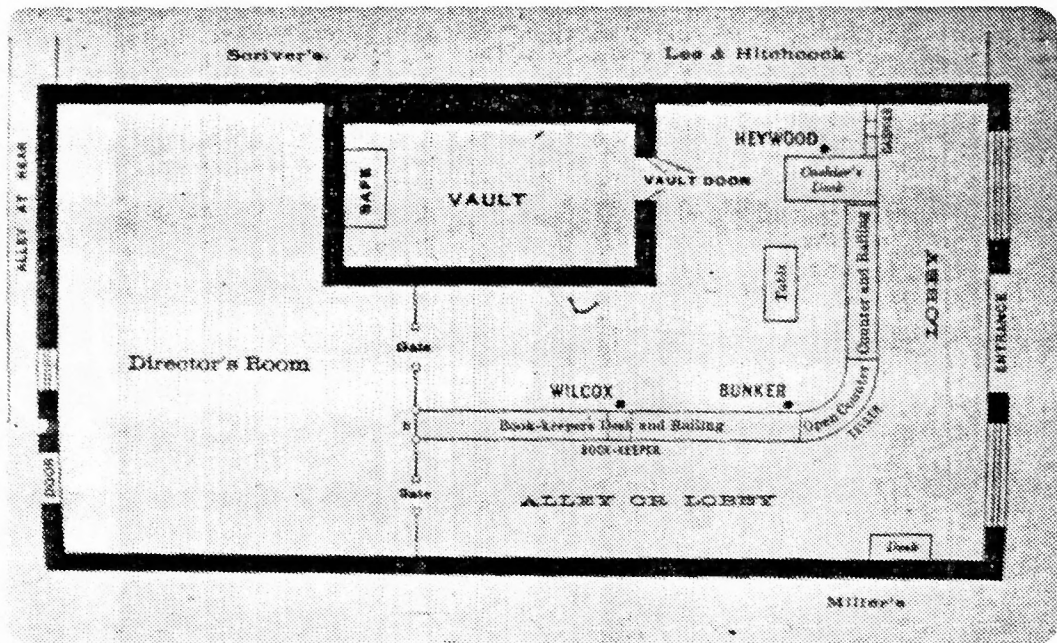
in the woods five miles west of town, and in the course of the forenoon some of them appeared on the streets and in the stores, and five of them ate their noon-day meal in a restaurant on the west side. All wore linen dusters, which served to conceal their weapons and cartridge belts.

It was about 2:00 o'clock in the afternoon that the first trio, consisting of Pitts, Bob Younger and, it is believed, Jesse James, came over the bridge, and crossing Bridge Square, dismounted in front of the bank. They threw their bridle reins over some hitching posts, and then walked leisurely to the corner and sat down upon some drygoods boxes in front of Lee & Hitchcock's store, assuming an air of indifference. Soon two other horsemen, Cole Younger and Clel Miller, rode up Division street from the south. Upon their approach the three men at the corner walked back to the door of the bank and went in. Thereupon Miller dismounted, and going to the bank closed the front door, while Younger dismounted in the middle of the street, and pretended to tighten his saddle girth. This action attracted the attention of several citizens.

J.S. Allen, a hardware merchant, whose store was located around the corner west of the building which was occupied by



ACTUAL PHOTO OF BANK INTERIOR. THIS HAS NOW LARGELY BEEN RESTORED AND REPRODUCED AT THE ORIGINAL SITE.



ARCHITECT'S DRAWING OF BANK FLOOR PLAN.



PITTS



BOB YOUNGER



JIM YOUNGER



COLE YOUNGER



STILES



MILLER

THE SIX BANDITS KILLED OR CAPTURED

Were You Right? Or Wro

1. Roosevelt told Sen. George Norris that he had never witnessed as beautiful a sunset as that seen in Red Willow County.
2. Capt. Walter Reed, who was stationed at Fort Robinson from 1884-1887.
3. Iowa's Hawkeye nickname is believed to come from Chief Black Hawk, who led Sauk and Fox Indians in a battle against whites in 1832.
4. Mike Tranmer.
5. Walt Disney.
6. Pickleville, after an early settler, J.W. Pickle. Other names included Scratchpot City and Lickskillet. Burlington Railroad officials suggested Cambridge, probably for Cambridge University in England. They earlier had selected Oxford, after Oxford University, as the name for another Furnas County town.
7. The names resulted from a struggle between local postmasters and the U.S. Postal Service. One harried postmaster was told he must select a name that was peculiar; another was told to choose a name that would avert confusion; another was informed that he could use any name "pro tem" (temporarily) until he could make up his mind; and another was told that the number of names he had submitted was enough.

18. Marshalltown.

19. From Lt. Levi Robinson, who was killed while escorting a wood train from Fort Laramie in 1874. The fort was first named Camp Robinson.

20. Squaring the circle.



Jesse James . . . outlaw and legend.

21. Bob Ford. Jesse James was 34 and living in St. Joseph, Mo., under the alias of Thomas Howard when he was murdered.

72. Jesse and his brother Frank plotted to rob the Rock Island Lines of \$75,000 in gold at Adair, Iowa. With their gang, they sabotaged the track west of town and waited for the train coming out of Omaha. A rope tied to a loosened rail was pulled at a critical moment, forcing the steam locomotive off the track. And on July 21, 1873, Jesse James presumably uttered for the first time, "This is a train robbery." The gold shipment turned out to be \$2,000 in currency.



Robert Ford in his youth did not suspect that it was his destiny to kill Jesse James.

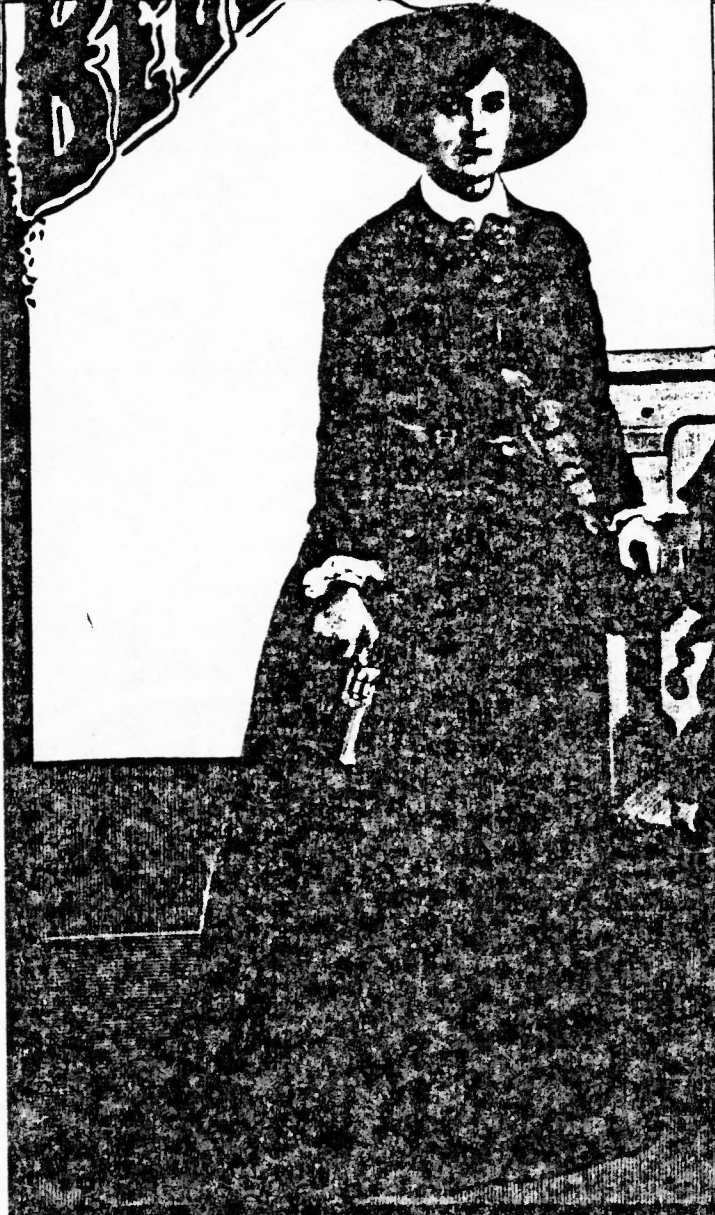
Bob Ford

St. Joseph (Missouri) Museum



Charley Ford was a guest at the home of Jesse James at the time his brother, Robert Ford, shot the famous outlaw for the sake of receiving the reward as well as immunity promised by Governor Crittenden.

BELLA STARR



THE
BANDIT
QUEEN
OF THE

FEMALE
JESSE
JAMES

HANDSOMELY
AND
PROFUSELY
ILLUSTRATED
PRICE
25¢

PUBLISHED BY RICHARD K. FOX NEW YORK 1889.



The San Antonio-Austin stage is robbed two miles north of Blanco, April 7, 1871. (Page 10)



Jesse James, one of the desperadoes who used Belle Starr's home as a hide-out

BELLE STARR
by
Jo Mora

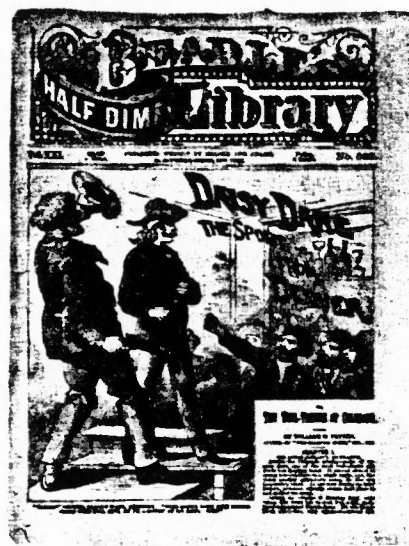
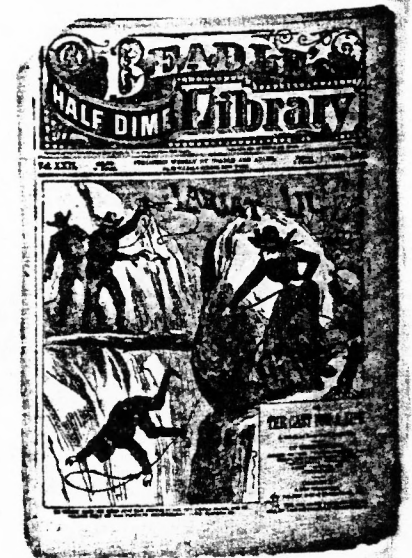
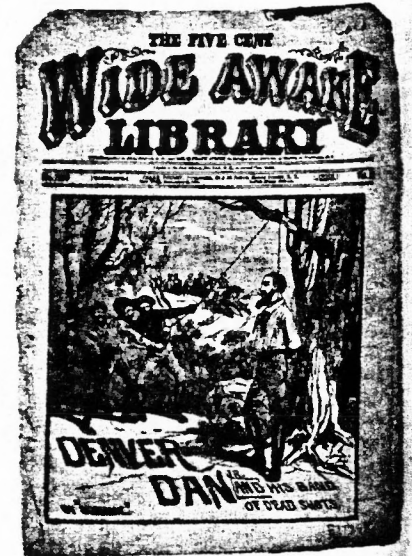
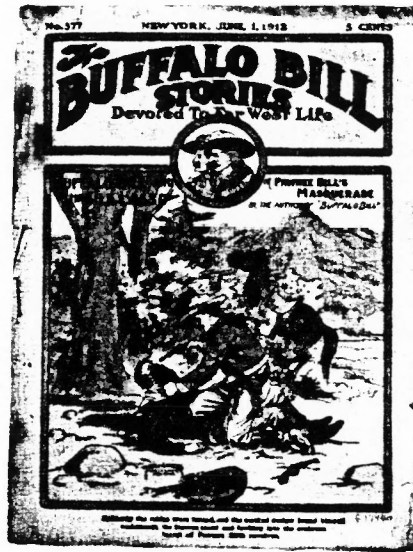
From the original 6 foot,
11 inch bronze in Woolaroc
Museum, Bartlesville, Okla-
homa

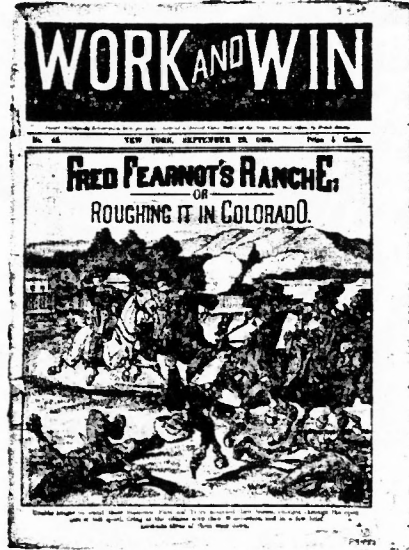
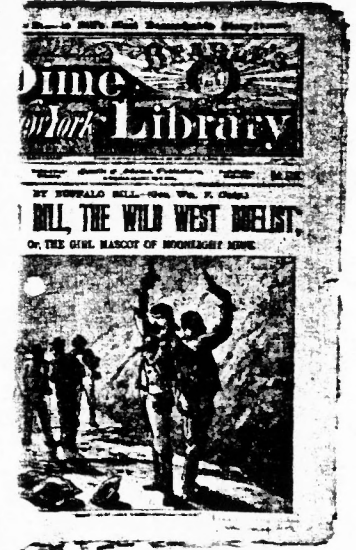
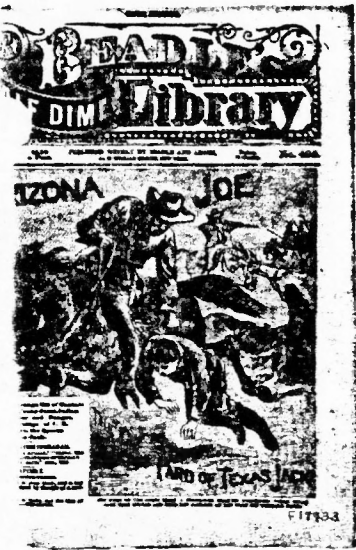


A feast of pulp for a hungry audience

When Teddy Roosevelt was ranching in the Dakotas, he once helped capture a trio of bandits whose saddlebags turned out to contain a stack of dime novels with such titles as *A History of the James Boys*. These real-life desperadoes were among the millions of Americans who, beginning in the 1870s, began to revel in — and sometimes even try to imitate — the bold adventure of the range as depicted in pulp fiction about the West.

Among the leading purveyors to this market was the firm of Beadle and Adams, from whose offices came some 2,200 titles like those shown here. In them, killers like Jesse James and Wild Bill Hickok appeared as swashbuckling gallants. Occasionally a genuine frontier hero would remind the public that most of the stories were balderdash: the famed scout Kit Carson, seeing a dime-novel cover of himself slaying seven Indians with one hand while clutching a grateful maiden with the other, laconically observed, "I ain't got no recollection of it." But nobody cared. Western buffs gobbled up the action — and such manly dialogue as that shown at right.





THE JAMES BOYS AND THE 49ERS.

CHAPTER II.

JESSE JAMES WORKS A COFFIN FOR A BIG HAUL.

CRACK!
 Crack!
 Crack!

Unluckily for old Jack Farley, his aim was not equal to his courage. His shots were both bad misses. A shower of cold lead came in answer. With a deep groan, the brave old engineer tumbled back, seriously wounded.

"Kill him, Ned—kill him, boy!" he cried, thrusting the smoking pistol into Ned Jackson's hand.

What Ned might have done if he had been given a chance it is hard to say. As it was he had no opportunity to do anything.

Two big, burly fellows sprang into the cab. He was seized and pinioned in an instant. The revolver was wrenched from him. Roughly the young fireman was ordered to descend into the snow. Of course he had to do it. The brakeman and conductor were in the same fix.

The masked outlaws had spread themselves along the line of the train. Some were armed with rifles, others with revolvers.

The latter now scrambled upon the platforms. There were men to stand guard at either end of the cars, and men to go inside and relieve the frightened passengers of their money, watches, jewelry and diamonds, if they had any.

If any one had thought of flight they speedily abandoned the idea.

The hold-up had been too cleverly planned, too skillfully executed.

There was positively no other way but for everyone to give up, and be thankful if they came out of the scrape with their lives.

Meanwhile, Jesse James was walking up and down through the snow, watching the movements of his men, giving directions where needed, making sure that everything was going to his mind.

Presently he encountered a tall, thin, cadaverous-looking man, and stopped to talk.

It was Frank James, the famous outlaw, fully as notorious as his brother, and credited by many with a longer head.

"Well, Frank, everything seems to be working all right," Jesse remarked.

"Right as the mail, far as I can see," replied Frank.

"I was sorry we had to shoot Jack Farley."

"So was I."

"Still it could not be helped."

"Certainly not. If these engineers will be fools and fire at us, they must take the consequences."

"Right you are; but I feel a sort of affection for the old man; you see this makes the third time we held him up."

"And the unlucky one for him. Is he badly hurt?"

"Bill Chadwell says no; the wound is in his left shoulder. Bill thinks he'll get over it all right."

"Glad to hear that. Are you still determined to carry out your plan, Jess?"

"I am."



Vol. I Stage Number BEAD LIBRARY No. 8



JESSE

and the Bandit Queen

by David Freeman

8 pm
Studio Theatre
ASH ROOM 214

Sept. 14, 15, 16
21, 22, 23



OF **READINGS**
A HALF-DIME **Library**



JESSE

and the
Bandit Queen

JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN

by David Freeman

CAST

Jesse James **William Lacey**
Belle Starr **Laura Marr**

Directed by Barbee Davis**
Set Design by Dennis Vesper
Lighting Design by Gary Gerber
Costume Design by Janet Sussman

Stage Manager Lin Holder
Costume Shop Supervisor Kenda Slavin
Set Construction Dan Wilson, Julie Vesper, Dennis Vesper
Rigging Gary Gerber, Rob Freeman
Props Jane Keller
Cutter Caren Carr
Stitchers Karen Lazio and Stage Costume Class
Graphic Design Sharon Grady
Business Manager Robin Gayle Lewy
Box Office Manager Steven M. Gibbs
Box Office Personnel Jeff Mohr, Don Jenson,
Mike Markey, Diana Schlesselman

**The direction by Barbee Davis of this production is in partial fulfillment of the requirement for her Master of Arts degree.

Act One

Scene One Jesse James William Lacey
Eddie Starr William Lacey
Belle Starr Laura Marr
Bobby Ford Laura Marr
Jesse James William Lacey
Belle Starr Laura Marr
Jesse James William Lacey
William Quantrell Laura Marr
Jesse James William Lacey
Belle Starr Laura Marr
Judge Parker William Lacey
Belle Starr Laura Marr
Jesse James William Lacey
Belle Starr Laura Marr
Blue Duck William Lacey
Belle Starr Laura Marr
Richard Fox William Lacey
Belle Starr Laura Marr
Jesse James William Lacey
Zee Laura Marr
Jesse James William Lacey
Belle Starr Laura Marr

Scene Two - 16 years earlier

Scene Three

Scene Four

Scene Five

Scene Six

Scene Seven

Scene Eight

Scene Nine

Scene Ten

Act Two

Scene Eleven Jesse James William Lacey
Belle Starr Laura Marr
Jesse James William Lacey
Belle Starr Laura Marr
Scarvey McCargo William Lacey
Jesse James Laura Marr
Jesse James William Lacey
Zee Laura Marr
Jesse James William Lacey
Belle Starr Laura Marr
Jesse James William Lacey
Bobby Ford Laura Marr
Eddie Starr William Lacey
Belle Starr Laura Marr
Jesse James William Lacey
Belle Starr Laura Marr
Belle Starr Laura Marr
Jesse James William Lacey
Zee William Lacey
Belle Starr William Lacey
Bobby Ford Laura Marr
Jesse James William Lacey
Jesse James William Lacey
Belle Starr Laura Marr

Scene Fifteen

Scene Sixteen

Scene Seventeen

Scene Eighteen

Scene Nineteen

The play takes place in Missouri, Kansas and the Indian Territories from just after the Civil War until the early eighteen-eighties.

There will be one fifteen minute intermission.

Special Thanks to:

Jim Otheuse, Marty Skomal, St. Albert's High School

The use of cameras and recording devices is strictly prohibited.

**1984-85
UNIVERSITY THEATRE SEASON**

BURIED CHILD October 19, 20, 21 & 26, 27, 28
by Sam Shepard

BUMS IN DUMPSTERS December 7, 8, 9 & 14, 15, 16
Book by Douglas Marr
Music by Robert W. Marr

UNDER MILKWOOD March 1, 2, 3 & 8, 9, 10
by Dylan Thomas

THE ROBBER BRIDGEGROOM April 19, 20, 21 & 26, 27, 28
Book by Alfred Uhry
Music by Robert Waldman

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

JESSE and the BANDIT QUEEN is a funny, entertaining and touching look at the difference between the myth and the legend of desperado Jesse James and the infamous Belle Starr. Jesse was transformed into legend through his daring bank robberies; especially his unsuccessful attempt in Northfield, Minn. Belle, heroine of the lurid dime novels of the Old West, was often billed as the female Jesse James.

In his fascinating look at these two American folk heroes, playwright David Freeman has used an ever shifting balance of documented historical truth and compelling dramatic fantasy. Many of the events which take place in this play are true: Jesse was, for a short time, a member of Quantrill's guerilla army and it is possible he could have ridden into Lawrence, Kansas with him. Cole Younger did ride with Jesse, although despite popular legend he did not father Belle's child, Pearl.

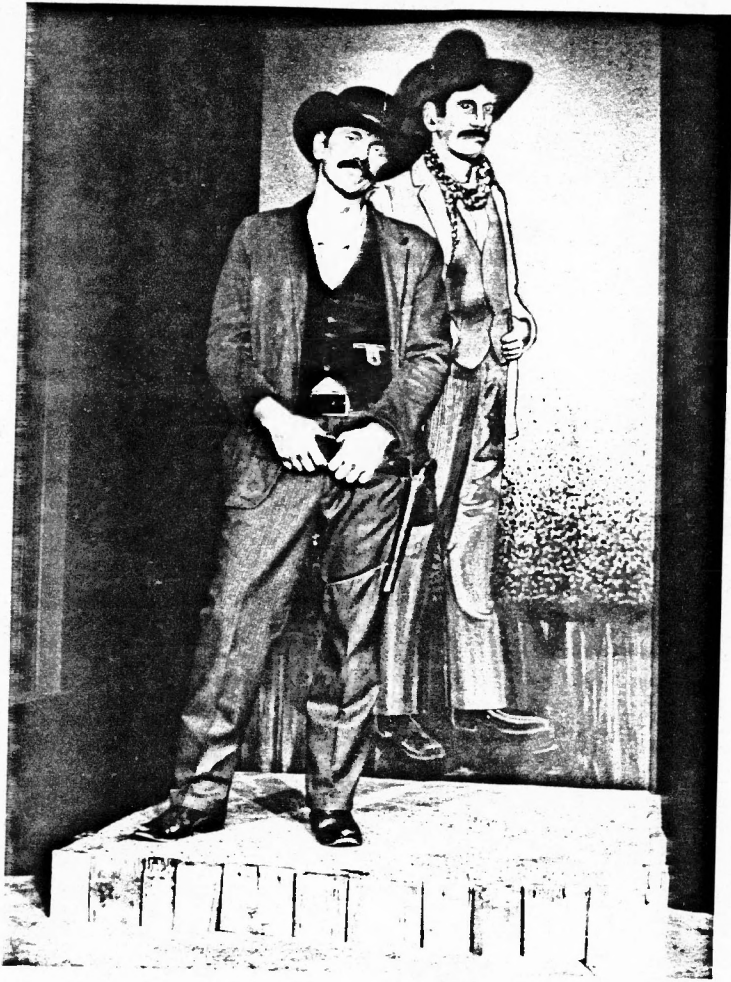
Jesse did have both a wife and mother named Zerelda, and the latter did have her arm blown off by Pinkerton men. Belle did meet the "hangin' judge," Judge Parker, and negotiated an arrangement with him for her freedom — but later did spend some time in prison for horse stealing. And Richard Fox did tremendously inflate Belle's popularity through his fictional accounts of her deeds in the Police Gazette.

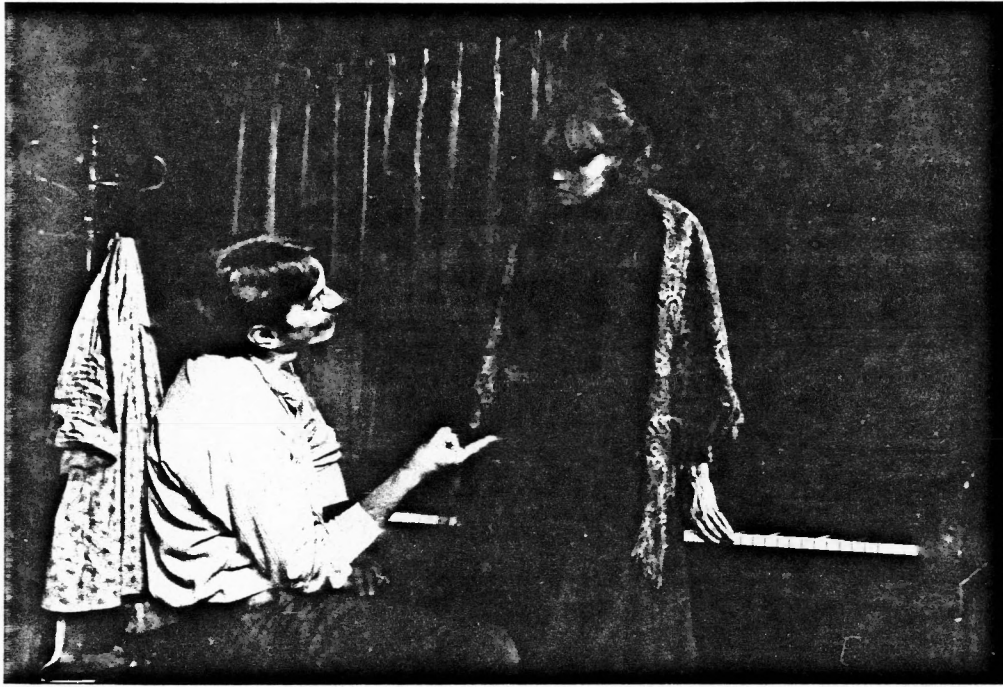
One of the play's loveliest ironies lies in the fact that although Jesse and Belle were contemporaries, history shows their paths crossed only once, briefly, when Belle was married to Jim Starr and Jesse hid out for several days at the Starr ranch in the Indian Territory (Oklahoma). Yet the American public has long mated them as ideal lovers, justifying Jesse's persistent concern that, "You think you're planning your life, doing what you want to, and everybody gets it wrong."

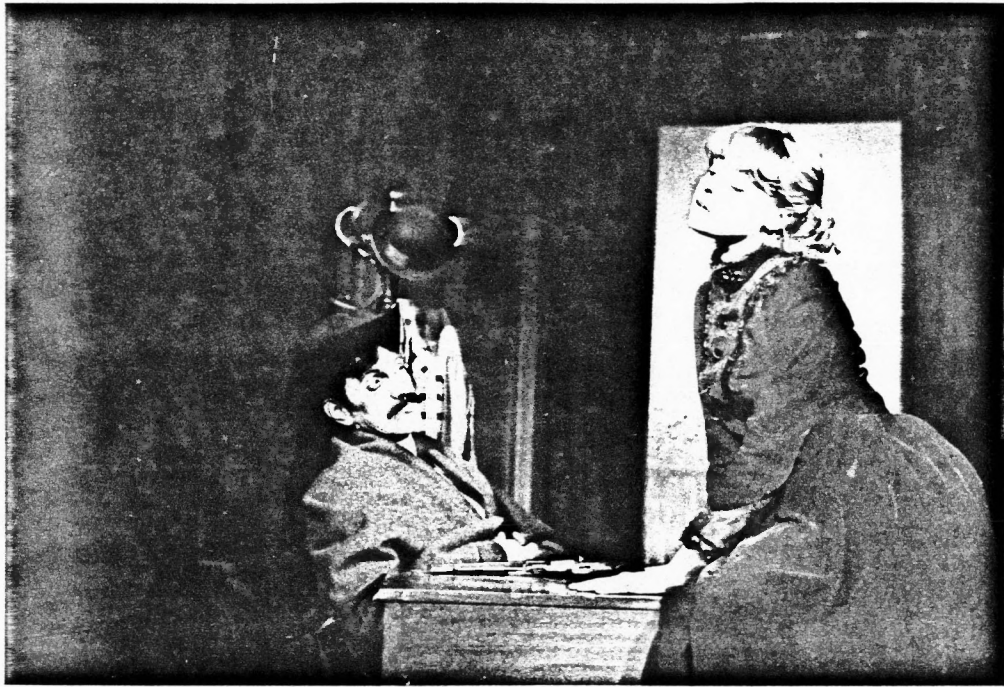
Welcome!

We are happy indeed that you joined us this evening. For us your presence here is as important as the work done on stage by students, staff and friends of UNO Theatre. After weeks of intensive activity, it is our audience that completes the effort and allows theatre to happen. In the coming months, there will be even more exciting productions and we hope you will return to UNO: A Live Theatre!

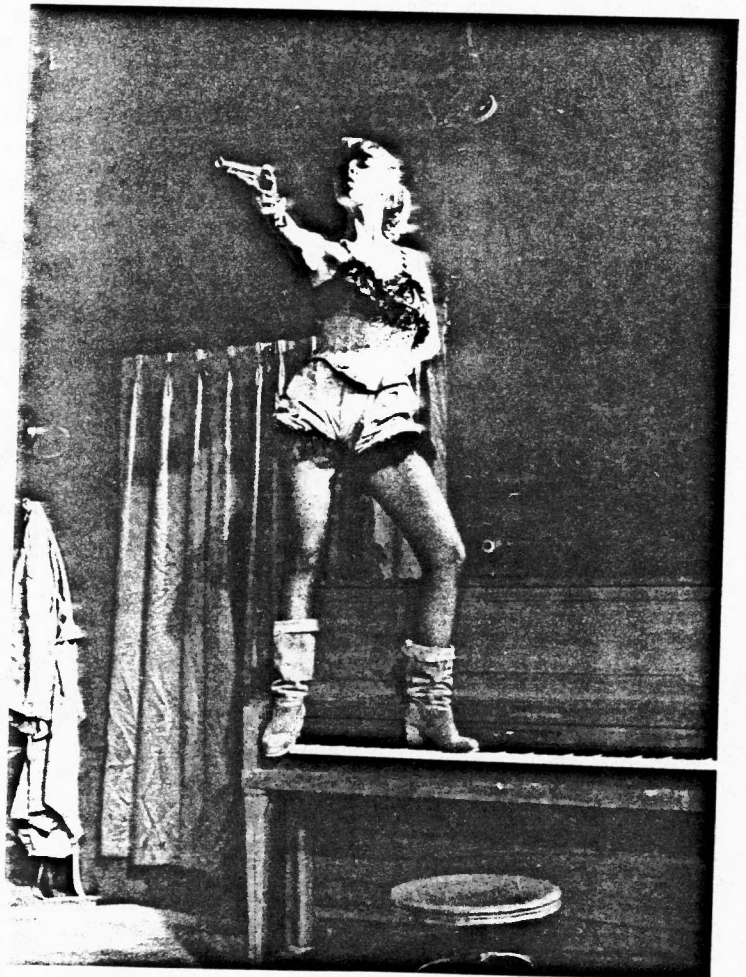
Dr. Douglas L. Paterson, Chair
Department of Dramatic Arts - UNO
Omaha, Nebraska 68182
402-554-2406













Newsweek

November 17, 1975

THEATER

JACK KROLL

Smile, Pardner

There's nothing ickier than satiric, ironic, poetic plays about Western types

like Billy the Kid and Jesse James. David Freeman has performed a minor miracle by writing such a play that sparkles with intelligence and sly humor and even makes a good running jump at a certain complexity. If Freeman picks up some splinters at that hurdle, **JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN** is still the best theatrical attempt to de-myth the gun slinger.

Directed jauntily by Gordon Stewart, "Jesse" is performed by two actors, Kevin O'Connor and Pamela Payton-Wright, who play Jesse James and his

quondam consort, the man-killing, man-loving Belle Starr, plus any other characters who jog into their lives. Jesse, the macho marauder, doesn't fool Belle, who knows what he really wants. Freeman's central device is the sensational *Police Gazette* stories that created the myth of the Western badperson, and his turning of the tables—sexual and ballistic—on Jesse is like putting a ten-gallon hat on the Marquis de Sade. O'Connor and Payton-Wright are superb—swift, smart, funny, sad, tender. They, and Freeman, catch the frighteningly childish nature of violence in a laughter that kills.

WOMEN'S WEAR DAILY

November 3, 1975

'Jesse and the Bandit Queen'

In "Jesse and the Bandit Queen," David Freeman has used two legendary figures from the American West, Jesse James and Belle Starr, to create a series of arresting stage images in which sexuality has the unpredictability, the anxiety and the violence of life on the frontier.

Early in the play we see Jesse dressing as a woman to lure unsuspecting victims for his then-partner to murder and rob, and Belle taunts him about whether the "drag" was simply an occupational necessity. Later we see a scene which begins as a conventional, comic "shaving" scene and ends with Belle threatening Jesse with the razor, both balanced precariously on a barber chair. Both acts end with "riding" scenes, a common image for brutal sexuality intensified here by the overall frenetic mood. Belle dies when she is stabbed by her son, with whom, it is suggested, she has had an incestuous relationship; Jesse is killed by his own gun wielded by a young man to whom he has been a spiritual father. The dialogue is often banal, not nearly as evocative or as pungent as the visual images it builds towards; what seems to matter most is that we are generally aware of an original and dark imagination at work.

The play has only two characters, each of whom "acts" the other "parts" in important scenes in his partner's life, creating a rich assignment for the two actors. As Jesse, Kevin O'Connor has a look that is somehow open, vulnerable and yet rough, which works well for the character. Pamela Payton-Wright, too, has a face that is at the same time inviting and very hard. The work of both has assurance, grace and an uncomfortable edge that seems superbly suited to the mood of the play.

— HOWARD KISSEL



New York Post

November 3, 1975

'Jesse' Is Where He Belongs

By MARTIN GOTTFRIED

The New York Shakespeare Festival finally had the first opening of this season at its home base—The Public Theater—and, happily, it has not forgotten what to do there and how to do it. "Jesse and the Bandit Queen" is an im-

pressive introduction to a talented new playwright.

David Freeman's play opened last night at the Other Stage, which is exactly where it should have opened. Each of the Public's theaters has its own personality and

this one has traditionally been devoted to workshop productions that evolve well enough to be presented professionally.

So, a certain amount of limitation is conceded the play by its producer. It hardly requires apology but on the other hand, "Jesse and the Bandit Queen" is frankly small in scale and reminiscent of other recent works, most notably Michael McClure's "The Beard," the movie "Bonnie and Clyde" and the western plays of Sam Shepard.

Like them, "Jesse and the Bandit Queen" digs into our Western bandit lore in search of an American mythology.

Like the "Beard," its characters move in a time warp, already figures of legend rather than history. Like "Bonnie and Clyde" they are publicity conscious, concerned with how they will be remembered as well as how they will be shot down. And, like Shepard's cowboys, their West has already become a picture of itself.

A Blank Frame

So Freeman's play has, as its recurring metaphor, a blank picture frame that supposedly contains a Western landscape—hung in a home set in the very midst of the real Western landscape.

The work has but two

characters — Jesse James and Belle Starr, the girl he obviously loved and relished but wouldn't leave his wife for. At least, that is Freeman's story.

But how much of it is true? Details grow so extravagant it is hard to tell where facts leave off and fantasies begin. Did James' wife and mother have the same name? Was his mother's arm blown off during a U. S. Army assault on her home and did he retaliate by cutting off the arms of a group of officers? Was Belle Starr's home incestuously plagued?

Sexual Ambivalence

Most of these uncertainties create the play's special spirit but some of the details are so surprising they inter-

rupt the suspension, stopping you dead in your tracks to wonder about them. Others have no apparent connection with anything, and I am thinking of the recurring sexual ambivalence: Starr shows more and more signs of masculinity (she insists that her husbands take her name in marriage) and James grows evermore feminine. At the very end, in fact, they are wearing each other's clothes.

This device exemplifies the youthfulness of this play as well as its author's natural gifts. A seasoned playwright would have either fit it more clearly into the play or cut it despite its theatricality. Yet, the very idea is so stagy, in the best sense of

the word, that one can only look forward to more of its author's inventions.

Smooth Writing

The writing itself is extremely smooth and consistent in tone, even when it is consciously anachronistic. The structure is formidable with episodes cinematically dovetailing and a variety of characters slipping in and out of the story.

The two actors play them all, and quite remarkably. Kevin O'Connor and Pamela Payton-Wright make an odd team, they are so disparate in method. O'Connor is a charismatic performer; Payton-Wright is a classically trained technician. In other circumstances she might wipe him out, she has so formidable an array of disciplines at

her disposal. In this play they mesh because he can project the dumb energy of James while she can carefully stitch together the many layers of Belle, not to mention James' wife and several other characters.

Gordon Stewart's direction is liquidity itself, excellent all the way through and always as if in a dream. My only quarrel is with his use of a cheap trick — showing the audience that a razor is actually sharp before Starr uses it to shave and threaten James. The play and Stewart's otherwise flawless work didn't deserve it. "Jesse and the Bandit Queen" is fascinating from beginning to end and David Freeman is a playwright to encourage.

"Yanks 3 Detroit 0 Top of the Seventh"

The New York Times

May 30, 1975

Theater: 2 by Reynolds

By CLIVE BARNES

Two venerable American activities—the State Assembly and the game of baseball—came under comic scrutiny at the American Place Theater last night, where a double bill of plays, "Rubbers" and "Yanks 3 Detroit 0 Top of the Seventh" by Jonathan Reynolds, had its premiere. Seen at a critics' preview, both plays seemed to share many of the same virtues and vices. They were both very funny, but were also over-extended, while the comic situations tended to be exploited rather than developed. But, there again, they were undeniably funny, until exaggeration is escalated beyond theatrical zaniness into dramatic folly.

Mr. Reynolds is a young man—if 33 can nowadays be called young—and his way of looking at the world is attractively cock-eyed. His view of the less-than-august proceedings of the New York State Assembly is particularly hilarious. He sees it as a place where futility reigns, and grown men and women play games of such imbecility that one would have thought that they would have been beneath even politicians. And probably they are—for this is one of Mr. Reynolds' cardinal

faults. He goes too far too often. Jokes are like candy bars—the first one is the best. Mr. Reynolds should take care not to hammer his audience into submission.

"Rubbers" has a young woman member of the Assembly desperately trying to get a bill through that would require pharmacists to place contraceptives on public display. The response this receives from her fellow members is immediate, explosive and often very amusing. Mr. Reynolds offers some whimsical caricatures of Assemblymen—such as the sickly corrupt majority leader with bonhomie oozing from under his fingernails, the whiz-kid, popstar politician playing to the gallery, the old and forgetful member who was one of Roosevelt's best friends, and wanders on inconsequentially about this or anything else that sparks his memory, the frustrated advertising executive, the manic moralist, and not least the woman sponsor of the bill, a disenfranchised liberal who fondly remembers the nineteen-sixties and is now full of the bile of human kindness.

The writing is not exactly

witty but it has the loveliest feeling for the absurd about it. The trouble is that the author never knows when he is going too far, so he is consistently more lively than lifelike. Dramatic humor is really more enjoyable if it is more firmly grounded in actuality. In the second play, Mr. Reynolds does keep rather closer to the real world, with an aging, fading baseball pitcher who is on his way out and frantically knows it.

With his ethnic jokes and crass materialism there is nothing very attractive about Emil (Duke) Bronskowski paranoically facing high noon on the mound. And yet seeing him assailed by the opposing team—all markedly younger and mocking men—his own catcher (he has the only catcher in the major leagues who wants his pitcher to call him "Mister!" and his coach, who seems to be a totally incoherent mixture of Yogi Berra, Vince Lombardi and a digest of The Readers' Digest, one has to feel some basic sympathy. His fast ball has gone, he never had a curve ball, and he wonders whether he is not a natural lefty. He might have been happier playing basketball.

The trouble with the play is that nothing happens to Bronskowski. At the beginning of the play he is a man pitching ball feeling failure in the pit of his stomach. At the end he has failed. It is a sketch more than anything else—overprolonged and yet

The Cast

RUBBERS & YANKS 3 DETROIT 0 TOP OF THE SEVENTH, two plays by Jonathan Reynolds. Directed by Alan Arkin; setting by Henry Mullman; costumes by Susan Denison; lighting by Roger Morgan; production stage manager, Franklin Keyser. Presented by the American Place Theater, Wynn Handman, artistic director. At 111 West 46th Street.

RUBBERS
 Republicans:
 Mr. Clegg Charles Siebert
 Mr. Murrin Lou Criscuolo
 Mr. Damiano Robert Lesser
 Mr. Tomato Mitchell Prince
 Mr. P. Viltziak Mitchell Jason
 Mr. Beep William Bogert
 Mr. Fermin Michael Prince
 Democrats:
 Mrs. Brimmins Laura Esterman
 Mr. Pard MacIntyre Dixon
 Mr. Townsend John Hill
 Mr. Austin John Hill
 Miss Pines Leta Stetter
 Pages Warren Swencov, Jaime Tiller
YANKS 3 DETROIT 0
 Emil (Duke) Bronskowski Lou Criscuolo
 Lawrence (Beano) Murrin Robert Lesser
 Old Salt Mitchell Prince
 Lucky Johnson John Hill
 Donna Lutz-Danna Leta Stetter
 Lincoln Lewis Albert Hall
 Guido Morosini Robert Lesser
 Brick Brock William Bogert
 Baseball Players Warren Swencov, Jaime Tiller

—within the underlimitations of its length—well done.

Both plays were beautifully directed by Alan Arkin, who maintained an artful spontaneity throughout the entire evening. His was a most considerable triumph, and the acting was also excellent. Charles Siebert was a delight as the majority leader, as was Laura Esterman as the woman determined to fight for contraception, while Tony Lo Bianco carried off a tour de force as the failing ball-player. A fun evening that, for Mr. Reynolds, holds promise of better things.

November 3, 1975

Outlaws and crazy people

By DOUGLAS WATT

David Freeman's "Jesse and the Bandit Queen," which opened last evening at the Public Theater's tiny Other Stage, is like a collection of out-takes from a '30s Western about the post-Civil War outlaws Jesse James and Belle Starr. The dialogue is snappy and the situations are sometimes salty, but the whole thing (90 minutes including an intermission on Friday, when I caught it) doesn't add up to a hill of beans.

The movie image is heightened by the presence of two personable performers, Pamela Payton-Wright and Kevin O'Connor. Their voices slurred and their manners easygoing as they spar with each other, they might be Claire Trevor and the young John Wayne or any one of a dozen other such

combinations.

They're both charming and knowing and play well against one another. O'Connor brings an added touch of sincerity to his performance that makes you suspect, especially when the publicity-hungry Jesse sits at an old-fashioned typewriter and declares "I'm building a legend," that the author may be onto something, but nothing comes of it and, anyway, the image of the Western outlaw or city gangster avid for feature articles is threadbare. The only novel touch is their continual transference of roles so that at the finish it is Belle dressed as Jesse who is shot by a Jesse wearing Belle's scarf and, of course, meant to be Bob Ford.

They play other contemporaries of theirs from time to time, too, and perhaps my

favorite line came from Miss Payton-Wright when, impersonating Jesse's wife, she said: "It's hard hein' married to you."

So for much too long we watch Jesse and Belle toy with one another, listen to Belle play Mozart on the spinet, see Jesse play the Hanging Judge and also Belle's beloved horse Venus, on whom she rides off at the end. We also learn of Jesse's early education with Quantrell's Raiders and the band's gory exploits and of the seduction of Belle's daughter by her son followed by the girl's running off to a Detroit brothel. Jesse and Belle, obviously, are two kids who just weren't brung up right.

But as finished as the acting and Gordon Stewart's direction are, and as attrac-

The Cast

JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN by David Freeman. Directed by Gordon Stewart, setting by Richard J. Graziano, costumes by Hilary M. Rosenfeld, lighting by Arden Funderburk, production manager, Penny Gebhard. Presented by the New York Shakespeare Festival, Joseph Papp, producer, Bernard Gorsten, associate producer. At the Other Stage Public Theater, 425 Lafayette Street.

Jesse Pamela Payton-Wright
Belle Kevin O'Connor

tive as Richard J. Graziano's simple setting and Hilary M. Rosenfeld's two costumes are, "Jesse and the Bandit Queen" remains just an exercise by a promising writer of dialogue, and not a play. As a matter of fact "Jesse," which first emerged as a staged reading last summer at the Eugene O'Neill Memorial Theater Center in Waterford, Conn., was a New York Shakespeare Festival workshop production until Joseph Papp decided—prematurely, it seems to me—to open it to the public. Besides, does anybody care much anymore about Jesse or Belle or Billy the Kid, who was the subject of another recent effort?

The New York Times

November 3, 1975

Stage: A Daring 'Jesse'

Bandit and His Queen Are Roles to Behold

By CLIVE BARNES

Bandits are interesting, if only because they accept no rules. The frontier promoted bandits, probably even needed bandits. The frontier was a world of exploitation, and bandits are great exploiters. And then the Civil War helped to promote banditry—it certainly created Jesse James.

Billy the Kid, Jesse James and, later, Al Capone have a special place in American folk history—think of all the novels, plays and movies that have celebrated them. Their lawlessness has proved covertly admirable to many law-abiding citizens. They have become the whipping boys for our dreams of conquest by assault. The jungle life. They actually have a shameful glamour—they are mythic.

The new play that opened last night at Joseph Papp's

The Other Stage in his Lafayette Complex of the Public Theater is called "Jesse and the Bandit Queen." It has been written by David Freeman, directed by Gordon Stewart, and concerns the relationship between Jesse James and that unusual bandit woman, Belle Starr. And their exploits as recorded in that sign of the times, The Police Gazette.

This is unquestionably a play I would recommend—it is most sweetly performed and it has a technical daring to it that is in itself fascinating—yet, beware, the entire show does not quite deliver what it is continually promising to deliver. When it ends you are still waiting for the ending. And always when you leave a theater wondering about the ending, you find yourself considering, for that matter, what was the beginning like?

What kind of play did Mr. Freeman want to write. He

holds us (partly it is his two fantastically accomplished actors who make the magic—they could hold up a bank with imaginary pistols), and yet he cheats on us. Who were Jesse James and Belle Starr? And why did they have to do those terrible things they did? And why did they end up so dead looking? And why did they stay alive? What is the solution to a myth? One has the feeling that Mr. Freeman is trying, very seriously, to tackle these questions. But they evade him.

The playwright is nobody's fool, and he has devised a quite unusual dramatic form. It is basically a dialogue between Jesse and his Belle, his sometimes mistress. But at any time, the actors are permitted to pass into other characters—so that, for example, Belle becomes Quantrell, the Southern guerrilla leader, who formulated Jesse's military-style thinking on banditry.

This very loose, free-fall form is helpful, but Mr. Freeman seems so obsessed with the glamour of his lovers that he seems to make no significant comment on them. As a result, you admire all the dramatic techniques displayed for your delectation, you enjoy Mr. Freeman's verbal felicity, which is considerable, and you watch the

lovely actors.

Mr. Stewart's direction is admirable, but why I really urge you to see "Jesse and the Bandit Queen," is largely to see the most ingratiating, technical and natural acting of Pamela Payton-Wright as Belle, and Kevin O'Connor as Jesse.

Miss Payton-Wright is a women's liberation movement all by herself—this appears to be one of the subtexts of Mr. Freeman's play, incidentally—and with her irony, humor, bitterness, charm and a fantastic realization of the concept of orneryness, she is a rodeo of a woman. Mr. O'Connor, slouched over his Police Gazette, is the very legendary Jesse. He tries to explain the conflicts of a bandit, without too much help from the play itself. What made Jesse run? Mr. O'Connor is clearly tackling this all-American question and, within the corral of the play, coming up with answers.

As a whole, the evening is a good one. Tantalizingly, it seems to want to tell you more about the nature of banditry than the playwright comprehends. Yet you have two actors here spinning out dreams. That can never be wrong.

so familiar setting and patterns. A superb final five minutes, death and despair made lyrical in Mr. Gunn's mighty cadences, culminating in the hopeless "I'm going to sit here and maybe come up with something in one thousand years." But the play proper was loosely focused, and didn't last beyond a few days. Leaving it rattling around in my head, but not yours.

Some of you, not too many, may have caught a delicately formed, vulnerable, perennial ingenue named Pamela Payton-Wright in an intriguing spot of fantasy called "Jesse and the Bandit Queen" down at Joseph Papp's Public Theater. It stayed quite a long while, though not with Miss Payton-Wright. Soon after its opening, the actress was whisked away uptown to Circle in the Square, there to play the delicately formed, vulnerable, eternal ingenue of "The Glass Menagerie." She was of course quite right for it. But do you know what? She was much, much more interesting as the notorious Belle Starr, riding Jesse James like a bronco, planting her booted foot on a barroom piano, snapping her fingers at incest and her whip at the world about her. There's just conceivably a lesson to be learned here. In doing Laura in "Glass Menagerie" the actress was simply playing into herself: her lip quivers naturally, her large eyes hint at hurt before a finger's been laid to her. Easy pickings; what further energies need be tapped? But Miss Payton-Wright may be one of those actresses whose real gifts aren't unleashed until she is cast against type, thrown into the muscular didoes and roundhouse oaths of a part that doesn't look like her. Suddenly we begin to get layers of personality, are startled by the cantankerous vigor of a virago who deceptively resembles a wolf, take delight in the contradiction and the electricity its friction throws off. Something to think about, but did you get there soon enough—or did you see another girl, put together for yourself another kind of season? I didn't see the replacement; we drift farther apart.

God knows how many replacements I have by this time seen in "Equus," what with all those analysts and stable-boys coming and going (the girls must he kept track of, too). But I've just realized this morning that there's one thing I haven't done. A correspondent writes to ask if I've ever seen it from the bleachers that rise on stage, surrounding the actors, serving as a kind of mirror-audience. No, I haven't. I suppose if it had occurred to me to do so, I'd have restrained myself; I take voluminous notes during performance, as the analyst does, and I wouldn't want to seem in competition with anybody. I might even be mistaken for a rival analyst—you know how those chaps differ—and be expected to speak. But my enthusiastic correspondent assures me that the sensation of being right there in the operating theater, as it were, faced by a darker horde beyond, is quite different—and exhilarating. "When the 'real' audience applauds, you feel like you want to get up and take a bow," the girl who wrote me concludes. And that, you see, goes into her grab-bag of experience.

I feel quite certain that those who are now seeing Ruth Gordon in "Mrs. Warren's Profession" at the Beaumont are not seeing quite the Ruth Gordon who opened in it a month ago. I was away at the time and missed that event. To tell you the truth, I still haven't seen all of "Mrs. Warren's Profession," just the first two acts; what looked like a blizzard came swirling through the towered skies and I dived for my car before my way home could be blocked (I hope to get back). But Miss Gordon's first notices were anything but pleasant; they weren't even polite. It is still true that she is miscast; Shaw's brothel-mistress wants a younger woman.

But some of the complaints I read found Miss Gordon working not merely in a mannered fashion but in isolation, playing her own game of hell while the others

woman!" we are prepared to nod assent, Miss Gordon's been working, and is gradually changing the complexion of what somebody saw.

What somebody saw. I pick up the morning paper and notice, with pleasure, that Ellis Rabb is not only planning to reconstitute the A.P.A. but is going to tee off, and help finance the project, with a television production of George M. Cohan's "The Tavern," a play the A.P.A. had in repertory when it was practically hidden from the world in an obscure downtown house called the Folksbeine. Did you see George Grizzard play the Cohan role there, lower lip slightly askew, head tilted back in defiance, voice often near a husky whisper to make the foolish fantasy more persuasive? No? I hope you'll have a chance now, though Mr. Grizzard is not mentioned in the release and may not even be available. But we do need more in common, you and I.

I would guess that for the audience at large Walter Matthau's career began with "The Odd Couple." Truth is, for more than 10 years before that he was one of the best young actors in New York, mainly in flops. On the telephone the other night an acquaintance could scarcely believe that I'd seen the late James Dean in the theater, first in a play called "See the Jaguar." But did you notice him? he wanted to know, rather as though he doubted whether anyone had until film made a legend of him. Yes, all the reviewers noticed him. Only the audience didn't, there being no jaguar to see after a night or two.

And so we share a theater, and we don't. We go to the same places, see the same faces, yet a trick of the light intervenes—last night or years ago, no matter—to keep us always, ever so slightly, apart. But that's all right. It's just something to be kept in mind, at parties or in locker rooms, when we're comparing notes we expect to be identical.

1976 Mr 21, 11:7:5

LINE and SHOOTING GALLERY, by Israel Horowitz. Directed by Carol Lisson. Lighting by Manny Savard. Set design by Neal Brant. Production stage manager, Neal Brant. Presented by the 13th Street Theater Repertory Company. Edith O'Hara, artistic director, in association with Atlantic Theater Company. All the 13th Street Theater, 30 West 13th Street.

SHOOTING GALLERY, by Young Frankenstein and Abraham Beame. Directed by Michael Sharrow. Edith O'Hara, artistic director, in association with Atlantic Theater Company. All the 13th Street Theater, 30 West 13th Street.

By CLIVE BARNES

There is a pleasant surprise lying in wait for people who go to Israel Horowitz's short play "Line" at the 13th Street Theater—not least for those who have seen the play in earlier manifestations—notably the major production at the Theater de Lys four or five years ago. Of course it may merely be a change of heart on the part of this critic. But I think not. The play really does look a lot better in this new and very responsive Off Off Broadway production. In fact it looks very good indeed.

The play is both slight and dense—a concept of play-writing that most of us find difficult to comprehend. You

Looking back one realizes that all of Mr. Horowitz's plays have been a conceptual message wrapped in a cocoon of wit. He has invented what might be called, not unkindly I hope, the fortune cookie play. But whereas fortune cookies are always dry and disappointing (after the message has gone, who eats the crumbled remnants, disgruntled waiters?), this play, while the wrapping may be dry, has wit, humor and fantasy—qualities that almost by definition fortune cookies singularly lack.

In "Lins," Mr. Horowitz is concerned simply with man's efforts to be first. It is the frenetic world of overachievers. Four men and one woman are standing in line. We never know what for. One by one they arrive, and then they play a kind of jungle version of musical chairs, adroitly cheating and savaging one another in their self-directed efforts to get to the front of that mythical, mystical but infinitely important line.

Yes, the idea does go on a little too long. Yet the style is very sure, the dia-

the characterulatory ending horrid, dange

The play interplays — sharpened in terns. It has by Carol I instinctive se style, the act ahly respons and its alle The five in first picking Benedetto, haum. Jackl ter Victor McGlade. All with impetu-

Miss Ilson thorough jol one-acter, lery," which ning. This account of t men and wo devoted his a dummy be gallery in a bowl of go self-sacrifici baby-sitting with a con Male chauv been more c sected in th

As the sharpshoote proved a m hension, an looked diml young wom shores of re play, neatly

VANITIES by J Garland. Wr Arlene. Lig osulties by stage manage sented by the the Lion The wright's Horiz side Theater. Kathy Mary Jeanne

By CL

Three lit up—or at l tle less lit "Vanities," last night a ater Center ter on We: diverting even a mild of three g sad journe ers at high queens anc wanly app with little courage a call their c

The pla something Carthy ne "The Group of women" aspiration seeming e is indeed



Martha Swope

Marjorie Knight in "Kennedy's Children"
"bold, deliberate and hypnotic"

themselves and the shattering decade they inhabit. Both are innocents, of very different kinds. Miss Knight, downing four straight vodkas efficiently before she has so much as said a word, sees Marilyn Monroe's death as an opportunity; a Marilyn Monroe is needed, needed by everyone, and she will be the next one. She is cunning and has her course charted. She knows that she is pretty—very pretty—and she knows how to manipulate men. No matter that "people don't want to hear me talk at all, people just want to look at me." Be a realist, and make it.

She has, as her turn to speak comes 'round another time, made just one mistake. She has forgotten that there are 15 million girls exactly like her, that "conglomerate input" has made them indistinguishable from one another, that they'll cancel each other out and be replaced by "drag queens." For the most part, Miss Knight's bitterness is reserved, shaped for irony; she chooses her words as carefully as Henry James might have done, models her mind for us as she does her body. But there is a steady advance toward savagery, toward the breathlessly swift changes of posture she will adopt as she mocks the merchandising of a body, toward the open, scalding hatred she will lavish on all of the other cunning people who have so unfeelingly scuttled her plans. The performance is bold, deliberate and hypnotic; I cannot believe Miss Knight has done anything so good before.

Miss Montgomery's innocence is the sort that survived the 60's by scarcely noticing them, so bound is she to the moment, the shock, the ideals, of Camelot. Still shaking her head incredulously as she recalls the confusions of the day when everyone first "heard the news," somehow producing a break in her voice after she has finished saying "Jackie's dead," reliving her concern over Jackie's not quite dead clothes and summoning up a rueful smile over how

capsule, ready to pick up now where she left off before the numbing event. She has got her teaching certificate, and she is going to leave the ad agency in which she works to do what conscientious liberals have always done: keep on improving the world. Miss Montgomery makes her portrait of a throwback—interestingly, this throwback is the only member of the group who has a future—seem strangely thoughtful, attractively earnest in her blind clinging to a past that might have been, might yet be, productive.

Two actresses, foraging among their instincts for character-shapes with some progression to them, have done what the others cannot do: make the play move.

David Freeman's interesting if inconclusive "Jesse and the Bandit Queen" never does get around in the death of either of its two heroes, Jesse James and Belle Starr. The two come within inches of killing each other half a dozen times: Belle with a razor at her fellow-outlaw's throat, a knife or a rifle aimed square at his back, and Jesse as he sits laboriously typing out his life-story, a life-story that will include the lady's slaughter at his hands. But their contests have a habit of dissolving into sex or stranger things, and the foul deed isn't done.

What Mr. Freeman's fanciful improvisation does have something to say about is the birth of heroes, or at least of the mythical kind that still trail blood through the American imagination. Who invented them, anyway? The evening at the Public is a succession of transformations. Two fine performers, Pamela Payton-Wright and Kevin O'Connor, keep turning into six or seven other people and at last into each other, and one of the roles Jesse temporarily assumes is that of his Police Gazette biographer, Richard Fox. Fox is writing "about outlaws for Easterners" and tends to color matters a bit. "It doesn't matter what you do, only what I say you do," he blithely informs Belle, who is infuriated at the notion that she is no more than the "female" Jesse James.

Jesse himself learns the lesson. Deciding to override Mr. Fox and tell the real truth about himself, he attacks, hunt-and-peck, his biography. Before long, though, he realizes that if Fox can say anything, he can, too, and he is off and away dramatizing his own death as he imagines it (much more spectacular than a dirty shot in the back) and deciding to do away with Belle because "I'm building a legend and that's gonna be part of it." What with the hero's own untrustworthiness, and everybody else lying like crazy to make him more heroic, is there anything we can believe in, yesterday or today?

The point is there, but not pressed. Mr. Freeman is principally having fun, exploring Belle's feminist urges (she not only wants Jesse to change his name, she halts and rides him like a horse while shouting "You're mah pleasure, mah only pleasure!"), Jesse's pride in having "invented" bank robbery along military lines ("We just kept up our own war"), and the elusive shifts of identity that keep turning male into female, victim into victor, two imagined folk-figures into one.

The conceit contents itself with making figure-eights through space, swapping one loop for another, letting us guess what its ending means ("I don't need you, Jesse," Belle cries, "because I am you, Jesse!"). We don't come away with anything substantial in our hands. But the playfulness that is there is well written, Gordon Stewart's staging is swift and light, and Miss Payton-Wright, in particular, is a joy to be baffled by. With a lecr beneath her eyelashes that is as insinuating as her drawl, stomping one boot upon piano keys as she displays her fast draw, as quick with a whip as she is with a surprisingly girlish grin, she is first-rate. So is Mr. O'Connor, deeply satisfied with his status as legend even if "everybody's got it wrong." This is promising work, exactly right for the Public's tiny but functional Other Stage.

"Kennedy's Children," by Robert Patrick. At the Golden.
 "Jesse and the Bandit Queen," by David Freeman. At the Public.

By MICHAEL FEINGOLD

STAMFORD, CONN.

"What are you laughing at?" the Mayor screams to the audience in the general hysteria that closes Nikolai Gogol's "The Government Inspector." "You're laughing at yourselves!" It is a famous line—one of the best-known in all Russian drama—and the key to evaluating any production of the play. Gogol's nightmare comedy, in which the corrupt officials of a small town mistake a hapless and penniless young fop for the Czar's official investigator, seems more to be the definitive dramatic version of our social life.

Not that "The Government Inspector" is a social satire, though most of its characters are government officials, and every one as rotten as can be. Gogol's joke simply has wider targets than bureaucracy: His weird, deracinated people, with their infallible ability to fall into the worst traps they lay for others, are too much like everyone else to be lumped into a special category, as a ruling class or whatever. The characters' corruption is simply an index of their humanity; after a point, their eagerness to bribe the simple-minded fop Khyestakov starts to look like their only virtue, a generosity that mixes oddly with their greed, their abject cowardice, their smug obliviousness to others' feelings, and their raging fear of having their crimes discovered. In other words, just folks.

Making the audience recognize its kinship with Gogol's grotesques is not something the current production—the first effort of the new Hartman Theater Company in Stamford, Conn.—is very concerned with. Under Byron Ringland's direction, a large and game company struggles to turn the play's gallery of oddballs into stock farcical types. A British translation is used, one which smooths over the lovely, goofy discontinuities of Gogol's language (Nabokov once defined this play as "poetry in action") and replaces them with slick running gags. The sets and costumes, by Peter Harvey and Dona Granata, respectively, are much more concerned with being Russian-pretty and 1830's-fancy (at which they are very success-

Michael Feingold is a drama critic for *The Village Voice*.

1975 N 16, 11:5:1

THEME

from

Sonata in C Major

(First Movement)

W. A. MOZART (1756-1791)

Arranged by Maxwell Eckstein

Allegro

Piano

p

1 1 5 1 3 1 1 2 (h) 3 2

p *cresc.*

1 3 1 2

f *cresc.*

5 4 2 1 5 3 2 1

f *cresc.*

5 4 3 2 1

f *cresc.*

5 4 3 2 1

mf *cresc.*

Dear Theatre Friend,

Preparations have begun for our 1984-85 University Theatre Season and as a past supporter of the UNO-Dramatic Arts Department, we wanted you to be the first to know about our season line-up:

Buried Child by Sam Shepard October 19, 20, 21, 26, 27, 28
Bums in Dumpsters by Douglas Marr December 7, 8, 9, 14, 15, 16
Under Milkwood by Dylan Thomas March 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 10
The Robber Bridegroom with book and lyrics by Alfred Uhry
and music composed and arranged by Robert Waldman
April 19, 20, 21, 26, 27, 28

Our new brochure should be at your home soon, but in the meantime we want you to know about our Pre-Season Special.

We are pleased to announce the opening of Jesse and the Bandit Queen by David Freeman on September 14th and continuing on the 15, 16, 21, 22, and 23rd at 8:00 pm in the Studio Theatre, Arts and Sciences Hall, Room 214.

Director Barbee Davis has cast William Lacey as the bankrobbing Jesse James and Laura Marr as Belle Starr. Ms. Davis describes Jesse and the Bandit Queen as a "funny, entertaining and touching look at the difference between the myth and the legend of desperado Jesse James and the infamous Belle Starr." Jesse was transformed into legend through his daring bank robberies; especially his unsuccessful attempt in Northfield, Minnesota. Belle, heroine of the lurid dime novels of the old west, was often billed as the female Jesse James.

The Theatre Box Office will be taking reservations for Jesse and the Bandit Queen Monday through Friday 12:00 until 5:00 at 554-2335. Our 1984-85 season tickets will also be available at this time. We are happy to offer this Pre-Season Special at no additional cost when you purchase a new season ticket.

General Season	\$12.00
Faculty/Staff	\$12.00
Student	\$10.00
Senior Citizen	\$ 5.00

We look forward to seeing you this year at UNO: A Live Theatre!


Robin Gayle Lewy
Business Manager

AUDITIONS! AUDITIONS! AUDITIONS!

The UNO Theatre Department announces auditions for the fall Studio Theatre production of Jesse and the Bandit Queen by David Freeman. They will be held at 7:00 p.m., Monday, June 18, 1984 in the Studio Theatre.

The play will run Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings, September 14, 15, 16; and also September 21, 22 and 23. Performances will be at 8:00.

Jesse and the Bandit Queen is a series of sketches about Jesse James and Belle Starr and the myths surrounding them. The governing concept concerns the perception of reality. Action takes place on several levels: there are scenes which seem to be encounters between Jesse and Belle, but the reality is that they never met. Their scenes are projections of fantasy as to what the relationship would have been if, indeed, they had been the famous lovers the penny dreadfuls made them out to be.

Each character plays a number of roles, but they are not merely the usual switches of character. As Belle plays the other people in Jesse's life, she portrays them not as they were historically, but as she imagines they were from her understanding of the effect they had on Jesse's life. Her own prejudices color her portrayals. Jesse also shows how he sees those who have been a part of Belle's life.

If you are interested in participating in this exciting project which will be done as a graduate project, please mark your calendar for auditions.

Barbee Davis,
Director

**Jesse and
the Bandit Queen**

A PLAY IN TWO ACTS

by David Freeman



Samuel French, Inc.

Jesse and the Bandit Queen

A PLAY IN TWO ACTS

by David Freeman

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, by any means, including mechanical, electronic, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher.



SAMUEL FRENCH, INC.
25 WEST 45TH STREET NEW YORK 10036
7623 SUNSET BOULEVARD HOLLYWOOD 90046
LONDON TORONTO

COPYRIGHT ©, 1976, BY DAVID FREEMAN

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN is subject to a royalty. It is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America, the British Empire, including the Dominion of Canada, and all other countries of the Copyright Union. All rights, including professional, amateur, motion pictures, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved. In its present form the play is dedicated to the reading public only.

JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN may be given stage presentation by amateurs upon payment of a royalty of Fifty Dollars for the first performance, and Thirty-five Dollars for each additional performance, payable one week before the date when the play is given, to Samuel French, Inc., at 25 West 45th Street, New York, N. Y. 10036, or at 7623 Sunset Boulevard, Hollywood, Calif. 90046, or to Samuel French (Canada), Ltd., 27 Grenville Street, Toronto M4Y 1A1, Canada.

Royalty of the required amount must be paid whether the play is presented for charity or gain and whether or not admission is charged.

Stock royalty quoted on application to Samuel French, Inc.

For all other rights than those stipulated above, apply to Bridget Aschenberg, International Creative Management, 40 West 57th Street, New York, N. Y. 10019.

Particular emphasis is laid on the question of amateur or professional readings, permission and terms for which must be secured in writing from Samuel French, Inc.

Copying from this book in whole or in part is strictly forbidden by law, and the right of performance is not transferable.

Whenever the play is produced the following notice must appear on all programs, printing and advertising for the play: "Produced by special arrangement with Samuel French, Inc."

Due authorship credit must be given on all programs, printing and advertising for the play.

Anyone presenting the play shall not commit or authorize any act or omission by which the copyright of the play or the right to copyright same may be impaired.

No changes shall be made in the play for the purpose of your production unless authorized in writing.

The publication of this play does not imply that it is necessarily available for performance by amateurs or professionals. Amateurs and professionals considering a production are strongly advised in their own interests to apply to Samuel French, Inc., for consent before starting rehearsals, advertising, or booking a theatre or hall.

Printed in U.S.A.

ISBN 0 573 61108 4

“Jesse and the Bandit Queen” was presented as a staged reading at the 1975 National Playwrights Conference of the Eugene O’Neill Memorial Theater Center.

“Jesse and the Bandit Queen” by David Freeman was presented on October 3, 1975 at the New York Shakespeare Festival/Public Theater by Joseph Papp, associate producer Bernard Gersten. The production was directed by Gordon Stewart with settings by Richard Graziano, lighting by Arden Fingerhut, and costumes by Hilary Rosenfeld, production stage manager, Penny Gebhard. The original cast was as follows:

THE CAST

BELLE *Pamela Payton-Wright*

JESSE *Kevin O'Connor*

The roles were later played by Dixie Carter and Barry Primus.

The play takes place in Missouri, Kansas, and the Indian Territories from just after the Civil War till the early eighteen-eighties.

There's been no attempt to write western dialect. The characters are from Missouri and speak in the flat accents of the western prairie.

Let's not start
it as a "deep"
play, rather
as an exciting
adventure story.
Spin a yarn.

Don't end here.
Let it set up... I
had a great
life - that is
what it was.
Let the audience
decide its merit.

① Introduction

write on

JESSE. Fat now, yes fat. But once, oh once.
(~~Stepping down stepping down from the picture
and onto the stage.~~) Actually, I never plan-
ned to be no bank robber, but a soldier. It
just happened. That's the thing, you think
you're planning your life, doing what you
want to, and everybody gets it wrong. (Sits
in rocker.) ^{put hat on - back}

BELLE. Jesse, when I wasn't pretending to
be the desperado of the stage coaches, I
wore a crisp white blouse and me and Venus
and little Jesse, we took in the races, the
circus and the county fair. Except for the
gun I always tucked into the folds of my
skirt, I was one first class lady. (Steps
from the picture and comes to sit at the
piano.)

Lead dimmer
①

change
more
set at
be part
stepped
to see
it would
a
storyteller
approach
a yarn
Audience

Avoid the
hard tough
wired
vice
stereotype.
ake few
al...
more
e can
like.

Blanket
Shawl or cardigan
To the accompaniment

Desk
Police Gazette

Belle
- some
- Red apron

Recording
Jesse

Jesse
Coat
Hat
Hightop
Shoe
Knife
Etc.

Belle
Lamplight Green
Ruffled trim
Lacey coat

Kate
Jesse
Mabel

Jesse and the Bandit Queen

ACT ONE

As the house lights dim, we hear a recording of "Bright Morning Stars." The lights come up, faintly revealing a desolate place on the open prairie. A few platforms divide the Stage. A picture frame, slightly askew, hangs above. On one side, BELLE, about thirty, sits at a small piano, playing softly along with the last of "Bright Morning Stars." She wears a long velour cape. BELLE is an attractive woman, but a little hard. A woman who has kicked around a bit. On the other side of the Stage, JESSE, a few years older sits in a rocking chair, considering his stomach. He wears a hat, leather jacket and chaps. He has his feet up; he's reading *The Police Gazette*. The sound fades out. BELLE continues to play as JESSE speaks.

Handwritten note: Jesse's hat

Handwritten notes: Jesse's jacket
Jesse's hat
Jesse's shoes
Jesse's chaps
Jesse's feet up

Handwritten notes: Jesse's chaps
Jesse's feet up
Jesse's hat
Jesse's jacket
Jesse's shoes

JESSE. (Calling Off Stage.) All right Zee, I said I'd straighten the damn picture and I will. Why'n't you make us some more pancakes Zee. (BELLE stops playing. JESSE addresses the audience.) Why anybody who lives out in the country needs a picture of the country is beyond me. You could just look out the window (He goes back to reading *The Police Gazette* as the lights dim on JESSE and brighten on BELLE.)

BELLE. (Turns Downstage on the piano stool and talks to the audience.) I regard myself as a woman who has seen much of life. I've learned from some of it, remained blind to much of it and I guess just watched the rest lurch past me. I've always expected the worst from people and I have rarely been disap-

9
Lead w/ 5

Handwritten notes: Jesse's chaps
Jesse's feet up
Jesse's hat
Jesse's jacket
Jesse's shoes

Handwritten notes: Jesse's chaps
Jesse's feet up
Jesse's hat
Jesse's jacket
Jesse's shoes

up X DLC

6 JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN ACT I

pointed. The first, and the first is always the worst, was an instructor in history at The Carthage Female Academy, board and lodging, ten dollars a month. He taught history and we made a little between lessons. Or at least it felt like making history. I was eleven. He was, I don't know, twenty, twenty-one. All he ever said was "I can't keep my hands to myself." And he couldn't. He truly, truly could not. I had a horse that I loved more than any man. A mare, a brown and white mare. I called her Venus and she was better to me than I ever was to her. I was never proud of what happened to my babies and when Pearl run off, and Little Ed come at me like that I just got on Venus and rode away. (I wore my lavender dress draped in black fringe and with a plume in my hat and a riding crop at my wrist, dangling . . . there.) (Rises and pulls a gun out of her cape.) Except for the gun I always tucked into the folds of my skirt, I was "one first-class lady." (The lights fade on BELLE as she crosses Down Left and come back up on JESSE still in his rocker.)

JESSE. Fat now, yes fat. But oh once. All right Zee, I'm doing it now. (Rising, removing his hat, and walking to the picture frame, about to straighten it.) Could spend the rest of my life straightening up this house. Why anybody who lives out in the country needs a picture of the country is beyond me. (BELLE as Bobby Ford points the gun at JESSE's back. He hears the gun being cocked, and turns to face BELLE.) Little Bobby Ford. It'll have to be a bullet in the back son, and there'll be no praise for you. No glory, no honor for little Bobby Ford. (JESSE turns back toward the picture, presenting his back to BELLE.) She moves quickly Up Center toward JESSE, dropping the gun to her side. JESSE spins back around as the lights change sharply. He has become BELLE's son Ed, threatening her with a knife.)

BELLE. (As herself.) Eddie. Don't. My little baby. My only son, I'm so sorry. You have to go away now.

History
- teaching
to something
you did love

up left -
Bobby Ford
riding crop
in place

⑪

⑫

X back
Red
she in
the
check
up w/
check
for.

Belle
used to
be

up
platform

X D
H. "bed"

ACT I JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN 7

You have to forget about all of that. Eddie, you mind your mama and put that down. (JESSE hands BELLE the knife as she hands him the gun. BELLE moves Down Center into a pool of light and addresses the audience. JESSE puts the gun into his holster and turns back to the picture as himself once again.) It aint fair. It aint true and it aint fair. Never with Ed. Never. With a lot of them, oh lord, a lot of them, but never with my own baby. (Putting her knife into her scabbard.) I might of made a mess with my babies, but at least I tried with Jesse. Just like my babies though, couldn't live with him, and couldn't live without him. I gave my name to everybody only nobody wanted it except Mr. Richard Fox of The Police Gazette and he just made up a lot of garbage. I guess I added to the confusion but at least it was something. It was more fun being written up in them magazines than never being wrote up at all. (The lights go out on BELLE and come up on JESSE, still at the picture. BELLE crosses behind the piano, removes her cape and bodice, and hangs them on her coat tree.)

JESSE. (Addressing the audience.) Sixteen years of making history and little Bobby Ford was the best they could do. All them Pinkerton men with their squads and staffs and long guns and little Bobby Ford was the winner. (Walking back toward the rocker area.) What the hell do I care about pictures on a wall. (Removing his jacket and hanging it on the rocker.) I was dusting it or straightening it or some damn thing. (Removing his vest and hanging it on his coat tree.) Zee was cooking and getting ready for the Howards to go to Church. (Sits in rocker.) That was our name, Howard. Zee was always worried I'd get arrested if people knew our name. Course we had monogrammed everything. J.J. sewn into every damn thing in the house. Bobby Ford. He used to work for me. Nice kid. Stupid. (Removes his boots.) I never believed that story about the governor paying him

(H)

(B)

+ X DC the "kid"

X coat tree
X to piano

hat etc

let on
deck

Enter
To
Belle
at
entr

8 JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN ACT I

\$10,000 or whatever. How the hell would that pimply faced dodo ever even meet the governor let alone make a deal with him. I always thought what he wanted was to get his sneaky little hands on my wife's ass. I was the same way with Belle when I was his age. (Rising, picking up his hat from the desk. At the first mention of her name, BELLE moves into the piano area, picks up the shawl from the back of the piano and puts it on. She sits at the piano.) Hell, when I got older too. Couldn't keep my hands off her from the day I met her.

⑤ .0
② — Belle at the piano
hat on pick up boots

1865

(The lights dim on JESSE and come up on BELLE at the piano. She struggles with a passage from a Mozart sonata. It is sixteen years earlier and BELLE is seventeen. She is alone in her father's Inn in Missouri. JESSE moves quietly toward BELLE whose back is to him, carrying his boots and wearing his hat. He's young and raw, about her age. He keeps his distance for a moment.)

Back it
sk
window
of the
platform

BELLE. (Still playing.) Who's there? (Pause.) Who is that?

JESSE. (Removing his hat.) Me.

BELLE. (Stops playing and turns to look at JESSE.)

Who's me? (JESSE tosses his hat on the Down Center platform. He does not answer.) Cat got your tongue?

JESSE. Your audience. (He applauds with his boots.)

BELLE. I don't remember selling no tickets.

JESSE. (Moving towards BELLE.) Maybe I don't need no ticket.

BELLE. Then again, maybe you do. You don't even know what I'm doing. (She plays the same piece again.)

JESSE. Then you aint much of a player, are you?

BELLE. (Stops playing.) You staying here?

JESSE. (Crossing Down Left.) You seen us ride up.

BELLE. (Turning toward JESSE.) Well this here is private quarters. Guests stay in the parlor—

facing to audience

turn back to piano

ACT I JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN 9

JESSE. (*Imitating BELLE's father.*) Or in their rooms or in the stables.

to back
DL
M piano
BELLE. (*Giggles.*) You talked to my father, huh?
(*JESSE moves closer to BELLE, enjoying the joke with her. BELLE stops laughing, nervously turns back to the piano, and continues playing the same piece.*)

JESSE. (*Moving Left of the piano.*) You know how to play anything but that one song? (*BELLE plays a different passage of the sonata. It is much faster and louder. She plays it well, obviously showing off.*)

BELLE. (*Still playing.*) What happened to your friend?

JESSE. (*Crossing behind the piano.*) You probably been watching for us since we was three miles up the road.

BELLE. So? (*Boots*)

JESSE. Don't blame you. (*JESSE puts his boots on the back of the piano.*)

BELLE. (*Stops playing.*) You make so much noise what do you expect? Your friend's a gentleman. (*She throws his boots on the floor Down Right of the piano.*) Not like some people I could mention.

JESSE. (*Quickly picking up his boots and carefully placing them Center on the platform.*)—Gentleman? He's my cousin Cole and a goddamn fool.

BELLE. Cole what?

JESSE. Cole Younger.

BELLE. (*Teasing JESSE a little.*) Well I like him. He was real polite. Maybe I'll just go and see if he likes music. (*She rises and walks Down Right as if to leave.*)

JESSE. Where'd you learn to play that?

BELLE. (*Stopping.*) School.

JESSE. Bullcrap.

BELLE. Watch your tongue.

JESSE. Where'd you ever go to school?

BELLE. Carthage Academy. (*She starts to leave again.*)

to
down

Turn

class
feathered

B1

10 JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN ACT I

JESSE. (*Crossing Left of the piano.*) I could play that thing.

BELLE. (*Stopping.*) Yeah, and you could probably fly too.

JESSE. If you could play it, I could play it.

BELLE. You don't even know what it is.

JESSE. I do.

BELLE. Name it.

JESSE. Piano.

BELLE. Nope. Wrong. *See heart & get things*

JESSE. Bullcrap. (*BELLE walks Right of the piano, keeping some distance from JESSE.*) That's a goddamn piano. I seen one before. Better than that, too.

BELLE. This here is a big bass drum. *this*

JESSE. Piano.

BELLE. Can you play it?

JESSE. That don't mean I don't know what it is.

BELLE. If you can't play it, how do you expect to know what it is. (*She hands him his boots; he ignores her.*)

JESSE. I aint going to stand here and argue about if a piano is a piano.

BELLE. Can you?

JESSE. I could learn it. Show me how. (*He sits at the piano.*)

BELLE. Maybe I will, maybe I won't. (*JESSE bangs on the keys. BELLE drops his boots on the floor.*) Do it easy.

JESSE. (*Stops pounding.*) You said it was a drum. (*They both laugh.*)

BELLE. Easy. Play on it like you liked it. (*JESSE plays randomly, more gently this time. BELLE interrupts him by taking his hand and placing his finger on middle C.*) This here's middle C. (*BELLE guides JESSE's finger over the keys.*) Everything goes up or down from that. Great. You're a born genius. (*JESSE rises, offering BELLE the stool. She accepts and JESSE quickly sits next to her. It startles BELLE, but she proceeds teaching him the scale, again guiding his*

It's gonna to keep...

Yeah, just a second to come with it.

turn sit on keep

Belle reach to decoration of piano X

open doorway

misstatement of the instrument

X draw behind desk

Belle will proceed if he dropped key-piano. She doesn't know if it's a scale.

Some what embarrassed she took her place.

ACT I JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN 11

finger. JESSE tries to put his arm around her. She resists but JESSE is persistent. He tries to put his hand on her crotch. BELLE rises, hitting him.) You just cut that out. You don't know nothing about it. You're just ignorant.

JESSE. (Indicating her crotch.) I know where to find middle C. (BELLE starts to leave again but JESSE blocks her way.) What's your name?

BELLE. Belle.

JESSE. You live in this place?

BELLE. Do I look like a paying guest?

JESSE. You're a smart ass.

BELLE. Well, you come into the living quarters where you aint supposed to be and then yell at me for being where I live. (BELLE tries to get by him, JESSE blocks her again.)

JESSE. I'm travelling. We're going to Kansas.

BELLE. So? Lots of people travelling to Kansas come through here.

JESSE. To join the army?

BELLE. War's over. Slaves been freed. Or aint you heard?

JESSE. It aint over for me. There's still Yankees out there shooting at our people. You know that?

BELLE. No.

JESSE. You ever hear of Captain William C. Quantrell?

BELLE. No.

JESSE. Well you should have and you will. We're going to do some shooting back. (He crosses to his boots and picks them up.) I'm Jesse James and I'm going to set this country on its ear.

BELLE. Then you aint going to be here long.

JESSE. (Moving closer to her.) Long enough.

BELLE. I got to go. (She crosses Up Right and stands next to the end of the platform.)

JESSE. Hey Belle. Wait. (He follows her for a short distance then crosses back to the piano.) Well ding dong bell. Drum? (He plunks middle C with his boot.)

roll
yell
stool
roll
back
on stool
up
like
stool
they
guilt
anything
to
walk
stool
going

at a reduction
to the piano

roll
turn
back
to piano
sake
escape
picture
at when
she
mistook
her
return
about
was
right
about
his
alternat
intention

the
X
just

Handwritten initials or marks at the bottom left of the page.

Quantrill & Soldier Boy

12 JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN ACT I

(3)

Bullcrap. (The lights change suddenly, leaving JESSE in a special Downstage of the piano. He's older now. In his early thirties again. He addresses the audience while examining his boots.) Boots are the thing. High ones, hand tooled and with silver heels. Boots make the difference. Billy said to me "You want to ride with me, you got to have the boots, or you don't travel with Quantrill." (He sits on the piano stool, putting on his boots.) The fighting was maybe over for the rest of them, but me and Billy, we kept up our own war, and to Hell with the army. That's what Quantrill said. Billy Quantrill was the truest, most amazing man I ever knew. (Rises, crossing Down Stage.) When the country tried to crush him down, he just talked to God and went out and started his own country. (There is a sudden change of lights. JESSE spins Up Stage and snaps to attention. He is young again—the age he met BELLE. Simultaneously, BELLE crosses Right of the Down Center platform, putting on JESSE's hat. She has tied her shawl in a baldric-like manner, becoming Quantrill, fiery and messianic. She steps up onto the platform, addressing JESSE.)

BELLE. Face the truth son, win and you're a God, lose and it's a license for 'em to hunt you down like a dog. We will rise up boy, like Lazarus gone from his grave. Son, face it for the truth it is: the South is lost— (Crossing Up Right on the platform.) but the western empire is before us. Pristine and untouched. (To JESSE.) Bluecoats tonight. You understand?

JESSE. (Saluting.) Yes sir.

BELLE. Smart, huh. Good. (Pacing to the Center of the platform.) "He that walketh with wisemen shall be wise:— (To JESSE.) but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." Proverbs 13:20.

JESSE. (Saluting.) Yes sir. (BELLE paces Up Left on the platform.) The country is gone mad and only you can set it right.

BELLE. We will be as gods to the people. You will

Intro
to
future
Belle
begins
x. to
middle
of
stage
x

Down
stage
J1

J2

17.0
Act 1
DSL platform

Belle
knows
about
Lawrence

ACT I JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN 13

have a pair of riding boots, of marching boots, and they will make you a man of mine. ~~(She crosses Right.)~~

JESSE. Yes sir, Captain. I am ready for your order. You are the leader and my only dream is to be your lieutenant.

Handwritten: "Sweet"
BELLE. (To JESSE.) Sweet little Jesse. (JESSE assumes an at ease position.) You are so pretty. So very pretty with your pouty little mouth. (I know just how you can save your country, in your own special way. (BELLE steps off the platform walking toward JESSE.)

JESSE. Yes sir. Thank you sir.

X Jesse
BELLE. Boy, you know what a decoy is?
JESSE. Like wiping out a Yankee?

BELLE. Close enough. You ever play dress up?

JESSE. I don't think so. (BELLE puts her shawl on JESSE.) *Handwritten: "Jesse takes to see fit it."*

BELLE. There. That's dress up.

JESSE. Sir, I feel kind of stupid. (BELLE removes her knife from her scabbard and hands it to JESSE.)

BELLE. That'll help you feel more like a man. We're going into town tonight, and you're going to stand in the shadows smelling of perfume. (She ruffles JESSE's hair and starts to leave. JESSE looks at the knife for a moment, unsure what to do with it.)

JESSE. Where'll I put it?

BELLE. (Stopping.) Where ever it fits. *Handwritten: "18.0"*

(BELLE turns and walks Up Center leaving JESSE Down Center as the lights fade to night-time.

Handwritten: "Howard"
BELLE removes JESSE's hat and puts the blanket from the Down Center platform around her shoulders. She crosses Down Left as a Union Soldier and squats down trying to keep warm.

JESSE, as a Young Girl, notices her and turns away, disguising himself with the shawl.)

JESSE. Hey. Soldier boy. Hey there. You.

Handwritten: "He v", "allief", "Half want to"

Handwritten: "He doesn't try to", "was so"

Handwritten: "make him", "half do it"

Handwritten: "go back"

Handwritten notes on the right side of the page, including "I got", "a chair", "make", "and a hand"

Handwritten: "(F)", "X 8"

4 11/17/22
Jesse

14 JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN ACT I

BELLE. Well goddamn. What we got here?

JESSE. Nice night for a walk.

BELLE. (*Rising.*) That aint all it's a nice night for.

JESSE. Lonely night. Don't have to be.

BELLE. (*She inches up behind JESSE.*) Suppose you just tell me what has to be.

JESSE. Depends on what you want.

BELLE. (*Laughs, getting closer to him.*) What are you doing out by yourself, little girl? (*BELLE pinches JESSE; he pulls away, moving further Down Right.*)

JESSE. Just trying to earn a living.

BELLE. (*Staying close behind JESSE.*) Well now, we can't let a sweet thing like you go hungry. (*BELLE tries to feel a breast; JESSE resists.*) Let's have a little sample, then maybe we'll buy the lot.

JESSE. You don't have to buy. I got a present for you.

BELLE. And I got one for you. (*BELLE spins JESSE around, and realizes that he is a man. JESSE draws the knife and plunges it into her. BELLE screams and falls motionless into JESSE's arms.*)

JESSE. By by, soldier boy. (*The stab has driven them Center Stage where they fall onto the Down Center platform. JESSE is on top of BELLE. He pulls the knife out of BELLE as the lights bump to morning.*)

It is a few years later and both are in their early twenties. They are relaxing on the platform. That's what Quantrill and me and the others done all over Missouri. He was dead at 28. But we did it. We surely did it. No matter what anybody said though, I never took to perfume.

BELLE. The hell you didn't. Dresses was the part you liked the best. You keep playing soldier boy, you won't even live as long as Billy.

JESSE. I only did it because I was good at it and I loved the surprise on their faces.

BELLE. If I'd known you liked dresses back when

Followed
best
see x
23
they
sing down
4
April
self

w/ all

John
Should
never had

Belle
keep
knife

John
John
Belle

keep up

ACT I JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN 15

you come through Carthage, I'd have given you a couple.

JESSE. I got what I wanted back in Carthage.

BELLE. I didn't know you was going off to fight a war in a dress. Did you and Billy ever argue over who got to wear it? *(She laughs.)*

JESSE. Me and Billy was fighting a war. You was off parading around with my cousin Cole not caring about anything.

BELLE. *(Sitting up.)* I was so hot to get out of Carthage and that goddamned hotel, I'd have gone off with any dog that asked.

JESSE. So you went with Cole. Figures. You could have waited for me.

BELLE. And I'd still be waiting. I didn't do nothing but sit around that place all day and play the piano. When my father found out I had Cole's baby, he tried to kill me. You should have come to me then Jesse. You should have come. *Shee-hee.*

JESSE. I had a mission. Me and Billy was going to change the whole country around. When we won I was going to get Montana for my own. ~~*(Lays back, arms extended, holding the knife straight up.)*~~ Billy was going to make me king of Montana.

BELLE. ~~*(Taking the knife, laughing.)*~~ Instead he made you Queen of the Night.

JESSE. *(Sitting up.)* Billy taught me to be a soldier. Right out on the prairie. Nothing for a hundred miles, then all of a sudden this little wooden town of Lawrence. We come in like devils off the desert. "Kill every man, burn every house." That's what Billy said, and that's sure as hell what we did. It was in every newspaper in the country. In Chicago, it said we killed over two hundred.

BELLE. ~~*(Putting the knife back in her scabbard.)*~~ You can't even count that high. Did you?

JESSE. Billy must of done that many his self. He'd be spouting the Bible while he was burning the Church.

*up the
face*

*arm around
her*

*take
out
the
knife*

*change
of mood
down*

*arm
around
knee*

*she had
time ago*

Quoting Shakespeare and raping the school teacher. I seen him grab a little blonde headed girl. Nine maybe ten years old. Ripped her dress off and yelled "I will lead them in paths they have not known." (*Throws the shawl on the floor.*) And he done it to her right there on top of her brother's corpse. He kept screaming "I will make crooked things straight." When he was done, he made that little girl say "Isaiah 42:16." She never even knew what it meant.

BELLE. (*Picking up the shawl, a little upset.*) By now she does. (*BELLE crosses Left and replaces the shawl on the back of the piano.*)

JESSE. When we come riding in with Billy waving his black flag, I could see the heat coming up from the streets, like a vision on the prairie. We just leveled it.

BELLE. (*Standing Right of the piano.*) You call that soldiering? There wasn't even any soldiers in Lawrence.

JESSE. The whole damn town was union lovers.

BELLE. Even the little girls?

JESSE. When they grew up they would be.

BELLE. You think because you went around waving that black flag and saluting each other that made you an army.

JESSE. We was an army because we won.

BELLE. You was the only one who ever believed that soldier crap Quantrill dished out. At least all the others knew what they were: bunch of thug outlaws. Nothing more.

JESSE. Only cause we lost. We split up. Little groups. Billy got killed. Now I got every federal soldier in the country chasing me.

BELLE. So you come runing to me. (*Sits Left of JESSE and speaks softly to him.*) They'll kill you. All you got to do is stay here in the Indian Nations and they can't touch you.

JESSE. You aint turning me into one of your Indians following you around in some goddamn feather suit.

21
10

X L K
fold
the shawl

sit

(Wk not having any of that material)

up X and put blanket on deck

that
isnt
loaded
blanket
to put
up
in
the
deck

Handwritten notes at the top of the page, possibly indicating scene or character details.

ACT I JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN 17

(JESSE rises Right of the platform. BELLE then rises, crosses to her coat tree, picks up her bodice and puts it on.) You know I took a bullet in my gut back there. A bullet. That's when you should have come to me.

BELLE. (Standing Right of piano-) Since when was I supposed to keep track of you and crazy Billy?

JESSE. (Standing Left of rocker.) Zeralda managed. There was a bullet in my gut and Zee was there cooking tea and fixing me up.

BELLE. So you married her. All over a cup of tea.

JESSE. I married her because she was there when I needed her. You was with your Indians and your goddamn baby. While you was being thrown out of the Carthage Academy, I was graduating from the William Quantrill Military College. (Stepping up onto the Down-Center platform and picking up his hat.) I have to go, Belle.

BELLE. Yeah, college of murder, arson, horse stealing and all around hell-raising.

JESSE. Horse stealing? Every Police Gazette I read's got: Belle Starr the biggest horse thief in the country. (Putting on his hat.) I am a soldier.

BELLE. (Throwing JESSE the blanket.) You're a soldier cause everywhere you go there's a war.

JESSE. At least I'm no thief. I never been arrested for nothing and I never will be. I'm going to earn a living. (JESSE crosses Up Left on the platform taking the blanket with him.)

BELLE. (Picking up her riding crop from the piano and moving the piano stool Down Left, talking to the audience.) I had my share of trials, true enough. And they loved me. (Sitting on the stool.) I dressed up real good and my trials was more famous than God. I met the Judge. Judge Parker, The Hanging Judge, and I made him mine. (There is a sudden change in the lights. JESSE turns around Up Left as Judge Parker. The blanket is over his shoulders. He dabs his forehead with his neckerchief and uses the butt of his

Handwritten notes on the right side of the page, possibly describing Belle's actions or the scene.

Handwritten notes on the right side of the page, possibly describing the scene or characters.

Handwritten notes on the right side of the page, possibly describing the scene or characters.

X to get hat on desk

5

Judge Parker

Give to Judge Parker

23 .0

Handwritten notes on the left side of the page, possibly describing the scene or characters.

Handwritten notes at the bottom left of the page, possibly describing the scene or characters.

X to

Handwritten notes at the bottom right of the page, possibly describing the scene or characters.

sit in
judge

18 JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN ACT I

gun as a gavel. We are in Judge Parker's courtroom, and BELLE is on trial.)

JESSE. I am the law. The only law. Parker's law west of the Pecos. I have gallows for twelve. A Parker's dozen. Would you care to try one?

laugh

BELLE. (To the audience.) Gentlemen of the jury, I'm the best lay west of the Pecos. (To JESSE.) Would you care to try one?

big look
feel it

JESSE. I've never had a woman before me. No woman has ever hanged west of the Pecos. The temptation is great.

BELLE. I aint guilty. You can't steal your own horse. And Venus is my horse. It's just a bunch of drunks talking.

met her
first

JESSE. (Cutting in.) It's a hanging offense. Have you met Mr. Maledon? He builds the gallows and he ties the rope. He has never hanged a woman. The temptation is great.

BELLE. (Rising and walking Down Right. To the audience.) Six men can walk up to Venus with sugar and apples, and she'll bite their hand. I can feed her broken glass for oats and she'll lick my fingers.

time to
what
said

JESSE. There is no appeal from my sentence. If I say guilty, Maledon will tie the rope and you hang at the first light. I prefer it at dawn. It's a little early for some folks, but I like the sun rising behind.

time to
men to
do
some
side
Jesse

BELLE. You bring Venus in here and you can see who she loves. (BELLE removes a hair pin and her hair cascades to her shoulders seductively.) Me.

sexual
response

JESSE. Perhaps. (To the audience.) Clear the court! Clear the court! The court will meet with the defendant in camera. Clear the court. Vamoose. Get the hell out of here. (BELLE starts to exit Down Right.) You stay. There is one appeal. (Crossing to the Down Center platform, putting his gun in his pants.) Your appeal to me. laugh

21

BELLE. (Laughs.) So that's the law west of the Pecos?

up

x down
US

x to
10

sit in
judge

ACT I JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN 19

JESSE. I am the law. (*Unbuttoning his shirt.*) The only law.

BELLE. (*Unbuttoning and removing her bodice.*) Judge, I'm ready to do my time and serve up my sentence, with potatoes and peas for trimming.

JESSE. (*Raising the blanket over his head.*) The law in her majesty is an awesome thing.

BELLE. (*Crossing Down Center, facing Up toward Jesse.*) And Belle Starr without her pants on is hell on wheels.

JESSE. (*Spreading the blanket on the floor Down Center.*) The sentence is—

BELLE. (*Kneeling down on the blanket, dropping her bodice and crop on the blanket.*) I know the sentence. Let's carry it out. (*JESSE pulls BELLE toward him as the lights change to nighttime with a campfire effect. They pull apart as themselves, a few years older now, in their late twenties. BELLE touches an imaginary tatoo on JESSE's chest. It reads "Enter Here."*) "Enter Here." Now what is that supposed to be?

JESSE. I done that in California. Down on the wharf.

BELLE. What's it for?

JESSE. To confuse the vulgar while I live,— (*Removing his hat.*) and baffle God when I die.

BELLE. (*Leaning back.*) Nothing but a low life thug. Why're you so agreeable?

JESSE. Lovable too.

BELLE. Lord, I know that. Everybody's good at something.

JESSE. Loving is my specialty.

BELLE. I thought banks was your specialty.

JESSE. (*Folding BELLE'S bodice.*) Banks and Belle.

BELLE. Hah!

JESSE. You never had it so good.

BELLE. How would you know?

JESSE. (*Relaxing, using the bodice as a pillow.*) All them damn Indians you keep marrying? Hell . . .

BELLE. There you go, bringing up marrying again.

Handwritten notes on the left side of the page:
- Look at
- Spread
- Crop
- Enter
- Here
- 6 (6)
- Kneel
- Drop
- Tatoo
- Enter Here
- Relaxing
- All them damn Indians
- Bringing up marrying again

Handwritten notes on the right side of the page:
- Take
- 1st
- 2nd
- 3rd
- 4th
- 5th
- 6th
- 7th
- 8th
- 9th
- 10th
- 11th
- 12th
- 13th
- 14th
- 15th
- 16th
- 17th
- 18th
- 19th
- 20th

holding 307

hat holster
for

believe 1/2 bet
bea

20 JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN ACT I

JESSE. I'm bringing up Indians.

BELLE. Don't go putting down my men. Not if you want to be one of them.

JESSE. Thanks, thanks for the offer.

BELLE. I aint offering.

JESSE. Wouldn't do you no good. I still got one wife. I never said I'd marry you anyway.

BELLE. I never asked you. And I never will. You could never change your name.

JESSE. Belle, that aint how it works.

BELLE. It is with me. I changed my name the first time. After that, the men change. Jesse Starr. How do you like it?

JESSE. I aint changing my name.

BELLE. That's right. And that's why I ain't marrying you. I marry you and you'd have to go shooting at yourself. That's your custom aint it, find my men and try to blow their heads off.

JESSE. (*Removing his holster.*) Cole? you only married him to spite me.

BELLE. And every time you took a shot at him, even after we wasn't together no more, I knew that was just Jesse saying "Hello Belle, don't forget me."

JESSE. (*Removing his belt and touching her breast with it.*) Hello Belle, don't forget me.

BELLE. What makes you think I remember? So busy all the time trying to be famous.

JESSE. You could be famous as me if you wasn't so busy littering babies all over the place. What did you name this one?

BELLE. Not Jesse I'll tell you that.

JESSE. Yeah Little Cloud or Big Duck or Feather Brain. Or—

BELLE. His name's Ed. Ed Starr.

JESSE. (*Sitting up, taking off his hat.*) Pearl and Ed. I could never take you with me. We'd ride into town looking for the bank and you'd turn it into a nursery.

BELLE. Like a little boy robbing a piggy bank.

JESSE. Piggy bank! Hell woman, I invented the

SL of hat

your C
on
glat
Holland
glat
Belle
pays
x
glat
Med
Get

ACT I JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN 21

American bank robbery. You know what that means? Before me nobody ever thought of it. (~~BELLE sits up and removes her boots. JESSE pulls his gun out of his pants.~~) St. Valentine's Day, 1866, Clay County Missouri, I invented robbing banks. Me and Frank and Cole after we sobered him up, come riding into the town of Liberty at nine in the morning shooting and hollering and scaring the shit out of everybody. I applied Quantrill's military techniques to robbing banks. We even brought the flag. (~~JESSE holds his gun up like a flag. BELLE takes it from him.~~) Billy taught me, make enough noise and you can have all you want so long as you take it quick. We took it quick all right, fifteen thousand in gold, a pile of non-negotiable bonds, and a few hundred in cash. (~~Removing his boots.~~) We got drunk on the cash, wiped our behinds with the bonds, and sold the gold to a peddler named Prominent Abromovitz in San Antone. And that's how bank robbing was invented.

BELLE. (*Laughing.*) Prominent Abromovitz?

JESSE. Yep. A Jew peddler down there. Bought all the gold I could bring him.

BELLE. What he do with it?

JESSE. Sold it back to the banks, I guess. (*They both laugh.*) So our army could have something more to rob.

BELLE. (~~*Aiming the gun at JESSE.*~~) And the killing was just for the fun of it?

JESSE. (~~*Faking the gun.*~~) Billy always said, "Kill a couple on Monday, and the rest'll cooperate on Tuesday." Billy—

BELLE. Billy, Billy, I'm sick of hearing about Billy. Whyn't you go marry Billy. (~~*BELLE rises, walks Right of JESSE.*~~)

JESSE. There you go bringing up marrying again.

BELLE. (*Putting on JESSE's hat.*) I look like Billy?

JESSE. You look like an Indian. (~~*He puts his gun back in the holster and removes his shirt.*~~)

BELLE. (*Picking up JESSE's boots and moving to the other camp*)

peddler

Just tick up on make

take that

*part 2
m. 11. 11. 11
30 50 11*

26 6

E. 11. 11. 11

Indian

22 JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN ACT I

Down Center platform.) Riding boots, marching boots. All hand tooled. Boots are the thing. (~~Sitting, putting on the boots.~~) Boots make the difference. (~~Snatching JESSE's shirt from him and putting it on.~~) The first time I ever put on man's clothes, I done it to fool some damn Indian who'd been stealing gold from the reservation. (~~Rising, putting on JESSE's holster.~~) He must've had thirty, maybe forty thousand dollars. I dressed up in Jim Starr's clothes and went out to visit. I tied a rope around that Indian's neck and yanked till he give me the gold. He was too old to stop me anyhow.

JESSE. (~~Turning away from BELLE.~~) Picking on half dead Indians. Figures. (~~BELLE picks up JESSE's belt, moves behind him, and puts it around JESSE's neck like a bridle, turning him into her horse Venus. She punctuates her words by cracking her crop, mounting JESSE's shoulders as if riding a horse.~~)

BELLE. I just pulled on the rope till he give me the money. Then I got on Venus and rode away with all that gold in my pockets, my man's pants pockets. I got on Venus and rode away. I made Jim Starr wash and brush Venus real good. (~~She cracks her crop. JESSE rises to his knees.~~) Venus. Come Venus. Up girl. My pretty girl. (~~She simulates the motions of riding a horse, trotting at first, then spurring him into a canter. She expresses pleasure in the riding as she speaks.~~) Oh, my sweet girl. To ride you, to touch you, my hands on your mane. You are my pleasure, my only pleasure. You are my Indian boy. Blue Duck, my own cruel Cherokee. (~~BELLE pulls up on the belt, stopping him, and then dismounts. JESSE, as himself for an instant, thinks the game is over until BELLE throws the belt at him, turning him into her Indian lover.~~) You wash Venus. You wash her good and brush her coat. You clean her hooves with a green stick and you comb her mane. (~~JESSE moves BELLE's boots and bodice Down Stage of the Down Center platform and picks up the blanket.~~) You clean her good and stroke

up on
Horse
ramp
platform
and Belle
platform

right foot
Snap fingers
back

7

27
E

X up ramp
queen

move
in the
edge of
bed

boots DO of

DSR

Handwritten notes on the left margin, including a circled '13' and some illegible scribbles.

Handwritten scribbles at the top of the page.

ACT I JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN 23

her fine and then you can stroke me. (BELLE moves slowly to the Down Center platform, removing JESSE'S shirt.) I want to feel cool hands soothing me. You are so pretty and so quiet. That's just what I like in my men. (BELLE lays face down on the platform as JESSE crosses to her, sets the blanket above her, and begins to knead her back.) Cool easy hands and hard brown bodies. Yes. Yes. My Cherokee. Stroke me, soothe me. Yes. (BELLE rolls to her side and raises her legs, indicating JESSE should remove her boots.) I'll be having meat for dinner tonight. A lot of it cooked up brown. You go feed Venus and then you cook my dinner, cook it up brown. (JESSE reaches for her, but she pushes him away with her foot. He moves angrily to the Up Right coat tree, taking his boots, shirt and belt with him. BELLE talks to the audience.) Six Indian lovers I had, each one prettier than the last; two were hanged, two died in prison, one got his head blown off and the other just ran away. More Indians than I could count. All my Cherokees, and everywhere I went there was my lovely brown braves behind me. I was in all them magazines and The Police Gazette had Jesse's picture in every saloon and barbershop in the country. He was everywhere and I was in the Indian Nations. Mr. Richard Fox said so right there in The Police Gazette, but still he never came to me.

Handwritten notes on the left side of the page, including 'Jesse', 'dark', and 'Jesse x dark'.

Handwritten notes on the right side of the page, including 'dat', 'to be', and 'Jesse'.

3

(There is a sudden change of lights back to day-time. JESSE steps behind his desk as Richard Fox, editor and principal writer for The Police Gazette. Fox is snappy and very eastern. He's an opportunist and he sees in BELLE a first class opportunity. He has put on his shirt, vest and neckerchief, leaving his boots and belt at the coat tree. He interviews BELLE.)

Richard Fox

Handwritten note: 'Back x get skirt SE'.

Extensive handwritten notes on the right side, including 'Belle', 'Police', 'and', 'up to DST', and 'He's a'.

JESSE. (Referring to the notebook on the desk which he uses as a reporter's pad.) "More relentless than

Handwritten notes on the bottom left side of the page, including 'Richard Fox' and 'Jesse'.

24 JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN ACT I

Pharaoh's daughter and braver than Joan of Arc." You like it?

BELLE. (*Still on Down-Center platform.*) Fox, you just make that stuff up.

JESSE. Merely the passion. You provide the particulars.

BELLE. Fox, what you ought to print are some Jesse particulars. True ones for a change.

JESSE. (*Sits in the rocker.*) It's taken me years to build Jesse's legend. Now let's get your pot boiling. You're one of our top sellers, already way past Lariat Lil and getting up there with Jesse James.

BELLE. Why is it all the men I meet are crooks?

JESSE. They love it back east. I'm going to call you "Bella Starr—"

BELLE. Bella?

JESSE. —"The Bandit Queen" by Richard Fox.

BELLE. It's Belle. At least get my name straight.

JESSE. Bella! It's more romantic. Bella Starr. Wait. Bella Stella. From Italy.

BELLE. What a crock of crap.

JESSE. (*Pointing to The Police Gazette on the desk.*)

The Police Gazette is the number one seller in the country. Why? I give them heroes like Jesse James. Giants! And you're my first giantess. A female Jesse James.

BELLE. (*Taking off JESSE's holster and hat.*) Hah! He's a thug. Your giant Jesse gets so confused from guns and dresses, that half the time he don't know who he is and he don't love nobody but himself.

JESSE. Well The Police Gazette's certainly not putting Jesse James in a dress, no, no. Not in my magazine. (*He rises and stands Right of BELLE.*) Now, if you're going to be my first woman hero, you too must follow the Gazette's rules for duels. One: Always fight fair. Two: Look a man square in the eye before you shoot him. Three: never shoot a small person.

BELLE. I do that I'd be one dead giantess.

dead as a porcupine

Belle X to
Belle Starr
stop talking
back at back
Give up
to
kill
kill

pick up
Belle Starr
book.

Chances of
the desert
love
queen
the
most
text

ACT I JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN 25

X L
fairly
but
to
but
let
X
to

JESSE. It doesn't matter what you do, only what I say you do. A vision. I see the open prairie. The great void, the unknown. Then, galloping out of the night comes a lone golden rider on a silver horse. It's Jesse. A Robin Hood. (JESSE hurries to the desk and eagerly begins to write in the notebook.)

BELLE. The only thing Jesse'd do with a silver horse is steal it. Foeie, you just once put the truth about Jesse in that magazine of yours and I'll tell you anything you want to hear about me.

JESSE. (*Walking back to BELLE.*) The Police Gazette is as good as it's word. You can trust me. *still writing*

BELLE. Trust hell. You make up Jesse, and I'll make up me. Which of this junk you want to hear? (BELLE rises, picks up her boots, and crosses Down Left to the piano stool. JESSE sits in the rocker, preparing to write.) *notebook*

JESSE. We had you running the Long Branch Saloon in Kansas City. *pull out*

BELLE. (*Sitting on the stool.*) Oh yeah. I rode into Kansas every Tuesday on my brown and white mare.

JESSE. (*Taking notes throughout.*) Venus. *dit*

BELLE. (*Putting on her boots.*) I wore buckskin breeches and a ten gallon hat and I shot up the streets and robbed the banks before breakfast. (*Crossing to the Down Center platform.*) I spent the money on lavender velvet dresses,— (*Draping the bodice over her shoulders.*) and in the evenings I became Rosa McComus,— (*On the platform seductively.*) the spitfire of the plains, Queen of the dance hall. " *drop desk*

JESSE. Great stuff. How about lovers? *to*

BELLE.—Yeah. Sure. There was Jack Spaniard, Jim French, Sam Starr, Jim July and my own sweet Cherokee, the Blue Duck.

JESSE. (*Looking up from the manuscript.*) Blue Duck? What'd you call him, Duckie? *to*

BELLE. I called him boy. I took them two at a time, and I kept one on the shelf till I wanted him. *to*

to meet
reference
in check
sit
to
check
for

drop desk
the

→ hold

Robert

26 JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN ACT I

JESSE. (A little shocked.) Great stuff. Now, a little something for the family trade. Tell me about you're own sweet mop haired children.

change mood

BELLE. No.

JESSE. Come on, a little bit of home and hearth. Pearl and Master Eddie, isn't it?

BELLE. (Pointing at JESSE with her riding crop.) You just leave them out of your magazines. I don't want to read nothing about my children. I don't care where you hear it.

JESSE. (Putting down the manuscript.) Okay. But I'm certainly going to push the female Jesse James angle.

BELLE. (Disgusted.) Ah the hell with him. He's a trigger happy lunatic. Him and his brother and his cousins. I hardly know him.

sit deep with me at ease

JESSE. (~~Rises, crossing Right of BELLE.~~) No, no. History has mated you.

BELLE. Don't go telling me who I mated with.

JESSE. I'm going to change the title. "Bella Starr—

BELLE. Belle!

JESSE. —"Bella Starr the Bandit Queen or the Female Jesse James" by Richard Fox. It'll outsell all the others. (Removing his vest and hanging it on his coat tree.) Move over Lariat Lil and Quicksilver Jean here comes Bella Starr, the Bandit Queen. (JESSE sits in his rocker and picks up the magazine from the desk.)

by accident
hanging to
coat tree.

BELLE. (~~Dropping JESSE's gun, holster and hat in his lap.~~) Who the hell buys these damn things?

JESSE. (Tossing his neckerchief on the desk.) Why anybody with a dime who wants to dream a little.

(BELLE walks Up Right. The lights tighten on JESSE, who becomes himself again, sitting in his rocker catting to his wife Zee. He puts his hat on, hangs his holster on the back of the rocker, picks up The Police Gazette from the desk and reads. He calls Off Right.) Zee. Zee, can't you get that baby to shut up?

9
Croup

pull out
with people
pull out
w/ crop
cut it
up into
Hanging
plate
DR

31
32
E

lucky
number of keeping

ACT I JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN 27

BELLE. (As JESSE's wife Zee.) Jess, he's got croup or something.

JESSE. Croup, huh?

BELLE. Something like that. He keeps coughing. (BELLE crosses behind JESSE. She has removed her bodice and left her crop Up Right and has tied a ribbon in her hair. Zee is pretty but a little prissy.) I don't feel so good neither. Whyn't you take a look at him, Mr. Howard.

JESSE. Cause every time I do he spits in my face.

BELLE. No hats in the house Mr. Howard.

JESSE. (Taking off his hat.) Quit calling me Mr. Howard.

BELLE. (Standing Right of JESSE.) That's our name.

JESSE. I'm tired of it Zee. I spent my whole life building up my name. I aint ashamed of it.

BELLE. But I'm afraid of it. I don't want you getting shot at or arrested.

JESSE. At least it'd be some activity. Instead of this endless sitting around.

BELLE. Jess don't do no more banks. Promise me. You go off like that I get so worried. You got one bullet, don't get no more.

JESSE. I thought you liked it when I got a bullet.

BELLE. I liked nursing you, but not you being hurt. Please promise me Jess, don't do no more banks. Please. Promise me—

JESSE. (Shutting her up.)—Okay, okay. For you Zee. No more banks. (Silence for a moment.)

BELLE. That kid was by again. Bobby Ford.

JESSE. What he want this time?

BELLE. Just to talk.

JESSE. Zee, I think you got an admirer.

BELLE. He's a boy.

JESSE. (Putting down the gazette.) I was a boy once. About one hundred years ago. I know what he wants.

BELLE. (Embarrassed.) Well, he aint getting it.

JESSE. He maybe don't even know what he wants.

act voice

head

SSK

head

up

Belle

stop

stop

stop

stop

stop

just 57

1. DL2

Belle
Silence
cut 7. 11.
me

Just cut
gazette.

Belle

the subtitles

28 JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN ACT I

But he wants it and I got it, Mrs. Howard. (JESSE pulls her onto his lap. She giggles.) Whyn't you make us something to eat?

BELLE. (Rising.) Still want pancakes?
JESSE. Sure.

BELLE. (Starts to leave but changes her mind.) One of these Sundays the Howards are going to Church. Like everybody else.

JESSE. Not this Howard. (Looks up at Zee.) Well, maybe. (Pats her on the behind, shooing her away.) Go on, be a wife.

BELLE. You be a husband and straighten that damn thing. (She points to the picture frame as she crosses Up Left.)

JESSE. (Rises, walking to the picture.) Why anybody who lives out in the country needs a picture of the country is beyond me. You could just look out the window.

BELLE. (Stopping Right of piano.) I'm just trying to make it nice for you. Just maybe help me a little. I don't feel good.

JESSE. (Turning away from the picture.) The deal is I make the money, you make the beds.

BELLE. Don't start in on that again. I told you, I don't feel so good.

JESSE. (Getting angry.) Don't keep telling me what to do.

BELLE. If you'd do what you're supposed to I wouldn't have to tell you.

JESSE. (Stepping off the platform towards the rocker.) I'm sick of hearing it.

BELLE. Jesse, I'm sick, too.

JESSE. Then get better.

BELLE. Jesse, you will be the death of me. The absolute death of me. (She walks to her coat tree, not hearing JESSE.)

JESSE. You're goddamn right I will. (JESSE storms to his coat tree and grabs his vest. As he is putting it on,

the least
think it's
money so
he's so
he's so
he's so

with
the

get
out
of
here

X
get
out
of
here

bill
the
the

Link + general
sit.

(33) c

shall
and at
the

the
the
the
the
the

30 JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN ACT I

You always got to be shaving it. And all it ever does is grow right back.

BELLE. (~~Crossing Left in front of~~ JESSE.) I thought you liked this.

JESSE. You want to do it every morning?

BELLE. Maybe.

JESSE. Well, when you make up your mind, let me know.

BELLE. (*back to p. 28* Starting to lather his left side.) Jesse, you know what you are?

JESSE. A lover.

BELLE. You don't care about me. You only care about you.

JESSE. I know you're there.

BELLE. Well, I aint.

JESSE. Then who's talking?

BELLE. Beats hell out of me. (*Finishes lathering him and picks up the razor, preparing to sharpen it.*) Well now that every stripe suit banker in the country's waiting for you, what're you going to do?

JESSE. Yeah, just waiting for me to walk right in and take whatever I want.

BELLE. (*Behind* JESSE, sharpening the razor.) Them banks is nothing but great big mouse traps. Squeakie little mouse. Banks is all played out. Done. Now me, I got me a better idea. Me and a few selected friends and that does not include you, are going to stop us a train. A whole goddamn train full of money.

JESSE. (*Looking up from the gazette.*) Now that's a first class A number one idea. You don't have many, but when you do, it's A number one. Belle I think maybe I'm going to invent me the train robbery.

BELLE. (*Drops the strop and rushes behind* JESSE, pulling his hair.) We probably ought to cut your hair too.

JESSE. You can leave my hair alone. Just shave me.

BELLE. I could cut off all your hair, make you a shiny bald head.

cut the hair
did the
hair
a good
bit

He doesn't
know what
he's doing

He doesn't
know what
he's doing

s it's now
different
tradition
I should be
called the
Belle.

He should
know
the
Belle

a fresh
strop

you
the
my

ACT I JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN 31

JESSE. Oh, that'd be great.

BELLE. (*Pretending to cut a small handful of hair.*) It'd be good for you. Nobody'd recognize you.

JESSE. I wouldn't even recognize me.

BELLE. (*Flicking the cut hairs in front of his eyes.*) Nothing new about that. *from above*

JESSE. (*Grabbing BELLE's wrist and pulling her to the right of him.*) I know who I am Belle. It's other people including you who have trouble figuring it out. (*Drops BELLE's arm and points to The Police Gazette.*) Why do you keep telling this guy this junk?

BELLE. (*Looking over his shoulder.*) Let me see.

JESSE. Listen to this crap: (*Reads.*) "Jesse and Belle. Jezabel. Mated by history. Riding the wild pampas together, the burning dust of the desert in their lungs. Bang went the guns, pop goes the heart of America."

BELLE. I love it. Wish they could get my name right, though. (*BELLE tries to grab the magazine, but JESSE pulls it away.*)

JESSE. It matters what they say in these things about me. I can't let this Fox junk be the record of me.

BELLE. What're you going to do, put out your own magazine? The Jesse Gazette. Readership of one: You.

JESSE. (*Handing her the gazette, which she begins to read.*) That's right, think small, stay small. I'm going to write me a whole goddamn book about me. (*BELLE looks up from the gazette.*) Up to now I aint had much control over my life, but from here on in, I am in charge of me. *Jesse sits.*

BELLE. You think if you write it down that makes it so. Just ink on the page Jesse, that's all it is and ever will be, just ink on the page. (*BELLE closes the magazine and drops it on the platform.*)

JESSE. Ink's about all you got the guts to spill.

BELLE. Jesse you are such a fool, that you are sup-

Handwritten notes on the left margin:
he looks like
I was the
all the
able to
have this
did not
that
you got used to it

Handwritten note on the right margin:
I heard
you have
to left.

Handwritten note on the right margin:
set on
steel

Handwritten note on the right margin:
full
paper

Handwritten note on the bottom left margin:
not
to
of

posed to be some kind of hero is God's joke. (She opens the razor and turns his head, about to shave him.) That's you. God's joke.

JESSE. Up to now maybe.

BELLE. (She carefully begins to shave his right side, punctuating her words with precise strokes of the razor.) For my part about you put: He had a villainous eye, an idiot's head and I do believe a satanic heart. Put: Jesse would kill just to see them kick. Put: I hated him without reason,— (She nicks him ever so slightly. He winces. She lightly dabs his face with the towel.) and I guess that's reason enough to love any man.

JESSE. (Grabbing BELLE by the waist.) But not reason enough for me to change my name.

BELLE. (Pulls away. Pause.) What if you got changed after you wrote it all down?

JESSE. Well, they'll just have to add a chapter.

BELLE. (Moving behind JESSE preparing to shave his left side.) What if you lost an ear? Just say. Would you have to put that in?

JESSE. (A little tense.) Shut up and do your job.

BELLE. (Beginning to shave him again.) How about that, would you still be the same Jesse, if you wasn't all there?

JESSE. Quit babbling.

BELLE. (Slowly stroking the razor up towards his rear.) I heard lots of folks say you wasn't all there already. What if it was actually true. Not just a way of speaking, but maybe an ear got lopped off. (She cuts his ear.)

JESSE. Ouch. Watch it.

BELLE. Oh, did I cut your ear there? I'm really sorry about that, Jesse. I didn't mean to do that. Let me fix it. (She straddles him, sitting on his lap and dabs at the cut.) Can't have our Jesse hurt, now can we? Can we now?

JESSE. You just be careful, or I'll do some cutting myself. (He grabs her wrist so she can't move the

What did
she do?

He...
she...
he...
she...

L. standing

pull her
in between
leg.

just all
she had
X behind
him

ACT I JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN 33

razor.) Then we'll have a little bit of Belle blood and a little bit of Jesse blood. All mixed in. Won't we?
(*Spinning Up Stage on the stool, squeezing her wrist.*)
I said won't we? *Now*

BELLE. Yes. *3/4 yell*

JESSE. Shut up. (*He loosens his grip on her wrist and pulls her face to his, kissing her. What's left of the lather smears across her face.*) Share a little soap, share a little blood. (*When he begins to relax, BELLE grabs JESSE'S hair, pulling his head back and puts the blade to his throat.*)

BELLE. What would you say if I, if I . . . was to slide this right into your throat. You probably wouldn't be saying much.

JESSE. I'll do some sliding in. (*He grabs her legs and makes a few small humping motions against her.*)
BELLE quickly brings the razor close to JESSE'S eyes. *He slowly leans back.*)

BELLE. How about you do that while I slit open your eyes. Then Jesse love, you can flow into me all you want. And all your blood, if you have any, can wash down my face. Think it'll spurt? Or just drip? (*By now, JESSE is leaning all the way back, supporting himself with his arms on the floor.*)

JESSE. What's that razor do for you, make you me? Make you Jesse James? That what it does for you? Good. Now we'll both be Jesse. And do twice as many trains. (*He makes a small motion to sit up, but BELLE holds the razor right next to his eyes, keeping him down.*)

BELLE. No. More what I had in mind is slicing off chunks of you and putting them on me. (*Making large motions with the razor which come very close to JESSE'S ears and nose.*) I might hack off an ear and stick it on, or maybe your nose. That way I can be either one of us or both. I'll use you for spare parts. (*She holds the razor very still and right next to his face.*)

JESSE. Yeah, or maybe I'll use you for something.

*Belle
razor*

34 JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN ACT I

(He grabs BELLE's thighs and begins to sit up slowly, defying BELLE and the razor. She persists, keeping the razor close to his eyes.) Cause that's what you really want, aint it? Well, I'll make you a deal. You can have it on temporary loan. Whenever I feel like giving it to you. (BELLE pulls the razor back as if to come at him with it. JESSE grabs her wrist and squeezes it. BELLE drops the razor. He rises, carrying her to the Down Center platform and lays her down on her back. He puts on his hat as BELLE, still on her back, tries to escape.)

take close fist

BELLE. Jesse, Jesse, I'll slit your throat. I will. I really, really will. I'll kill you. I really, really will. I'll kill you—

JESSE. Ride 'em. (BELLE tries to kick JESSE but he catches her feet and flips her over on her stomach. She becomes Venus and starts to crawl up the platform. JESSE grabs her by the waist, pulling her back to him, and mounts her.) Ride Venus. Ride . . . I am the real Jesse. The only one. Only I am Jesse—

to P
of "had"

BELLE. Starr. Jesse Starr. The only Jesse Starr. (JESSE waves his hat in the air; they are silhouetted against the back drop as the lights fade out.)

35

36

37

END OF ACT ONE

34 page.

full with...
 Jesse...
 Jesse...
 Jesse...
 Jesse...

Boback to let
 Jesse...
 Jesse...

Belle... Jesse...
 Jesse...
 Jesse...
 Jesse...
 Jesse...

43-

How to rob a train.

ACT TWO

(11)

The lights come up revealing BELLE at her piano, softly playing a third passage of the same Mozart sonata; JESSE is sitting in his rocking chair laboriously pecking at an old-fashioned typewriter. He finishes a sentence, and then pleased with himself, sits back and reads aloud from *The Police Gazette*.

JESSE. "The masked outlaws had spread themselves along the line of the train. 'Well Frank, everything seems to be working all right,' Jesse remarked. 'I was right sorry we had to shoot Jack Farley,' said Frank." (He throws down the magazine and talks to the audience.) Je-sus! If that don't beat all. There's people reading that crap and thinking I go around talking like that. (BELLE stops playing and sits quietly at the piano.) No wonder the whole damn world's confused about who I am and what I done. Oh, we done plenty of trains all right. But there wasn't much in the way of polite conversation going on while we was at it. Trains are a pain in the ass. Always moving, not like banks which just sit right there where they're supposed to, waiting for you. Robbing trains is done one of two ways: dumb and bloody or smart and bloody. Dumb and bloody is when you and a bunch of drunks see a train coming and you ride down onto the tracks shooting at it. The train just keeps coming, and the passengers fire back at you like you was a herd of buffaloes which you are. The blood is yours. The smart way is you bribe somebody to tell you which train is worth bothering with and then you buy a ticket for a dollar, and get on when it's stopped. (Rises) takes his vest from the coat tree and puts it on.) That's the way me and Belle done it.

(12)

Jesse...
 Jesse...
 Jesse...
 Jesse...
 Jesse...

We'd get on board, me lugging Belle's leather valise like a regular husband and wife. (~~Picking up his coat from the back of the rocker and putting it on.~~) Pretty soon Belle would start moaning about having train sickness, whatever the hell that was. She'd just hold her gut and scream "I got the train sickness." All the conductors and caboose men and half the passengers would come running over to help. (~~Putting on his hat from the coat tree.~~) They wasn't so much gentlemen as afraid she'd go and throw up all over their nice clean train. (~~Picks up the manuscript from the desk and crosses Left of the rocker.~~) When they was all standing over her in a little circle, I'd pull my Colt,— (~~He draws his gun.~~) and there they'd be. (~~BELLE crosses Down Center carrying a carpet-bag.~~) Get famous for spilling blood, and you better keep doing it, or next time the blood is yours. (~~JESSE puts his gun back into the holster and begins to cross Down Center to BELLE. It is raining and just after a train robbery. Before he joins BELLE, JESSE stops and talks to the audience.~~) Course after me and Belle got famous, and our faces was known, we couldn't do it anymore.

guts
to
my
hat
ref

HE

from the
car

12

Rain

(JESSE squats down Right of BELLE and writes in his manuscript. BELLE has dumped several wallets out of the carpet-bag and is counting the loot. She has her shawl over her head for protection from the rain.)

Robber

BELLE. (Glancing at his manuscript.) Rain robber? Now what the hell's that?

JESSE. No, no. Train robber you fool. Just shut up.

BELLE. That'd be like you, go robbing the rain. You don't need it, there's plenty of it, you just do it to be ornery. World's first and only rain robber. Great. Chief Rain in the Face. (She knocks JESSE's hat off.)

JESSE. (Putting his hat back on.) You are the fault

rain

the
the
the

from

the
the
the
the
the

from the
at

ACT II JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN 37

of it all. You look right at me, you supposedly listen to what I'm saying, but you get it just wrong enough, and then you go spreading the word—the just wrong enough word—so's the world don't know who I am. I think you do it on purpose.

BELLE. I know a liar when I hear one, Mr. Howard.

JESSE. (*Stands*.) Cause you are one. Always making that crap up to Mr. Richard Fox and The Police Gazette. You don't care what happens to your name.

BELLE. At least I use my own.

JESSE. You hand it out to every drunk Indian and horse thief you meet. Sam Starr. Tom Starr. Jim Starr, everybody's named Starr to you. (*JESSE sits above BELLE on the Down Center platform.*)

BELLE. People are going to remember it when I'm gone. There's already so many stories about you nobody's ever going to get it all straight. (*BELLE rises and stands Left of JESSE, holding a wad of money and the carpet-bag with the empty wallets.*)

JESSE. (*Waving his manuscript.*) They will now.

BELLE. (*Jesse, you say what you want about yourself, but, if you go talking about Bandit Queens, you just say I was the toughest in the morning, the softest in the evening, and in between times I just shot up the place.*) (*BELLE offers JESSE his share of the money. He refuses it.*) *shake head.*

JESSE. I'm telling the truth, *place money to R*

BELLE. (*Drops half the money on JESSE's lap.*) Well then what you ought to say is Belle Starr's got a face like a hatchet, a son who won't listen and she hates the sight of mirrors. (*She throws her half of the money into the carpet-bag.*) *picks up money*

JESSE. Maybe I will. (*Rises, offering his share to BELLE. She refuses it!*) Keep it. I'm sick of running all to Hell and back with Pinkertons and punks shooting at me cause I'm Jesse James. I'm going home.

(*JESSE throws his money into the carpet-bag. In-re-*

Jesse reach to
carpet bag
carpet bag

stop
don't look
at her.
X DL
sit on
edge of
platform

Belle
up & X to him
don't get bag
divide money
in half

face
out
head
it.

keep
down
his R
side
slight
back
up
platform
with
money

in his
left hand.

up w/
carpet
bag

she
doesn't
take it
he drops
into the carpet
bag on
"keep it"

2 Jesse - turn

"Jesse!"

lit at
the table
I think
all
good bye

38 JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN ACT II

turn BELLE throws the carpet-bag, now containing all the money, at JESSE and then crosses Right of the piano. JESSE crosses Up Right, leaving the carpet-bag on the rocker and the manuscript on the desk.)

back with audience

at the top
of the page
the
manuscript
at the desk
to the
social.

(13)

Scarvey McCargo

BELLE. (~~Removing her shawl and replacing it on the piano as she speaks to the audience.~~) I done time. Almost a year, my thirty-second. It was in the federal prison in Detroit. I was supposed to weave chair bottoms out of split cane. (~~Walking Downstage of the piano.~~) The warden sort of ushered me into this room full of seat frames and bamboo. "Take a chair," he says to me. "No thanks," I say. "I'd rather stand." He damn near threw a chair at me. That stuff gets under your finger nails after a while and it never comes out. (~~Crossing Down Right.~~) Detroit looked like a nice town, what I saw of it. I was in for horse stealing. Crap. But with all the things I done I just took my medicine. Sam did hard labor and as far as I know he's still doing it. (~~Crossing Down Left.~~) After I got out I got mixed up with this wild west show and this actor, Mr. Scarvey McCargo. Jesse was gone and I was just floating, so I took what come along. (~~The lights change suddenly. BELLE removes her bodice and swings it over her head as she crosses to her coat-tree.~~) JESSE, as Scarvey McCargo, a broken down actor, takes a bow to the audience and moves his rocker Down Right. He picks up the carpet-bag and steps into the rocker as if it were a stage coach, and we're into The Wild West Show. Scarvey takes it all very seriously, but BELLE performs by rote.) ~~Yah-hoo!~~ (~~BELLE picks up a pistol and ties JESSE's neckerchief around her head like an outlaw. JESSE, as the stage coach passenger, bounces in the rocker creating the motion of a stage coach.~~) Beware travellers, look out for the dangers of the open road, beware the ways of the highways. (~~Crossing Up Left on the platform,~~

your own joke.

Intro
to
the
stage

10

Belle
the "Moa"
while.

at the
with

(see)
at

from
the

up to Belle take
L of WW poster

Back to the top of the
page "come back"

ACT II JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN 39

shouting her lines. JESSE hears her, motions to the driver to go faster and bounces more furiously in the rocker.) Guard your gold and your women when you pass this way. (BELLE gallops to the ~~Down Center platform.~~) Halt there. (JESSE mimes the stage coach coming to a sudden stop and crosses ~~Down Left~~ with the carpet-bag, trying to escape.) You! Stop!

JESSE. (~~Turning Upstage,~~ falls to his knees, arms raised.) Don't shoot. Please don't shoot.

BELLE. Traveller, your luck has run out. This is the end of the journey for you if you don't follow my instructions. (She holds her gun up in the air, away from JESSE.)

JESSE. (~~Waving, indicating to point the gun at him.~~) Don't point that gun at me.

BELLE. (~~Quickly aiming the gun at him.~~) Sir, guns are the words of the west, and I'm doing the talking.

JESSE. Yes sir.

BELLE. Stand and deliver. (JESSE stands majestically. He leaves the carpet-bag on the floor. BELLE obviously forgetting her next line.) Stand and deliver!

JESSE. (~~In a stage whisper.~~) I am standing. (Cueing her.) You know who I am?

BELLE. (~~Crossing Down Left to JESSE who counters Down Right.~~) You know who I am?

JESSE. No sir, I surely do not.

BELLE. Well sir, you are now enjoying the pleasure of meeting up with Mr. Jesse James, the desperado.

(She jumps onto the ~~Down Center platform,~~ pulls the kerchief from her mouth. He's amazed and terrified.)

JESSE. Well, goddamn! (Cueing her again.) Your grandchildren.

BELLE. Yes sir, you will tell your grandchildren of this. If I choose to let you leave here with your vocal cords intact. (She places the gun at JESSE's throat.)

JESSE. It is an honor, sir. (JESSE extends his hand to shake. As BELLE transfers the gun to her left hand, JESSE tries to grab the gun. They struggle. She is sup-

gallop to stop

begin with
stagecoach
stage

(kiss L
head -
queen R.

later
stagecoach

mean
end
the
there with

30
2 "stage"

plie

begin up
L
into pocket

same

stop

stagecoach

stagecoach

stagecoach

stagecoach

Look at audience

get to know

40 JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN ACT II

posed to let it fall, but does not. In a stage whisper.) Drop the gun, drop the gun. (BELLE lets the gun drop and rises up, overpowering JESSE who falls down behind her.)

look at
1910
up

BELLE. You think it's that easy to outwit the undisputed leader of the fiercest band of lead poisoners in the West? (JESSE grabs her from behind. She spins out from under him and, with very little effort, blocks several punches. Finally, she sends him flying Down Center with an obviously fake punch.) Traveller, you think you can conquer the man who gave orders to Bloody Bill Anderson and rode with Quantrill? (JESSE crawls toward the gun, which is next to BELLE's foot.)

look at
X
hand
back

You have sir an excess of earthly riches and there are homesteaders and little people who have not at all. I am here to set that aright. (BELLE stomps her foot, supposedly on JESSE's hand. He falls back down, cringing in mock pain.) Now. Stand and deliver. (He starts to rise. She pushes him back down with a kick that is much more real than anything else in The Wild West Show. She picks up the gun and points it at him. This is not what Scarvey has rehearsed and it surprises him. As JESSE, realistically, intensely.)

look at
the gun
back

I am the real Jesse. The others, all the others are not me. Only I am Jesse, golden Jesse. Hunt for me, pursue me, chase me across my prairie and I will find you. I am your one true hero and you will love me more when I am dead because this country's greatest fear is not for its heroes, but of them. (BELLE rises, speaking to the audience. JESSE gets on his knees, waving his wallet at her, trying to get her back into The Wild West Show.) They were afraid of me while I lived and they will surely build a tower to me when I die. (She takes the wallet.) I thank you.

R
Jesse

JESSE. My pleasure. (Picks up the carpet-bag Down Left and crosses below BELLE.) Scarvey McCargo gives you the sack. (JESSE opens the carpet-bag; BELLE throws the wallet into it. He then throws it at

put
hand

R
hand

look at
the gun
back

look at
the gun
back

gun in
back
taken out

Bill ...

ACT II JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN 41

her and moves the rocker back to the desk and sits, still as Scarvey.)

BELLE. (To the audience.) We went everywhere with the damn thing. (Putting the ~~gun~~ into the carpet-bag.) People loved to watch Jesse hold up that stage. I made so much money at it, that I hired me a special groom for Venus, a little black boy and I named him Jesse. (BELLE leaves Up Right and stands next to the platform. JESSE, as himself, begins to type as the lights tighten to the desk area. He makes an error and pushes back from the typewriter.)

JESSE. "Oh that my words were now written! Oh that they were printed in a book." (He looks at his work for a moment.) Fat now, yes fat. But once, oh, once. Now I will write it all down, all of it, every last blood-letting drop of it. (BELLE, as Zee crosses left of JESSE and picks up The Police Gazette. She has removed the neckerchief and has added a hair ribbon.)

About how I rode out one fine spring morning with Billy, and how I met Belle. (BELLE turns to look at JESSE who has been unaware of her presence. He pauses briefly to look at her then goes back to his writing. BELLE sits on the Down Center platform, reading the gazette. She is dimly lit.) ~~Fat now, but~~ oh yes. I'll write it all down with lots of parts like "One fine spring morning." All down, once and for all, so they can get it straight. (The lights change suddenly as BELLE speaks, interrupting JESSE at work.)

BELLE. (Referring to The Police Gazette.) Jesse I don't get this. It keeps saying she's the female Jesse James. I don't like that.

JESSE. You don't like it? How do you think I feel about it? Zee don't get worked up over nothing. (He tries to go back to work.)

BELLE. It says you go riding together. Jesse I don't think that's right. If anybody should be in magazines it should be me.

JESSE. (Rises, sitting Right of BELLE.) That guy

Jesse hang up Scarvey coat to desk

Jesse
Zee
14

Zee
10

50
10
Zee
10

X L reading stop work

Wade

Belle keep coat rack and put on Scarvey

Belle X in between Scarvey bed. Stop X "Belle". Look at Jesse. Hit Gazette from Scarvey. X up to Harlan platform. Belle reading

tree

42 JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN ACT II

just makes that stuff up. I only met her once or twice. Back when she was with Cole. She's in jail anyway. (Appeasing her.) Maybe I'll get us a map. We'll go down to Rio. It's in South America.

up x to
walk
bed and
make

BELLE. I heard of it.

JESSE. I could put my hands on twenty five thousand tomorrow. We could live on that like a king and queen.

BELLE. ~~Horray!~~ I could get us and the kids and everything packed real quick. What language do they talk down there?

x to
rocker

JESSE. But you know, I don't know.

BELLE. Why? Why not?

JESSE. Too dangerous right now. Somebody'd recognize me. (Walking back to the rocker.)

BELLE. Oh.

sit

JESSE. Maybe in a few months.

BELLE. Oh.

JESSE. Six months.

BELLE. Ohh.

go back
to work

JESSE. Maybe a year.

BELLE. Ohh. Jesse it's hard being married to you. (Crossing ~~Left~~ of JESSE.) I wouldn't trade it, but it's hard. I mean you're off away so much and this Bella Starr stuff.

like earlier
scene

up

JESSE. (Grabbing The Police Gazette from her.) Belle. Her name is Belle. (Whyn't you go make us some food.)

BELLE. You just ate.

(5) Belle
sister

JESSE. Then go clean something. Can't you see I'm trying to work, goddamn it. (BELLE crosses Up Left to her coat tree. JESSE looks at the magazine for a moment.) If Richard Fox can say whatever he wants, so can I. I'm going to put in how I only stole from the rich and give to the poor when they needed it. How the railroads were the robbers stealing the land from homesteaders and how I set it right, how I was a man of the people and how they loved me. (Stands Left of the typewriter.) Sure. Why the hell not? I can put in

R

x up
take off
put on
notice
take
Belle
notice

Leah to son
Mexico

about Belle and I can put in about the Pinkertons, I can do anything I damn well want to. I'm Jesse James. (*Pointing to the page in the typewriter.*) It says so right here. (*He looks at his finger and then pretends it's a gun, moving it from the typewriter to an imaginary holster at his waist. He pauses for a moment as if he were looking at an adversary.*) Come on. I got you cold . . . I'll take all of you. Face me. Face Jesse James. (*He draws and spins Upstage to shoot as the lights change suddenly, revealing BELLE sitting Up-Left on the platform. She has removed the "Zee" ribbon and put her bodice back on.*)

BELLE. You got me. (*Rising.*) Congratulations. Fastest finger in town.

JESSE. You ought to know.

BELLE. (*Crossing Down the platform to JESSE standing Down Right.*) Who you fighting, the whole French army?

JESSE. Who you think I'm fighting?

BELLE. Yourself. (*They embrace.*)

JESSE. I'm planning it Belle. I aint going to die in some bed with an idiot doctor standing over me. (*JESSE sits on the arm of the rocker and imitates a doctor examining BELLE.*) Why this boy's heart aint beating and pulse aint thumping. Give him an enema. Talk to me next week. Three dollars please.

BELLE. (*Laughing, sits on JESSE's lap.*) Jesse, you aint going to die in bed. You don't spend enough time there. And I ought to know. How are you going to die?

JESSE. Big and taking plenty with me. (*Sitting BELLE in his rocker, referring to the page in the typewriter.*) My last chapter: Jesse's death. I will ride through the bullets and they will not touch me. I will ride into history and no man's gun can stop me. Northfield. I am in Northfield. Billy's military techniques can't save us. They are too smart in Northfield. They are waiting. The long rifles of the farmers—all those blonde haired Swedes from Minnesota—they cover

15
 Fastest
 finger
 in the
 West.

X behind rocker to L of rocker

up

us in bullets. I have never been so far north. Frank is shot. Cole is shot. I can see my men falling but still I ride. There is a glow around me, a white light that no bullet can enter. Only I can escape. It is my fate. And my glory.

BELLE. Glory—

JESSE. Don't interrupt.

BELLE. Half that Northfield business was so Cole'd get shot. Always trying to set it up so Cole'd get shot.

JESSE. (*Crossing Up Left on the platform.*) I see a gun fight. A shoot out in the street. Me against three. Maybe more. (*He acts out the parts as he speaks.*) I drop down fast, firing. I jump to one side. I spin around shooting. Two of them drop then three more appear. Then four. But they beg for mercy. I'm amazing. I'm Jesse James. Then suddenly from out of the shadows a dozen more stand up. With rifles. (*Moving Center on the platform, looking all around him.*) Twelve long barrels facing me from every direction. I look at them and laugh and begin to fire. They drop, oh, how they fall, but as they go, the rifles take Jesse with them. I'm kept up in the air dancing and turning, my body is getting heavy with Union death, lurching and turning. The blood of Jesse James is flowing, the breath of Jesse James is going. Jesse will die in the street, I can see it. (*Seeing himself die.*) I can see my own death. I shoot to the end till I fall. (*Crumbling and falling off the platform Down Center.*)

BELLE. (*Still sitting in the rocker.*) Wonderful. We can put music to it and play it in every opera house in the country.

JESSE. (*Sitting on the platform.*) That's how it's going to be. (*He goes back to his desk, pulling BELLE out of the rocker and sitting.*) Pretty soon now I'll have it all wrote down, all on the record. (*Writing in the manuscript.*) The blood of Jesse James is flowing, the breath—

take out of
appreciate

out to
platform

(to go)

music
(theater)

set

ACT II JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN 45

BELLE. So sure of everything, even know how you're going to die.

JESSE. You don't care how you're going to die. Because you are nothing and you know it. I am a hero and it matters how I die. The death of Jesse James. . . .

BELLE. (~~Walking to Jesse's coat tree.~~) He fell off a bar stool and banged his head on his own foot.

JESSE. It's my life and my death, and I get to say how it happens. And I just might say how yours happens too. (~~Gestures to the manuscript.~~) Maybe I'm deciding that right here. (~~He turns to Belle who has picked up Jesse's gun from the coat tree and is aiming it at him.~~)

BELLE. (~~Lowering the gun.~~) You'll die of overeating and I'll die of back strain from lugging your corpse to the hole where it's going to get dumped.

JESSE. Zee'll see to that, thank you very much.

BELLE. (~~Shouting Off Stage to Zee.~~) All you ever do is get tired of Zee, and I can't think why. (~~To Jesse.~~) Well I'm tired of being some kind of pillow for you.

JESSE. What am I supposed to do, wait in line?

BELLE. (~~Calling off again.~~) You just wait for Zee.

JESSE. (~~Calling Off Stage.~~) Zee's all right. She's good to me. (~~To Belle.~~) Least she tries. (~~Calling off.~~) And I'm good to her. (~~To Belle.~~) Sometimes.

BELLE. What do you tell her about me these days?

JESSE. I lie. She don't ask so much anymore.

BELLE. You lie to her, you'd lie to me. That's all that silly thing is: (~~Points to the typewriter.~~) Lies, lies, and more lies. (~~Moving behind Jesse, leaning on the back of the rocker. She still holds Jesse's gun.~~) Jesse, writing it down doesn't make it so. You don't know and I don't know how we're going to die.

JESSE. I know how you're going to die, Belle. I'm going to kill you. I'm building a legend and killing you is going to be part of it. I don't like killing women, but that's how it's going to be.

BELLE. Maybe so, Jesse, maybe so. (~~Belle walks~~

kick his shoulder

Type it into the manuscript.

XDR

Belle looks like "side of that"

X to desk

Jesse admits "no" something they laugh & the tension is broken

"you're charged to work"

Ang from behind

take for hands

put gun back in appearance

46 JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN ACT II

away from him in ~~disgust, taking his gun with her.~~ ^{shaking her head} She stands Up Right next to the platform.)

JESSE. (Rises and walks Down Left (as the lights fade to evening.) Now, every last blood letting drop of it. My life and my death, straight and true and permanent.

(BELLE steps into the Scene as Bob Ford. She has taken off her bodice and carries JESSE's gun at her hip. Bobby is about seventeen. He's oily and ingratiating and doesn't fool JESSE for a moment.)

BELLE. Evening Mr. Howard. (JESSE spins around to see her, instinctively reaching for a gun which he is not wearing. When he realizes it's Bobby, he relaxes.)

JESSE. Hello Bobby. Do me a favor.

BELLE. (Crossing Down Center:) Yes sir.

JESSE. Save the Mr. Howard crap for my wife. You just call me by name.

BELLE. Yes sir. I want to thank you again for this. (Holds the gun up.) I'm real grateful.

JESSE. You fire it yet?

BELLE. No sir, not yet. Aint had no cause. But I'm sure she'll fire true. (JESSE takes the gun from her.) I do thank you. Real generous of you.

JESSE. Well Bobby, I appreciate all the attention you paid to my wife while I was away.

BELLE. Glad to be of assistance sir. I am grateful. And proud to have such a gift from such as yourself.

JESSE. (Sits on Down Center platform.) Bobby, you are the politest damn boy I ever met.

BELLE. Yes sir. I try to be.

JESSE. I know. Zee's real fond of you too.

BELLE. Is she about? Zee? Miz Howard.

JESSE. Nope. But she'll be back.

BELLE. She wanted me to straighten up that picture. Thought I'd have a look at it. She's a real fine person,

w/ manuscript

from last week

16
Jesse
Belle

Bobby
fond
secret

Look for
Zee
Howard

straighten
again.
picture

to cover

half back up

ACT II JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN 47

Miz Howard. I do admire her. Real fine. I'm real glad to fix up that thing. *(She starts to step up toward the picture.)* I can probably scramble around here easier than you can. Yes sir. Glad to help out in my own little way. ~~*(As she's at the picture, with her back to Jesse, he sights the gun, first at the floor, then at Belle's back.)*~~ I want you to know sir, I consider it an honor to be around you, yes sir, an honor. ~~*(Belle turns to look at Jesse who quickly lowers the gun and crosses Down Left. She turns back to the picture. He again points the gun at her back.)*~~ It's a real nice picture you got here, Mr. Howard . . . ~~*(She turns back to Jesse who keeps the gun aimed at her. It scares her, and she turns back to the picture nervously.)*~~ ah, Mr. Jess . . . Mr. James. Real pretty.

JESSE. You just leave it be.

BELLE. I'll have it fixed in a minute. ~~Just a little~~

JESSE. ~~*(Lowering the gun.)*~~ Just leave it be. I'll take care of it. ~~*(It's my job to straighten it and I'll take care of it. (Crossing to his coat tree.)*~~ You just get on down from there now.

17

BELLE. Yes sir. ~~*(Belle steps Down Center off the platform as the lights change suddenly leaving her in a pool of light. She is herself again and talks to the audience.)*~~ Jesse had two children, a boy and a girl, and so did I. I had a daughter named Pearl, she was the smart one, and a baby boy named Ed. We lived out away from everything and then Pearl run off to Kansas City. ~~*(She worked in one of them houses. That's something I never done.)*~~ I bargained with it a little, and lord knows I gave it away, but I never sold it and I never will. ~~*(She sits on the Down Center platform speaking with some difficulty.)*~~ Before Pearl run off, she and Ed were always around to help me. They got in trouble them two, and I aint proud of it. It was the living away from everything and me being away so much of the time. It aint natural what happened, but my kids aint the first that ever done it.

What to Ed & Pearl

turn to picture
turn to Jesse

55
.0

go out to #3
Hill
Hill
Hill

48 JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN ACT II

Probably won't be the last. (JESSE, as BELLE's son Ed, enters as the lights change suddenly. He jumps onto the platform heading Up Left. He has put his gun back into the holster hanging from the coat tree Up Right. He has removed his vest, ~~shirt~~, boots and has rolled up his pant legs. Ed is sixteen and capable of anything. He sees his mother and stops for a moment.) Hello, Ed. (JESSE starts to leave again.) Where's your sister?

JESSE. (~~He stands, sullenly staring at his feet, his mother, then back at his feet.~~) I don't know.

BELLE. Where you been? (JESSE shrugs.) You been with Pearl? Have you? Cat got your tongue?

JESSE. You going out?

BELLE. Yeah. So what?

JESSE. (~~Jumps off the platform Right of the piano.~~) Just wondered.

BELLE. I'm going out, Pearl's coming in. That it?

JESSE. She lives here.

BELLE. In my house. She lives in my house. And so do you.

JESSE. (~~Moving Down Left.~~) Yep.

BELLE. And I won't have you carrying on like that. It aint natural. Do you hear me? Do you?

JESSE. (~~Facing away from her.~~) Yep.

BELLE. (~~Stands.~~) Stop saying yep. (JESSE says nothing.) She is your sister. Your sister! It'll kill you. That will strike you down dead if you do that with your own sister. That is a sin against God.

JESSE. (~~Looking at her defiantly.~~) When you going?

BELLE. I'm taking her with me. Away from you. Do you understand? (JESSE starts to leave. BELLE pulls him back, slapping his face and then hitting him again and again. He falls to the floor Down Center.) Do you? Do you? You do that with your own sister and I will take you out behind the barn and cut it off with a butcher knife. You understand? Do you? (~~Pulling him up to his knees.~~) I will take a knife to

56.0

To
Jesse
Belle pulls

X up

Take
out
the
vest
and
boots
and
roll
up
the
pant
legs

tear
to

115
116

ACT II JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN 49

you and slice it off and feed it to the pigs. (BELLE is horrified at what she has just said to her son. She pulls him to her trying to comfort him. With her son's head pulled to her breast, she sinks to her knees. The embrace turns from a maternal one to a sexual one. Neither is certain of what is happening. It is neither a seduction nor a rape, but a moment that they can neither understand nor control. Clinging to him as they fall to the floor.) Let go of me. You let go of me. Eddie. (They lay there entwined in each other's arms. They are still for a moment, both frightened by what has happened.)

JESSE. Mama, I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

BELLE. Oh, Eddie, my little Eddie. (They pull away from each other.) You have to go away now. (JESSE slowly moves Up Right as BELLE pulls herself to her feet. The lights return to a pool of light on BELLE, distraught by what has just happened. To the audience.) Pearl and Ed went away, and I went looking for Jesse. I wore a tight black jacket, high topped boots and a Stetson hat with an ostrich plume. And I rode into town at break neck speed scattering everyone on the side walk, looking for my Jesse Starr. I played the piano till he come to me. I was a singer and a dancer and a dealer of poker and faro, and Venus was my only friend till Jesse come to me. I married Henry Starr and John Starr and Sam Starr, and my babies run off together and I was never happy till my Jesse Starr come back.

(BELLE crosses Left of the piano, throwing her skirt on the floor, leaving her in short laced bloomers and dark stockings. She's a dance hall girl now, "a dealer of poker and faro." She sits at the piano and plays the Mozart passage she was playing when she first met JESSE, seventeen years earlier. As the lights slowly change, JESSE enters Down Right with his gun and holster slung over his

step to
back to
platform

12
Dance
Hall
Stetson
to dance
hall
for

like
dancer
dealer
poker
faro
skirt
bloomers
stockings

56 E

let
5 p.m.
with
to bar
let
Dick
and faro

50 JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN ACT II

shoulder. He's carrying his boots. His entrance and her piano playing parallels their first meeting. JESSE stands Down Center for a moment watching her and listening. He applauds with his boots. Hearing him, BELLE stops playing.)

JESSE. Very good. Very, very good.

BELLE. (She turns toward him.) Well, if it aint the music critic himself. Who'd you kill this morning?

JESSE. Belle, you don't understand me. I'm a peace loving man, just trying to earn a living.

BELLE. Me too. I'm a school teacher.

JESSE. So I hear.

BELLE. You come for a lesson? How much is one bank and one bank? Or you just going to stand there and watch me?

JESSE. You're the best thing I know to watch.

BELLE. Yeah, every once in six months. (She plays again, the same piece.) To what do I owe this rarely bestowed honor?

JESSE. (~~Crossing above the piano placing his boots on the piano.~~) You know the governor's making speeches about me? A whole speech just about me. (~~Setting his gun and holster on the piano.~~) How I'm a menace to the community of free peace loving people, or some crap like that.

BELLE. (She stops playing and laughs.) I can't imagine where he'd get an idea like that. (~~She plays again.~~)

JESSE. (~~Moving Right of BELLE.~~) I'm on the run Belle. I need to just be here for a while till things cool down. Till the governor thinks up somebody else to make speeches about. (~~He puts his arm around~~

BELLE. (~~She pulls away, picks up her skirt, and hangs it on her coat tree.~~)

BELLE. The only time you come around here is when the army's chasing you. Just get in my life or get out of it. (JESSE sits at the piano and plunks a few notes

put
up
put

stop

blow d
hair

hat
sk
of bit

with
the
piece

skirt
up
(skirt
w/ skirt
- 3-2)



ACT II JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN 51

of "Bright Morning Stars.") You been practicing.
(She sits on top of the piano Left of JESSE.)

JESSE. (Stops playing.) This damn thing's hard.
(JESSE plays again.)

BELLE. Take me with you. I'm better than half those horse's asses you got for partners anyway.

JESSE. I guess you ought to know about my partners, you slept with enough of them.

BELLE. Let's go to St. Joe. There's a bank in the middle of town just waiting there.

JESSE. (Still playing.) Not no more.

BELLE. You done another one already without me. The hell with you. (She smashes his hands on the keys with her foot.) There, Chopin.

JESSE. You just watch what you're doing.

BELLE. You never did know what you was doing, did you? Did you?

JESSE. I'll do whatever I want. (He grabs her.) That's more like it. (BELLE pulls the gun out of the holster and points it at him. JESSE moves away, a little startled.)

BELLE. You'll have to get at it first.

JESSE. I been there. I know where to find it.

BELLE. Whyn't you just come riding in here and shoot me? Aint that your military techniques? (JESSE takes a step toward BELLE. She stomps her foot on the keyboard and extends the gun farther, stopping him.) Lock up your daughters, hide your wives, here comes Jesse James the bandit queen. (JESSE reaches for the gun but before he can grab it she lets the barrel drop and swing free. He takes it and aims it at her.)

JESSE. Bang.

BELLE. Banged by Jesse James.

JESSE. It aint the first time.

BELLE. And as usual it didn't take long. Sit.

JESSE. (Walking Down Left, looking about him.) You own this place yet?

BELLE. I do okay.

JESSE. Bullcrap.

BELLE. I do okay.

JESSE. Bullcrap again. You still married to that idiot?

BELLE. Which idiot? *(They both laugh.)*

JESSE. *(Crossing Right of the piano.)* The tall one. What's his name?

BELLE. Sam? No. I guess not. Sam's in jail.

JESSE. Well, which idiot you married to now, and how is he?

BELLE. Oh, I don't know. I lost track.

JESSE. Zeralda sends her love.

BELLE. *(Sarcastic.)* Which one?

JESSE. What's that supposed to mean?

BELLE. You're the only man I know ever had a mother and a wife both named Zeralda.

JESSE. Well, then they both send their love. *(Putting his gun into his holster.)* And so do I.

BELLE. Zee. Pretty Zee and her little round face.

JESSE. *(Carressing BELLE'S breast.)* That aint all that's round on her. *Red in face from alcohol.*

BELLE. *(Pushing his hand away.)* I'll never understand why it is men make such an unending fuss over an inch or two of flesh.

JESSE. Depends on whose inch or two it is.

BELLE. No, no it don't. Not to any man I ever met. Nothing matters but a curve or two on a woman or an inch or two on a man. There. *(She presses her foot on his crotch. JESSE holds her leg. She speaks, exasperated.)* Jesse, it's like this piano. The decoration is fine, but it aint got nothing to do with the music it makes.

JESSE. *(Dropping her leg and crossing Left of the Down Center platform.)* You didn't hear about Zeralda I guess. And I mean my mother. You're so busy being jealous of my wife. *(He removes his jacket.)*

BELLE. Now what?

JESSE. Since St. Joe every damn Pinkerton flunkie and federal soldier's looking for us. *(He sits on the Down Center platform.)*

*Put
gun
on desk*

gun

Quiet!

*Let me
bed*

ACT II JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN 53

BELLE. And that's why you come here. (*BELLE gets down from the piano, crosses to ~~her coat tree and puts on her cape.~~*) Maybe I sent all them soldiers out after you so you'd show up here. Maybe next time I'll have 'em all put a bullet in your brain. (*~~BELLE sits at the piano and plays the same piece.~~*)

*Rodriguez Kiss
(B-2) (Coat tree)*

JESSE. Yankee soldiers come looking for me and Frank. Threw some kind of bomb in the window. Blew my mother's arm off.

BELLE. (*~~Stops playing.~~*) Her arm?
JESSE. Left one. She could still cook and stuff.
BELLE. (*Turning to JESSE.*) Blew her arm off?

JESSE. Right about there. They thought she was going to die. She's pretty tough though. Tougher than she looks.

BELLE. What are you going to do?
JESSE. Already done it. Army Post in St. Joe. Before we burned the place, we rounded up all the officers. Sawed their arms off.

fr. bed

BELLE. You are a vicious one.
JESSE. (*Leaning back.*) Now you don't like a little hell raising?

*100%
at 100%
at 100%
at 100%*

BELLE. No, I guess the truth is I like it more than ever.

JESSE. (*Extending his arm to her.*) Maybe I ought to saw your arm off.

BELLE. You probably would just so you could play the piano better than me.

JESSE. I'd do it for the sheer joy and simple pleasure that it would bring me.

BELLE. (*~~Rises and sits Left of JESSE.~~*) My gentle Jesse.

JESSE. I aint your Jesse.
BELLE. You aint even your own Jesse. (*They kiss.*)

JESSE. Goodbye Belle.
BELLE. What's that supposed to mean?

JESSE. I come to say goodbye.

BELLE. You come to hide. You got in trouble and you come to hide in my skirts.

*up 2 steps
at 100%
at 100%*

*fr. bed
at 100%
at 100%
at 100%
at 100%*

JESSE. That aint what I do in your skirts.

BELLE. You don't do nothing with my skirts but wear them.

JESSE. *(He pulls away from her.)* I'm going down to South America with Zee and the kids. Rio. ~~*(JESSE rises and walks behind the piano.)*~~

BELLE. Stay here till you get tired of me, then run away with your wife. It aint going to work. I don't want you and you couldn't spend that much time with her. *(Imitates.)* "Jesse . . . do this . . . do that."

JESSE. Zee's okay. She's regular and permanent.

BELLE. What do you think we are?

JESSE. We're permanent okay, permanent crazy.

BELLE. You get on that boat and you'll die there.

JESSE. There's worse places to die.

BELLE. *(Stands and quotes.)* "The blood of Jesse James is flowing, the breath of Jesse James is going. Jesse will die in the street . . ."

JESSE. *(Moving Left of the piano.)* You don't know nothing.

BELLE. *(Walking to JESSE's desk.)* I know you aint going to South America. It's coming to an end Jesse. You're thirty-four Jesse. And fat now, yes fat. *(BELLE stands behind the desk.)*

JESSE. It's my life and I get to do whatever I want with it.

BELLE. You got two choices bank robber: go back to Zee and pretend to be somebody you aint and get killed. Or, come with me out to the Indian Nations. And be who you are.

JESSE. *(Crossing Down Left.)* You aint going to turn me into one of your damn Cherokees.

BELLE. Whyn't you go back to Zeralda. And I mean your mother and your wife, cause you don't know the difference between them.

JESSE. *(Moving towards BELLE.)* I don't know the difference? You're the one can't tell you own baby from your Indians. *(Crosses Right of the desk, point-*

L

twice
XDL

fat on
skirt
Jesse
Zee

Xin

ACT II JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN 55

ing at the typewriter.) I'm putting in a whole chapter about you and Ed. Belle and her bouncing baby boy, out behind the barn.

BELLE. You can just leave me out of that thing, thank you very much.

JESSE. It's okay to be Bella Starr—

BELLE. Belle! Belle, damn it!

JESSE. —the bandit queen or the female Jesse James. It's fine to be decked out in lavender fringe— (JESSE tugs on BELLE's cape. She pulls away Down Center.) convincing God you're Mary Magdalene come back to haunt him, oh that's okay, but none of the rest of it.

BELLE. That other stuff don't matter. (Put in about all of 'em.) I never done nothing with my own baby. Never.

JESSE. I'll put in about how Ed and Pearl was out behind the barn. Or maybe it was all three of you.

BELLE. It aint true.

JESSE. All I know it was a mighty busy barn.

BELLE. It aint true.

JESSE. (~~Rushing towards BELLE.~~) It is now.

BELLE. (*About to hit him.*) Jesse, I'll kill you. (*He throws her down on the Down Center platform.*)

JESSE. I aint going to die in South America with Zee and I ain't going to die in the Indian Nations with you. Cause there aint no difference between the two. (*He moves to the piano to pick up his boots.*)

BELLE. Oh, you're going to die all right. They'll blow your head off like Billy. That's the best thing ever happened, Billy got his head blowed off. (JESSE, forgetting about his boots, spins Downstage and slaps BELLE across the face.)

JESSE. (*Standing over her.*) You're talking about the dead. A hero. You are talking about a true hero.

BELLE. (*Quietly, recovering.*) Since when do you count the dead? What about them officers? And that little girl back in Lawrence? They're dead.

JESSE. (*Goes to pick up his boots.*) Damn right.

Jesse
Hanna

detail
in
center

in
Hanna

up

Jesse
pull
OS
1 stop

Belle
hand of
Jesse

make
on desk

stuff

if
Jesse

And the only thing I'm sorry about is I can't kill them again.

BELLE. Golden Jesse. Everybody's hero.

JESSE. (*Sits on the piano stool, starting to put on his boots.*) And that's how I intend to go. Boots on and taking somebody with me. *one boot*

BELLE. Me?

JESSE. (*Puts his boots aside and stands Left of BELLE.*) That's what you want. But only I am Jesse and only I can die like Jesse.

BELLE. If you leave you aint coming back.

JESSE. If I leave it's cause I want to, and if I come back it's cause I want to. And if I don't—

BELLE. It's cause you're dead. (*JESSE moves back to the piano stool and sits.*) Dead and nothing. (*BELLE removes her cape, letting it drop on the platform. The stage gradually begins to get dark.*) And I am Jesse.

(*BELLE puts on JESSE's jacket as JESSE removes his chaps.*) Only I am Jesse. (*She crosses Upstage and stands Right of the Down Center platform.*)

JESSE. (*Crosses Left of the platform facing BELLE and hands her his chaps.*) One last time, huh Belle?

BELLE. (*Putting on the chaps.*) No more times. No more. (*JESSE picks up BELLE's cape and puts it on.*) I don't need you Jesse. Because I am Jesse. The best you ever been was when you was being me.

JESSE. (*Picking up BELLE's shawl from the piano and draping it around his neck.*) Me being you is me being better at it than you Belle. It's always you and me in the end. Aint it? (*BELLE puts on JESSE's hat. They face each other from opposite sides of the platform.*)

BELLE. (*As JESSE, Right of the platform.*) Hello Belle.

JESSE. (*As BELLE, Left of the platform.*) Hello Jesse. Jesse, Jesse Starr.

BELLE. I have to go, Belle. (*She crosses to the rocker and sits, becoming JESSE at home. JESSE crosses*

action

up

X back & sit

up

up

up

X

Jesse 1st level

1st level

1st level after meeting

put on jacket

see pick up

put on hat

59

19 Jesse shot

ACT II JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN 57

~~Left and stands between the piano and the stool, facing Upstage.~~ BELLE calls.) Zee. Zee, you in there? What are you doing? Whyn't you make us some pancakes, Zee?

JESSE. (As Zee.) In a minute. Straighten that picture Jesse, will you? (JESSE picks up the gun from the piano and sits on the stool.)

BELLE. (Rises and walks up to the picture about to straighten it.) Yeah, I'll get to it in a minute, Zee. Why anybody who lives out in the country needs a picture of the country is beyond me. You could just look out the window.

JESSE. (Turns Downstage and addresses the audience. As BELLE.) The kid that shot him done it with a gun Jesse gave him. It was a Colt .45 with a pearl handle. Gave him. As a gift. After, he got a job with a wild west show. "The Outlaws of Missouri," starring Robert Ford. He shot through that window hundreds of times. He even did it at the circus in New York City, for Mr. P.T. Barnum. There was a lot of stories about Jesse's funeral. The \$500 coffin and everything. No. A lot of crap from The Police Gazette. They buried Jesse with his boots on and without a coffin, just dumped him in a hole, because wood was too dear on the prairie. (He rises and walks Down Left.) I know. I was there. Nobody knew me, but I was there. He is timeless, he will never die. A hero and a legend and he will never die. Only he did. (He cocks the gun and becomes Bobby Ford, pointing the gun at her back.)

BELLE. (Turns to JESSE when she hears the click.) There'll be no praise for you. No glory, no honor for little Bobby Ford. (She turns back to the picture, presenting her back to JESSE. He fires the gun, and runs toward BELLE as she jumps off the platform, pulling out her knife. JESSE has become BELLE again, being threatened by her son Eddie. They face each other from opposite sides of the platform.)

Intro to Jesse shot

33
3

32 held for him
3

*He's through with the
the people you're
when*

*realizes
the did it
for public*

58 JESSE AND THE BANDIT QUEEN ACT II

JESSE. Eddie. Don't. No. You have to go away now. You have to forget about all of that. Eddie you mind your mama and you put that down. *(They step up onto the platform. BELLE stabs JESSE and they collapse onto the platform. The lights brighten, revealing BELLE and JESSE as themselves, relaxing on the platform.)*

*one; fully
Belle
Bright.
Kiss*

BELLE. Jesse, when I wasn't pretending to be the desperado of the stage coaches, I wore a crisp white blouse and me and Venus and little Jesse, we took in the races, the circus and the county fair. Except for the gun I always tucked into the folds of my skirt, I was one first class lady.

*Jed B
x to
LATA
Belle's
Eto
He has
The picture is similar to the end of Act One.
Except now, BELLE has mounted JESSE. The
weapons have been left next to each other on
the Down Center platform.)
No scene Jesse's death transition*

JESSE. Fat now, yes fat. But once, oh once. Actually, I never planned to be no bank robber, but a soldier. It *(They kiss just happened. That's the thing, you think you're planning your life, doing what you want to, and everybody gets it wrong.)*

He has
The picture is similar to the end of Act One.
Except now, BELLE has mounted JESSE. The
weapons have been left next to each other on
the Down Center platform.)

BELLE. Come Venus. *Up* girl. My pretty girl. Oh, my sweet girl. To ride you, to touch you, my hands on your mane.

JESSE. *(Rising to his knees.)* Jesse Starr, Jesse Starr. *(They are silhouetted against the back drop.)*

BELLE. The only Jesse Starr. *(BELLE waves JESSE's hat in the air as the lights fade out.)*

THE END

20.0

24-pm.

*200
700
600
500
400
300
200
100*

*Lat
Belle's
Eto
He has
The picture is similar to the end of Act One.
Except now, BELLE has mounted JESSE. The
weapons have been left next to each other on
the Down Center platform.)
No scene Jesse's death transition*

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

This brief director's outline is intended only to suggest points of entry into "Jesse and the Bandit Queen," not as a prescription for a perfect production. It has four parts—the time frame of the play, its style, characters, and concepts.

At first glance the time sequence of the play may appear to be complex. In fact it is quite simple. The opening sequence of the play takes place immediately before the final moments. That is, Jesse and Belle are introduced just before they are killed, and almost the entire play happens in the instant between their awareness of danger and their moment of death. The seven Jesse/Belle scenes alternate with the ten biographical scenes in exact chronological order.

In terms of style, this means that while Jesse and Belle act out their lives from a final point of perspective, the play is not a memory play but one of active, on-going conflict. The dramatic drive, the suspense, comes not from going backward in time towards origins and explanations but forward to consequences and conclusions.

As the play does not rely on the mood or imitation of memory, the basic style of playing should not be dreamlike but related to direct and immediate objectives, as can be seen by looking at the characters themselves.

It will be obvious from a first reading that several levels and kinds of characters are presented, including the fully drawn and colored ones of Jesse and Belle and the more pointedly sketched "third person" characters of Quantrill, Parker, Fox, Zee, Eddie, etc. The first are clearly at the dramatic and emotional center of the play, and it is towards the development of Jesse

and Belle as individuals and as a couple that most of the actors' work must go.

But the "third person" characters are not simply comic relief cartoons or informational symbols. They are the image Jesse and Belle have of each other's lives *apart* from each other. Thus when Jesse is being Parker or Belle Quantrill, they are demonstrating their own idea of what the other one has told them or they have imagined. Belle's Billy represents not just the historical Quantrill but what she perceives he means to Jesse. In this light it is no stylistic quirk that leads to Jesse's sarcastic version of Belle's biographer-friend Richard Fox, or to Belle's almost humiliating version of Zee.

In addition there are the "characters" assumed by Belle and Jesse when talking to the audience. These approaches to the audience are extremely varied, from talk-show slickness to the most ragged confessions. This range is possible because the audience is *inside* the minds of the characters. They are the people or voices or figures one addresses inside one's mind, which may be flattered, amused, appealed to, begged, yelled at, even crawled to. For Jesse and Belle they take the form of the scowling woman in row E or the sleeping man in seat 140. Played this way the third characters and the posture taken towards the audience become not "bits" but integral parts of the characters, style and time frame of "Jesse and the Bandit Queen." Which leads to the fourth point, concepts, or just what is this play about anyway?

On the simplest level it is straight forward biography, the individual stories of Jesse James and Belle Starr. This is easily understood, but its interest to an audience should not be underestimated. People are fascinated by what turns out to be true and most of what is asserted about Jesse and Belle separately is true.

But this implies at least an equal interest in what

may not be true. Our quest for amazing details, the so-called death of fiction, may really be a reaffirmation of our need for fiction. And what is *not* historically true, the relationship between Belle and Jesse, becomes the center of truth in this play.

One way to enter the nucleus of the play is to imagine it to be composed of opposite forces in orbit around each other. Historical fact and journalistic invention, domesticity and sexual passion, killing and love, domination and independence, horse and rider, male and female find resolution only in opposition.

If the play is merely examined in terms of levels—biographical, the individual characters, the relationship, sexuality, and the achievement of myth—the most important level of all will be missed, that of conflict within and among these elements. It is a two dimensional approach. The play's molecular dimension is given form and meaning by the attraction and repulsion of its opposing charges.

Jesse, who has achieved enormous fame because of the velocity of his unselfconscious violence is attempting to find understanding and permanence. They are incompatible. Belle wants only the most complete independence for herself and the strongest, toughest, and freest for her man.

Jesse tries to fill up his life to out-do his legend, Belle tries to build up her reputation beyond what she does. Jesse is attracted to the dress and scent and form of women, Belle grasps for her masculine opposites. Both opposites are within the other. At the end, they do not make love, they exchange clothes. They do not grope each other, they become each other.

Jesse strives for heroic death, yet the shot in the back by a mediocrity gives him greater glory than any act he ever committed on his own. Belle's urges to destroy and protect her children come full circle and meet at a moment when to sleep with her son or castrate him would be bound in the same passion.

One final word on production. To create this image on the stage it is important not to blunt or blur the edges. Smoothness and fluidity is best achieved by simplifying the physical production, by making the transitions sharp, not dreamy, and by illuminating the conflicts of and in the characters instead of trying to smooth them into resolution. As in photography, the degree of clean resolution in the print depends upon the balance of contrast in the negative.

Too much is easily made of the fact that Jesse and Belle are movie figures. Of course they are. Movies are one of our major myth media. But that says little about the meaning of the play and nothing about directing it. The object is not to duplicate a movie in further two-dimensional service of another version of a myth, but to take the audience inside the shielding glass and feel the force of conflict as matter is transformed into myth.

Certainly more props could be used, more music could be added, elaborate costume changes devised. If designed and executed very carefully they might add a great deal. But one advantage of using 10 props, 2 sets of clothes and no sound cues is that atmosphere and behavior do not become substituted for character and conflict, because they can't.

The Mozart Sonata used in the New York production was chosen to suit the ability of the actor. Others of lesser difficulty could be substituted. Obviously the greater the technical display the more delicious the moment, but such facility is neither essential for the scene nor the play.

Jesse and Belle are legends, but they began life as real people and if their legends endure it is only because they live on in people like us.

—*Gordon Stewart*

PROPERTY LIST

Furniture and Set Props:

desk with center drawer (Stage Right)
rocking chair with patchwork cushions (behind desk)
coat tree (Up Right)
piano (Stage Left)
piano stool (swivel type)
coat tree with small shelf attached (Up Left)
empty picture frame (Up Center)

Act One—Preset:

Desk:

copy of The Police Gazette
small, leather-bound notebook
pencil

Center Drawer:

shaving mug with lather
shaving brush
straight razor

Down Center Platform:

brown blanket

Piano:

3 sheets of music (the Mozart sonata)
riding crop

Belle's square mauve silk shawl with fringe

Up Left Coat Tree Shelf:

shaving strop
small barber's towel

Act One—Personal Props:

JESSE:

holster
Belle's knife

BELLE:

scabbard
Jesse's Colt .45 with pearl handle

Act Two—Preset:

Desk:

copy of The Police Gazette
small leather-bound notebook (from Act One)
pencil
old fashioned typewriter with half typed page in it

Piano:

Belle's shawl
small carpet-bag with:
5 wallets containing paper money and photos

Up Left Coat Tree:

Belle's cape

Up Left Coat Tree Shelf:

Jesse's neckerchief
prop gun (wild west show)

Up Right Coat Tree:

Jesse's hat
Jesse's vest

Rocking Chair:

Jesse's jacket

Act Two—Personal Props:

JESSE:

holster
colt .45 with blank cartridges
wallet with paper money

BELLE:

scabbard
knife

COSTUME PLOT

Richard Fox
jacket
Dorothy
Quaintance hat -
Scarney hat
Lino
jacket

JESSE:

Act One:

muslin cowboy shirt dyed red
brown and red striped suit vest with mauve cotton lining
faded brown western cut jeans
hand tooled cowboy belt
~~Aged, rust, split rawhide chaps~~ with gold conches
faded red unionsuit
light brown socks
hand tooled boots with silver heels
maroon bandana-type neckerchief
brown suede jacket
brown flat topped plainsman hat

Act Two:

pants, shirt, chaps, belt, unionshirt, boots and socks from
Act One

BELLE:

Act One:

wine silk brocade, five gore wrap around skirt (opens in
back)
~~boned corset built on to a camisole top~~
lavender striped bodice with a built-in blouse. (opens in
front like a jacket)
~~terre cotta cotton eyelet, knee-length pantaloons~~
cocoa brown silk stockings
red satin garters
riding-type boots with spur straps
~~wine colored half inch velvet~~ "Zee" ribbon tucked in
camisole
maroon velvet, floor-length cape with hood

red
satin
kerchief

Act Two:

skirt, camisole, bodice, stocking, boots, and "Zee" ribbon
from Act One
dark red silk bloomers with maroon lace ruffles

Riding shirt.

SOUND PLOT

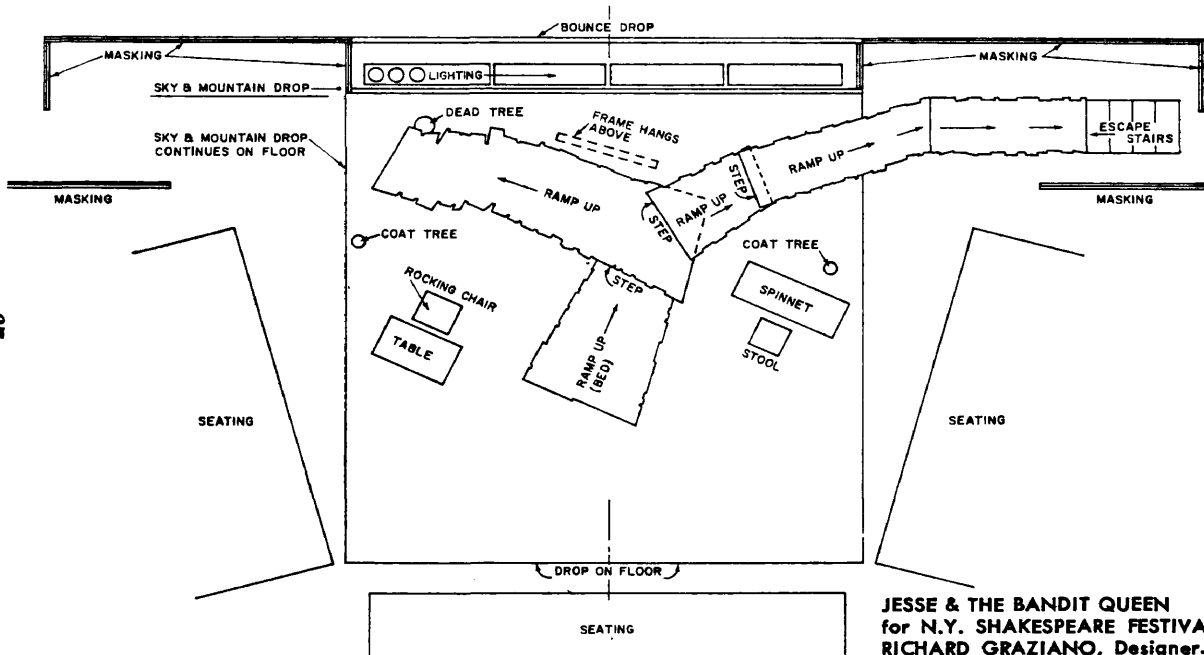
Cue 1—Top of Act One:

“Bright Morning Stars” from *Music of the Ozarks*, a Sounds of the World recording, available through National Geographic Society

Cue 2—End of Act Two:

“Bright Morning Stars”

In the New York production, Mozart’s Sonata III, written in the key of C was used.



JESSE & THE BANDIT QUEEN
for N.Y. SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL
RICHARD GRAZIANO, Designer.

A Breeze from The Gulf

MART CROWLEY

(Little Theatre) Drama

The author of "The Boys in the Band" takes us on a journey back to a small Mississippi town to watch a 15-year-old boy suffer through adolescence to adulthood and success as a writer. His mother is a frilly southern doll who has nothing to fall back on when her beauty fades. She develops headaches and other physical problems, while the asthmatic son turns to dolls and toys at an age when other boys are turning to sports. The traveling father becomes withdrawn, takes to drink; and mother takes to drugs to kill the pain of the remembrances of things past. She eventually ends in an asylum, and the father in his fumbling way tries to tell the son to live the life he must.

"The boy is plunged into a world of suffering he didn't create. . . . One of the most electrifying plays I've seen in the past few years . . . Scenes boil and hiss . . . The dialogue goes straight to the heart." *Reed, Sunday News.*

Royalty, \$50-\$35

ECHOES

N. RICHARD NASH

(All Groups) Drama

2 Men, 1 Woman, Interior

A young man and woman build a low-keyed paradise of happiness within an asylum, only to have it shattered by the intrusion of the outside world. The two characters search, at times agonizingly to determine the difference between illusion and reality. The effort is lightened at times by moments of shared love and "pretend" games, like decorating Christmas trees that are not really there. The theme of love, vulnerable to the surveillances of the asylum, and the ministrations of the psychiatrist, (a non-speaking part) seems as fragile in the constrained setting as it often is in the outside world.

" . . . even with the tragic, sombre theme there is a note of hope and possible release and the situations presented specifically also have universal applications to give it strong effect . . . intellectual, but charged with emotion."—*Reed.*

Royalty, \$50-\$35

August 1984

for the Bardis - Max Bearval Kosturco
Studio Theatre

JULY
S M T W T F S S
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8 9 10 11 12 13 14
15 16 17 18 19 20 21
22 23 24 25 26 27 28
29 30 31

SEPTEMBER
S M T W T F S S
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
9 10 11 12 13 14 15
16 17 18 19 20 21 22
23 24 25 26 27 28 29
30

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
15 5:30 - Corrupt Mortifying and Account Head Alive	6 1:00 - Dead Alive	7 1-4:00 Block & Run 1-3	8 Block & Run	9 1-4:00 Block & Run 4-7	10 1-4:00 Block & Run 8-10	11
12 5:30 - Block (Aud Run) 11-13	13 7:30 - Block (Aud Run) 11-16	14 1-4:00 Block & Run 17-19	15 Block & Run	16 1-4:00 Block & Run Debt	17 Block & Run	18
19	20 7:30 - Block (Aud Run) 11-16	21 1-4:00 Block 1-3, Prep, off books	22 9:30-11:30 Block 4-7, Prep, off books	23 1-4:00 Block 8-10, Prep, off books	24 1-4:00 Block 11-13, Prep, off books	25
26	27 7:30 - Block (Aud Run) 11-16	28 1-4:00 Block 1-3, Prep	29 Block 4-7, Prep, off books	30 1-4:00 Block 8-10, Prep	31	

for all the Standard Park & Recreation Schedule

September 1984

Studio Theatre

AUGUST
S M T W T F S
1 2 3 4
5 6 7 8 9 10 11
12 13 14 15 16 17 18
19 20 21 22 23 24 25
26 27 28 29 30 31

OCTOBER
S M T W T F S
1 2 3 4 5 6
7 8 9 10 11 12 13
14 15 16 17 18 19 20
21 22 23 24 25 26 27
28 29 30 31

SUN MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT

2	3	4	5	6	7	8
5:30 - Dunk All work, add program	Labor Day	4-4:00 Dunk II All work, No program	5:30 - Dunk 8:30 Kitchen, dance, performance add lights	6-4:00 Dunk II Dance, performance add lights		10-1:45 Dunk II
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
5:30 - Dunk Dunk II All work, time add program		1-4:00 Dunk II	4:30 - Dunk Dance, performance	6:30 Dunk Dance, performance	6:30 call 8:00 Dunk performance	6:30 call 8:00 Dunk performance
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
				6:30 Dunk Dance, performance		Autumn Begins
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
6:30 Dunk 8:00 Dunk performance				Rest Holiday	6:30 call 8:00 Dunk performance	6:30 call 8:00 Dunk performance
30						



55-475 12 Months
Refills

Reminder:
Order 4945 Refill

Part 60 Conference Schedule

August 1984

SUN MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT

JULY
S M T W T F S
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8 9 10 11 12 13 14
15 16 17 18 19 20 21
22 23 24 25 26 27 28
29 30 31

AUGUST
S M T W T F S
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15
16 17 18 19 20 21 22
23 24 25 26 27 28 29
30 31

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

21
part 60
part 60

1
part 60
part 60

2
part 60
part 60

3
part 60
part 60

4
part 60
part 60

5
part 60
part 60

8
12:00-2:00 pm
Kathie K.

9
part 60
part 60

10
part 60
part 60

11
6:30-
part 60

12
part 60
part 60

15
12:00-2:00 pm
Kathie K.

16
part 60
part 60

17
part 60
part 60

18
part 60
part 60

19
part 60
part 60

22
part 60
part 60

23
part 60
part 60

24
part 60
part 60

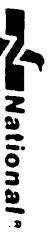
25
part 60
part 60

26
part 60
part 60

29
part 60
part 60

30
part 60
part 60

31
part 60
part 60



55-675 12 Months

Just B.D. Conflict Schedule

September 1984

SUN MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT

AUGUST
S M T W T F S
1 2 3 4
5 6 7 8 9 10 11
12 13 14 15 16 17 18
19 20 21 22 23 24 25
26 27 28 29 30 31

OCTOBER
S M T W T F S
1 2 3 4 5 6
7 8 9 10 11 12 13
14 15 16 17 18 19 20
21 22 23 24 25 26 27
28 29 30 31

2		3 Labor Day	4 Monday	5	6 Monday	7	8	
9	10	11 1-4	12	13	14	15 Third Tax Due	16	17
18	19	20	21	22 Autumn Begins	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30					



55-875 12 Months
Dofill

Reminder:
Order Ahead Now!