

*BANDANNA*, AN OPERA BY DARON ARIC HAGEN WITH LIBRETTO BY  
PAUL MULDOON, COMMISSIONED BY THE COLLEGE BAND  
DIRECTORS NATIONAL ASSOCIATION: THE ORIGINS  
OF AN ARTWORK WITH A GLIMPSE AT ITS  
MUSICAL CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Edwin C. Powell, B.M., M.M.E.

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APPROVED:

Eugene Corporon, Major Professor  
Henry Gibbons, Chair of Conducting and  
Ensembles

Dennis Fisher, Committee Member and  
Associate Director of Wind Studies

Thomas Sovik, Minor Professor

James Scott, Dean of the College of Music

C. Neal Tate, Dean of the Robert B.

Toulouse School of Graduate Studies

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All information for this study was obtained by original source documents, interviews with the principal participants and the personal observations of the writer. A complete transcript of interviews with Daron Aric Hagen Michael Haithcock and Robert De Simone are included as appendices.

In 1961 the College Band Directors National Association (CBDNA) created its commissioning project for the purpose of contracting prominent composers to contribute works of high quality to the growing wind repertoire.

Recently, CBDNA commissioned works that sought to collaborate with other disciplines within the artistic community. These collaborative works added new depth to the wind repertoire and helped advance the genre to new levels of prominence.

CBDNA commissioned Daron Aric Hagen to write an opera using winds in the pit. He titled the work *Bandanna*, based on Shakespeare's *Othello*. Hagen contracted Paul Muldoon to write the libretto. A consortium of 79 member schools contributed to the project. A total of \$100,000.00 was paid to the composer. The Director of Bands at Baylor University conducted the premiere performance of *Bandanna* during the 1999 CBDNA convention on 25 February 1999.

Hagen assigned instrumental, thematic and harmonic attributes to each character. There are literally thousands of interactions between these elements that weave a tight pattern of organic unity into the entire work, making it exceptionally rich with symbolism and innuendo.

Though still in its infancy, the uniqueness of this work both in the manner in which it came into being and through its artistic merits are fascinating. Only the future will determine whether *Bandanna* has true longevity or will fade into the background as a historical curiosity.

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## CHAPTER 1

### BACKGROUND

In 1961 the College Band Directors National Association (CBDNA) created its commissioning project for the purpose of contracting prominent composers to contribute works of high quality to the growing wind repertoire. Several of the most respected composers of the twentieth century including Aaron Copland (*Emblems*), Ingolf Dahl (*Sinfonietta*), Howard Hanson (*Laude*), Ernst Krenek (*Dream Sequence*), Leslie Bassett (*Colors and Contours*), George Walker (*Canvas*) and John Harbison (*Olympic Dances*) have made valuable contributions. These works have been primarily for, but not solely limited to, the traditional band or wind ensemble.

Recently, CBDNA commissioned or sponsored works that sought to collaborate with other disciplines within the artistic community. These collaborative works added new depth to the wind repertoire and helped advance the genre to new levels of prominence. The most recent result of these collaborations occurred in Denton, Texas at the 2001 CBDNA National Conference when the North Texas Wind Symphony premiered George Walker's *Canvas*. This work utilized winds, multiple narrators and chorus.

Another effort in this vein resulted in the highly successful premiere of *Olympic Dances* a ballet by John Harbison, also performed by the North Texas Wind Symphony

in conjunction with the Pilobolus Dance Theatre at the 1997 CBDNA National Conference in Athens, Georgia.

Between these two very successful premieres was perhaps the most daring collaborative effort. CBDNA commissioned Daron Aric Hagen to write an opera he subsequently entitled *Bandanna*. Based on William Shakespeare's *Othello*, the opera is set in a small town along the Mexican border and follows a saga of jealousy and passion that culminates in tragic consequences.

This commission is unique on many levels. Though unusual, the concept of an opera predominantly accompanied by winds is not new. Kurt Weil's *Three Penny Opera* and Robert Kurka's *Good Soldier Schweik* are examples of previous efforts using small chamber ensembles made up of largely winds. *Bandanna* is different from these two examples for a number of reasons.

First, the instrumentation of the accompanying ensemble is greatly expanded. Second, the amount of \$100,000.00 makes *Bandanna* the largest monetary commission ever contracted by CBDNA.<sup>1</sup> Third, it is the intention of the composer that *Bandanna* has a life with professional opera companies. It is the hope of the composer and CBDNA that professional opera companies will show interest in future stagings of *Bandanna*. This is not without precedent. Pilobolus Dance Theatre staged the previously mentioned ballet, *Olympic Dances*, during their 1997 New York Broadway

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<sup>1</sup>College Band Directors National Association. Waco, TX to Daron Aric Hagen. 3 July 1997. *Bandanna* commission contract, p. 2.

run using a recording made by the North Texas Wind Symphony. At this time, no professional companies have scheduled *Bandanna* in their upcoming seasons, but the composer continues to actively pursue organizations. The premiere was originally going to be performed by The Austin Lyric Opera (ALO) in 1999 but the negotiation failed.<sup>2</sup> This negotiation will be detailed later. Fourth, by contract the opera must stay in its original form for a period of ten years following the premiere, meaning that it cannot be adapted with an orchestral accompaniment.<sup>3</sup> Fifth, though it was not required by the commission contract, the composer derived two stand alone wind ensemble works, *Bandanna Overture* and *Wedding Dances*, giving a full set of score and parts to each member of the commission consortium. In addition to these wind ensemble works, two extracted arias *Mona's Prayer* for soprano and winds and Kane's *Seduction Scene* for baritone and winds are available by rental through Carl Fischer Publishing.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> This writer possesses several documents detailing a failed negotiation with Joe McLain and the Austin Lyric Opera and several letters from the composer discussing other companies.

<sup>3</sup> College Band Directors National Association. Waco, TX to Daron Aric Hagen. 3 July 1997. *Bandanna* commission contract, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Hagen, Daron Aric, Personal Home Page, <http://daronhagen.com>. 2002.

## CHAPTER 2

### ORIGINS

Detailing the origins of this commission is an interesting and involved story. At the time Michael Haithcock was the Director of Bands at Baylor University and newly appointed chair of the CBDNA Commissioning Committee. He was looking into ways to branch out and collaborate with other artistic circles.<sup>5</sup> Before his tenure as chair of the committee, a survey was distributed to the general CBDNA membership. The survey results clearly indicated that the general membership was interested in nontraditional, collaborative pieces to add to the wind repertoire. Some hoped that these collaborations would elevate the artistic community's general opinion of wind music; others felt that it was simply good to have diversity within the repertoire. The ideas that came from the survey were multiple. The creation of a concerto, an opera, a piece with soloist/narrator and a ballet were strongly supported. Since a ballet had already been successfully produced, this removed it from the commissioning committee's list of probabilities.

In March of 1997, Haithcock decided, with much consultation with the CBDNA Commissioning Committee, that an opera or a song cycle might be the next possible direction for the organization. He had been tracking Hagen's career as a songwriter and read an outstanding review of his first opera, *Shining Brow*, which premiered 23 April

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<sup>5</sup> Personal conversation with Michael Haithcock October, 1997.

1993.<sup>6</sup> The article was very complimentary, prompting Haithcock to investigate further.

After acquiring Hagen's email address from his publisher at the time, E. C. Schirmer, Haithcock wrote Hagen to explore his interest and availability. Hagen that, while he was willing to write anything CBDNA wanted, he was most interested in an opera.

So the decision fell upon Haithcock and the Commissioning Committee to either proceed or explore other options. Their primary concerns were whether there was enough time to raise the money and could the project be completed and staged for the Austin, Texas premiere in February 1999. Haithcock spoke to many of his colleagues, had a graduate student research grant funding and after a good deal of thought, felt that it would be a good time to move forward.

The decision to choose Daron Aric Hagen as the composer of this opera was both practical and artistic. First, he was willing and available. Second, though the amount of \$100,000.00 was certainly not small, it was quite reasonable in respect to the going rate of opera compositions. Hagen's abilities and availability provided CBDNA with the opportunity to commission *Bandanna* at a fairly early point in his career. Hagen's skills and previous acclaim as a songwriter led Haithcock to believe that CBDNA might be catching a rising star. A brief look at Mr. Hagen's background might illuminate this more.

Daron Hagen, born in 1961, has created a catalog of over a hundred works in every

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<sup>6</sup>Von Rhein, John. Review of *Shining Brow*, by Daron Aric Hagen, in *American Record Guide* 56:4: 924-26.

genre from art song and chamber music to full-scale operas, orchestral and choral works. Commissions have come from major artists, ensembles and orchestras around the world, including the New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, and the Kings Singers.

Hagen's work has received numerous awards and accolades, including the Kennedy Center Friedheim Award, a Rockefeller Foundation grant, Columbia University's Bearn's Prize, an Ives Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the ASCAP-Nissim Prize. His music is widely recorded on such labels as Albany, Arsis, Klavier, Sierra Classical, Josara and Mark. His current publisher is Carl Fischer.

Trained at the Curtis Institute and Julliard, Hagen is active as a conductor and pianist. He taught composition at Bard College for 10 years, as well as at the City College of New York, New York University and Princeton University. He also served on the Curtis Institute of Music faculty from 1996 to 1998 and as composer in residence of the Ohio Opera Theater and the Long Beach Symphony Orchestra. Hagen currently resides in New York City where he works as a freelance composer and copyist.<sup>6</sup>

Knowing these details, Haithcock decided to learn more about Hagen's music by acquiring several scores, reading more reviews and listening to several recordings. He was entered into a working relationship with Hagen, agreeing to record four of his preexisting

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<sup>6</sup> Hagen, Daron Aric, Personal Home Page, <http://daronhagen.com>. 2002.



works for the Arsis label. The result was the recording *Night Again*, of which this writer was an assistant producer. During this project, a proposal to contract Hagen to write the opera was submitted to the other members of the CBDNA Executive Board and Commissioning Committee members and was quickly approved.

The total amount of the contract was \$100,000.00; the CBDNA Executive board agreed to commit their yearly commissioning budget of \$20,000.00. It then fell upon Haithcock and the Commissioning Committee to raise the remainder. After seeking multiple grant possibilities, they approached the Meet the Composer Organization. Meet the Composer evaluated and denied the request stating that CBDNA had adequate resources within its membership. Meet the Composer turned out to be correct in that assessment. Haithcock and members of the Commissioning Committee then constructed a consortium of member schools to fund the project. Mr. Haithcock states:

Part of the plan was to raise the money from our membership, which is what we wound up doing. We created a tiered situation where for five hundred dollars you got the two band pieces, for a thousand dollars you got more. Three thousand and five thousand dollars gave schools rights to performances and sets. So we had seventy-nine schools contribute slightly more than eighty thousand dollars as a result of all that. So combining that with the twenty thousand dollars that the organization committed, we were able to meet our total obligation of one hundred thousand dollars to Daron.

The contract was paid in seven installments. The first sum of \$10,000.00 was disbursed on 11 July 1997 as good faith money once the commission contract was

signed. The second sum of \$5,000.00 was disbursed on 1 September 1997. The third sum of \$15,000.00 was disbursed on 1 October 1997 upon delivery of the operatic treatment, which is the basic synopsis of the plot. On 23 January 1998 and 1 April 1998 two disbursements of \$15,000.00 each were given for the delivery of the Act I and Act II vocal scores. Two more payments of \$20,000.00 each were given out on 1 June 1998 and 1 September 1998 for the delivery of the full score, completed parts and performance materials.<sup>7</sup> Hagen contracted Paul Muldoon, a noted Irish poet and collaborator on *Shining Brow*, to write the libretto for \$20,000.00.

A brief comparison of the orchestration allowed in the contract with what was actually delivered shows that they are very close, with a couple of notable exceptions. There two horns used instead of four due to the composer's desire "not to fall back on using the horns to fulfill the role of sustaining chords the way strings ordinarily do. It is like keeping chocolates out of the house if you have a sweet tooth." The other deviation to the orchestration is not really a part of the pit. It is the onstage Mariachi Band that uses violins. These were used in what turned out to be an interesting and somewhat controversial manner that will be detailed later. Hagen describes the onstage group as representing ". . . the joys of the character's secular lives." The chorus singing the Latin text from the Mass represents the character's spiritual lives. Appendix B contains the complete instrumentation as well as a list of characters.

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<sup>7</sup> College Band Directors National Association. Waco, TX to Daron Aric Hagen. 3 July 1997. *Bandanna* commission contract, p7.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE PREMIERE AND AFTERMATH

As previously mentioned, the premiere was originally going to be given by the Austin Lyric Opera Company in a “workshop,” or un-staged format.<sup>8</sup> The influence of Joseph McLain, Artistic Director of the Austin Lyric Opera, should not be underestimated. If the actual premiere had happened as planned, it might have meant a very different path for *Bandanna*. Mr. McLain saw the collaboration between the professional and academic institutions to be innovative and felt quite sure that he personally could interest other companies in staging the work. In a fax transmission to Haithcock and Hagen dated 21 April 1997, Mr. McLain states:

[A professional consortium] “will be comprised of several, two to five, professional opera companies, ideally geographically diverse. With the Austin Lyric Opera as the lead company, the group will produce the ‘Premiere’ production of the work. . . . In the best of all scenarios, we would see perhaps a two-year period in which the newly created work would be performed on professional stages and in important university settings all over the country. The issue of innovative collaborations is of special importance here since many sources are very interested in helping with projects of this kind. . . . The Austin Lyric Opera would provide the use of myself as the ‘dramaturge’ member of the creative team. The Austin Lyric Opera will take an option for rights to the first fully staged performance no earlier than the 2000/2001 season.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Hagen, Daron Aric, New York, NY, to The Austin Lyric Opera Company, Joseph McLain, General Director, 19 November 1997, letter of agreement to perform the *Bandanna* premiere, personal holdings, Edwin Powell, Knoxville, TN. 1997.

<sup>9</sup> McLain, Joseph, Austin, Texas, to Daron Hagen and Michael Haithcock, 12 April 1997, Fax transmission subject: Proposal Regarding Commissioning, personal holdings, Edwin Powell, Knoxville, TN 1997.

Quite clearly, Mr. McLain was very enthusiastic, not only implying that other professional companies would be interested in the project but that he felt confident that outside funding sources could be found. His interest is further evidenced by the desire for the “dramaturge” to be part of the creative team and thus involved from the very beginning. This desire is what eventually led to the dissolution of the agreement to do the premiere. Michael Haithcock describes the breakdown.

Originally the Austin Lyric Opera was going to be part of the commission’s consortium. They were not going to pay for any of the composition; we were going to do that. They promised us two things, a concert performance in Austin at the 1999 CBDNA Convention and then the next year, a staged world premiere.

As we went from concept to the reality of the first act, I think that the best way to put it is that there was an artistic disagreement between Joe McLain, the Director of the ALO, and the composer. I think that both individuals were right. Daron had a feeling that Joe wanted to compose and Joe had a feeling that Daron wanted to be the dramaturge. They just pulled away from each other.

To Joe’s credit, he offered to continue with a concert version but he would not go forward with a stage production given what he felt were the issues involved. At that point the CBDNA Board felt that it would not be in our best interest to depend on the ALO to give the piece a fair shake. It was one thing to think that they were working toward a staged version and another if it became just something else they did. Furthermore, it became obvious to me that the relationship between Joe McLain and Daron Hagen was not one in which CBDNA needed to be in the middle.

So at that point Robert DeSimone, who is in charge of the opera program at the University of Texas (UT), which is quite a fine collegiate opera program, said that he would be willing to take on the premiere. He did not have the same reservations that Joe had.

In fairness to Joe, mounting a professional opera production from scratch is very expensive. You can’t afford for it to go south. It could ruin

the rest of the company. In academics we do not have the same budget requirements and worries so the University of Texas was able to do it.

Jerry Junkin, the Wind Ensemble conductor at UT, was also hosting the conference and the Wind Ensemble was playing their own concert, so he didn't feel he could do all that and conduct the opera. So Alan McMurray and Jerry asked if I would conduct because of my work on the project, my relationship with Daron and because I was close enough to make it back and forth to Austin for rehearsals.

Michael Haithcock subsequently conducted the premiere performance of *Bandanna* during the 1999 CBDNA National Conference on 25 February 1999. Additional performances were held 28 February 1999, 5 March 1999 and 7 March 1999. There was a subsequent production in Las Vegas held 29 February 2000 that was not staged. The primary purpose of this production was to create a cast recording. This writer was the Associate Producer for this recording. The release is pending.

The events leading to the premiere generated a great deal of excitement within the membership of CBDNA. The aftermath, in contrast, can only be described as mixed. The statements made in causal conversations were both complimentary and derisive. While some felt that it was a great deal of money to spend and that CBDNA should be allocating their resources into commissioning music that everyone could perform, others felt that the exposure that CBDNA received for being involved in such a project was much needed and will have long term benefits. The second opinion has been supported by the fact that following the premiere, composers David Del Tredici, Joan Tower and Ned Rorem, who were brought to the performance by CBDNA members, wrote or are in

the process of writing wind works.

One of the most interesting issues to come from the premiere is the controversy over how Hagen chose to accompany the final aria of Mona, the primary female character. In an attempt to heighten the drama orchestrationally, Hagen upset many of the CBDNA membership. Hagen chose to use the three onstage violinists from the Mariachi Band to play alone with Mona for almost ten minutes. Hagen describes the effort as follows:

An onstage mariachi band playing notated-but-memorized parts . . . made possible a theatrical and orchestrational coup, the use of three sustained violins that do not have to stop playing to take breaths while sustaining pitches. After 90 minutes of wind orchestra, to halo a completely static, prayerful aria. Those members of the audience who expected to hear winds all evening would be disappointed, but the theatrical impact would be devastating for everyone else. . . . The saving up of the three violinists, who do not breathe, until the end, when Mona says her prayers just before she is murdered, is an orchestrational metaphor for Death. The orchestra is telling us that she is already in another world. When, after ten minutes of far-off sustained violins, her husband Morales strangles her with her bandanna, the winds return, in a ghastly, wheezing “air attack” of the twelve-tone “bandanna chord.”

There were many who felt that, while this might have been done for effect, it could have been accomplished by wind players and thus not compromising the intent of the commission.

There was some middle ground found. Hagen claims that his stated intention all along was to re-score this aria for winds so that it may be extracted and played on its

own. He felt that this should have diffused any ruffled feathers. When asked, he states, “I simply do not see what all the fuss was about.” At this time, however, he does not intend to allow this re-scoring to be used in the opera proper. Musical example No. 1 illustrates the end of the aria as it was originally written with three violins. Note their very static role.

**Example No. 1**  
**Bandanna Act 2, mm. 220 – 224**

MONA  
 sway... That I may be blest... I kneel to pray. Since the dead hold sway, as some suppose, I kneel and pray.

MARIACHI VLN'S

1  
 2  
 3

MONA  
 to Al - migh - ty God. Who knows if, as some sup - pose, we've been forsaken by God, though a God who knows that to die is to a -

MARIACHI VLN'S

1  
 2  
 3

"Bandanna"



**Example No. 1 (continued)**  
**Bandanna Act 2, mm. 220 – 224**

222 MONA gets into bed, laying the marigolds on her own breast.

MONA  
 - va - - ken?

MARIACHI VIOLINS  
 1  
 2  
 3

223a

rit. a tempo

Cb  
 1  
 2  
 3

MARIACHI VIOLINS  
 1  
 2  
 3

MONA

MORALES enters. He crosses to the motel room door... forces an entry... closes it behind him.

**Example No. 1 (continued)**  
**Bandanna Act 2, mm. 220 – 224**

picc 1  
 cl 1  
 bc(s)  
 bc  
 bn 1  
 hn 1 (sord.)  
 fl (cup)  
 tr (buckets)  
 tbn (sord.)  
 1  
 cl 2  
 3  
 MARACAS/VIALS:  
 1  
 2  
 3  
 piano  
 harp  
 snare/cymbs.  
 vibr.  
 B.D.

(picc 2 take alto flute)  
 (picc 1 take alto flute)  
 (bassoon 2 take clarinet)  
 (on sord.)  
 (cup)  
 (buckets)  
 (on sord.)  
 via sord.  
 via sord.  
 via sord.  
 via sord.  
 223  
 MORALES STRANGLES MONA  
 MORALES takes the bandanna from his back pocket and fashions it into a noose.  
 MONA puts up a feeble struggle.  
 JAKE and EMILY hear the cry, cross forward the motel room.  
 MONA dies.  
 MORALES, facing away from the door, is paralyzed with horror.  
 JAKE, unarmed, bursts through the door.  
 MORALES hears JAKE enter and, without thinking, draws his gun as he pivots toward the door. MORALES fires, hitting JAKE who is standing in the doorway.  
 JAKE slumps backward into the street, falls.  
 EMILY throws herself on JAKE'S lifeless body.

Example No. 2 is the re-scored version. It is much more dramatic until a *subito pianissimo* at rehearsal letter “R.” Here a trio of two flutes and a clarinet supply a placid passage until rehearsal letter “T,” where Mona is murdered in the opera. Clearly the composer felt it necessary to completely rework the aria to allow for the winds. It is ultimately the decision of the listener to determine which is more effective, but the second a much different mood and color.

## Example No. 2

### Prelude and Prayer from Bandanna, letters "P – T"

The musical score is arranged in a standard orchestral format with the following parts from top to bottom:

- Flute 1 (Fl 1)
- Flute 2 (Fl 2)
- Clarinet 1 (Cl 1)
- Clarinet 2 (Cl 2)
- Trumpet 1 (Tpt 1)
- Trumpet 2 (Tbn 1)
- Trumpet 3 (Tbn 2)
- Tuba (Tba)
- Harp (Hp)
- Soprano (S)

The score is divided into two systems. The first system includes the vocal line with lyrics: "pray. Since the dead hold sway, as some suppose, I kneel and pray." The second system continues the instrumental and vocal parts with lyrics: "to Al-mighty God Who knows if, as some suppose, we've been forsaken by".

Key performance markings include:

- [P]** (Piano) dynamic marking.
- mp* (mezzo-piano) dynamic marking.
- mf* (mezzo-forte) dynamic marking.
- mf espr.* (mezzo-forte, espressivo) dynamic marking.
- sole* (solo) instruction.
- dolce* (dolce) instruction.
- p gradual crescendo and intensification from here to the climax* instruction.



**Example No. 2 (continued)**  
***Prelude and Prayer from Bandanna, letters "P – T"***

The musical score is arranged in a standard orchestral format. The top section includes Flutes (Fl 1, Fl 2), Oboes (Ob 1, Ob 2), Clarinets (Cl 1, Cl 2), Bassoon (B. Cl.), Saxophones (S. Sax., A. Sax., T. Sax., Bar. Sax.), Bassoons (Bsn 1, Bsn 2), Horns (Hn 1, Hn 2), Trumpets (Tpt 1, Tpt 2), Trombones (Tbn 1, Tbn 2), Tuba (Tba), Timpani (Timp), and Percussion (Perc). The vocal soloist (S.) part includes the lyrics: "God, through a God who knows that to die is to a-wa-ken". The piano (Pno) and violin (Vln) parts are also present. The score is marked "allargando" and includes a rehearsal mark "66".

**Example No. 2 (continued)**

***Prelude and Prayer from Bandanna, letters "P – T"***

24

**Q** Più Mosso  $J = 72$  Crescendo

Fl 1  
Fl 2  
Ob 1  
Ob 2  
Cl 1  
Cl 2  
B Cl  
S Sax  
A Sax  
T Sax  
Bar Sax  
Bsn 1  
Bsn 2  
Hrn 1  
Hrn 2  
Tpt 1  
Tpt 2  
Tbn 1  
Tbn 2  
Tbn  
Timp  
Pan  
Vib  
Mar  
Cb 1  
Cb 2  
Cb 3



**Example No. 2 (continued)**  
**Prelude and Prayer from Bandanna, letters "P – T"**

The musical score is divided into three systems. The first system (measures 154-156) features Flute 1, Flute 2, and Clarinet 1. Each part is marked 'solo' and 'pp sub.'. A rehearsal mark 'R' is placed above measure 154. The second system (measures 157-159) features Flute 1, Flute 2, Clarinet 1, and three Contrabass parts (Cb 1, Cb 2, Cb 3). Flute parts are marked 'poco rit.' and 'a tempo'. A rehearsal mark 'S' is placed above measure 157. The Contrabass parts are marked 'fpp' and 'sul pont.'. The third system (measures 160-162) features Flute 1, Flute 2, Clarinet 1, and three Contrabass parts. The score concludes with a double bar line.



**Example No. 2 (continued)**  
**Prelude and Prayer from Bandanna, letters "P – T"**

The musical score is divided into two systems. The first system includes parts for Flute 1 & 2, Oboe 1 & 2, Clarinet 1 & 2, Bassoon 1 & 2, Horn 1 & 2, Trumpet 1 & 2, Trombone 1 & 2, Tuba, Percussion, Harp, Piano, and Vibraphone. The second system includes parts for Horn 1 & 2, Trumpet 1 & 2, Trombone 1 & 2, Tuba, Percussion, Harp, Piano, and Vibraphone.

Key performance instructions and markings include:

- Flutes:** *ppp* breath attacks only
- Oboes:** *ppp* breath attacks only
- Clarinets:** *ppp* breath attacks only
- Bassoons:** *ppp* breath attacks only
- Horns:** *ppp* breath attacks only; *con sord.*
- Trumpets:** *ppp* breath attacks only; *cup mute*
- Trombones:** *ppp* breath attacks only; *bucket mute*
- Tuba:** *ppp* breath attacks only; *con sord.*
- Percussion:** *cymbal scrape*
- Harps:** *f l.v. al niente*; EFGbABbCbDb
- Piano:** *pp l.v. al niente*; *f l.v. al niente, pesante*

Tempo markings: **Ritard.** and **Tempo Primo** (indicated by a 'T' in a box).



## CHAPTER 4

### SONIC PERSONALITY SYMBOLISM

As is common with many opera composers, Hagen assigns instrumental, thematic and harmonic attributes to each character. There are literally thousands of interactions between these elements that weave a tight pattern of organic unity into the entire work, making it exceptionally rich with symbolism and innuendo. Hagen believes that even the average audience member is capable of very sophisticated listening on more levels than they may even be aware. He states:

Our generation grew up "deep listening" over and over to records with very high production values. The producer was just as important as the members of the band because of the way he helped the band to specify a hierarchy in the mix. I knew that the kids I grew up with, who knew very little about music, were listening in a very, very sophisticated way because we would talk about it. Alas, when I'd put on some Richard Strauss, with all the layers of information in real time, they wouldn't listen in the same way, even though they were capable of it.

It quite misses the point when so-called serious composers attitudinize about pop music listeners, dismiss them as unsophisticated, say, "I spent nine months of my life writing my piece; I don't want it listened to by someone who gives it less than their full attention." Dismissing the overwhelming majority of the people who actually listen to your music is a rather arrogant pose, don't you think? Rather than just dismiss them, my generation's job as composers is to get pop music lovers in their thirties and forties to listen to serious concert music and opera the way they "deep listen" to pop music. Serious listeners have the luxury of listening to recordings many times. It is my hope that *Bandanna's* subtleties and sophistication will become more apparent over the years, as scholars, musicians and music lovers get to know it better.



**Example No. 4**  
**Bandanna Act 1, mm. 124 – 126**

The musical score is arranged in a standard orchestral layout. The top section includes brass instruments: Horns 1 & 2, Horns 3 & 4, Trombones 1 & 2, and Tuba. Below these are the Clarinet in Bb and Snare Drum. The vocal parts for Morales and Jake are written in a single system. The bottom section includes Piano, Horns 3 & 4, Maracas, Vibraphone, and Tom-tom.

**Key Performance Instructions and Markings:**

- Brass:** "con sordini" (muted), "(take cupmutes)", "(take bucket mutes)", "a2", "sfz", "p", "f".
- Clarinet:** "Solo", "f", "p", "sfz".
- Snare Drum:** "a piacere", "MORALES puts the pistol to JAKE'S head:", "parabolo molto", "f", "p".
- Vocals:**
  - MORALES:** "(cresc.)", "and the wound-ed store, the store... Its point-blank time: Its the end of the line for you, you'll".
  - JAKE:** "(cresc.)", "gook to a bam-boo chair and shoot-ing that poor bas-tard point-blank.".
- Piano:** "con tutta forza", "1x", "b.o.", "sfz", "ff".
- Horns 3 & 4:** "marab.", "sfz", "EFGAB", "BCDEB".
- Tom-tom:** "(Tam)", "f", "1x", "(to Tub. Bell)".



Referring back to example No. 1, illuminates an instance of Hagen’s scoring symbolism. Again, this is at the end of the opera, just as Mona is murdered. Note the *Bandanna* Chord sounded during the fatal attack at m. 223.

Table 1 is a summary of each character’s assigned sonic attributes. These attributes evolve along with the characters. The most important issue is the depth of each characters’ moral being. Major tonalities symbolize good, minor tonalities symbolize some moral relativism. Bi-tonality and polytonality symbolize moral ambiguity and atonality depicts evil.

**Table 1: Sonic Personality Summary**

<b>Character</b>	<b>Key(s)</b>	<b>Instrument(s)</b>
Morales	B minor/Major to Polytonality/atonality	Harp/Keyboard/ Mallets
Mona	D Major/minor bi-tonality to D Major	Double reeds/ Harp/Horns/ Violins
Emily	E major with no deviation. The only clean character.	Flutes/ Clarinets
Jake	C minor/Major to Polytonality/atonality	Trumpets/Horns

**Table 1: Sonic personality summary (continued)**

<b>Character</b>	<b>Key(s)</b>	<b>Instrument(s)</b>
Cassidy	A minor chromatic. He drifts without a moral anchor to E, D-flat & B-flat major as well.	Trombones/ Tuba/Horns
Kane	Octatonic and chromatic scales. He is truly evil but in order to seduce the other characters, he will fake good intentions by operating in multiple keys.	Saxes/ Contrabassoon

As mentioned in the introduction, *Bandanna* is based upon William Shakespeare's *Othello*. Morales, a Mexican Sheriff, can be correlated to the lead character, Othello. In *Bandanna* he is morally ambiguous, straddling the fence of good and evil, as well being emotionally unstable. As he descends into a jealous rage, he moves to more and more bi-tonal or atonal music. Example No. 5 shows a clear B minor passage taken from the beginning of the Opera. Note the accompanying harp, one of his signature instruments.



**Example No. 5**  
**Bandanna Act 1, mm. 44 - 45**

**SCENE TWO**

44 Freely (♩ = 69)

MARIACHI GUITARIST

MORALES

Why do they have to let me down, Jake and Cas-si-diy, in front of my own town? Have they no re-spect for me?

44 Freely (♩ = 69) MORALES stands by his front door, clearly dejected.

hp.

Pno + solo Cb arr.

dim al niente

④ The harp, from [44] to [45], is a cross-over and should be played only in the event that the onstage guitarist is not technically capable of providing an adequate accompaniment.

MARIACHI GUITARIST

MORALES

They've spent Dia de los Muer-tos drinking beer and wine with Co-ro-na-do and Cor-tes while I pat my self

hp.

The next example is in Act 2 when Morales suspects Mona of infidelity. He is attending Emily and Jake's wedding and gives a drunken and spiteful toast. The toast hints around B minor but is also clouded by B-flat Major, one of Cassidy's centers as well and Emily's key of E Major. The bi-tonal accompanying chords are the telltale signs. This tonal struggle indicates Morales' rage at Cassidy and Mona for their believed affair and a little guilt for behaving poorly at Emily and Jake's wedding. This is further supported by the instrumentation. Since all the characters are involved, most of the instruments have their say. It is also noteworthy that the harp, piano and keyboard percussion, instruments assigned to Morales, sound the *Bandanna* chord ominously.



**Example No. 6**  
**Bandanna Act 2, mm. 141 – 143**

pic.  $\frac{1}{2}$   
 ob  $\frac{1}{2}$   
 cl  $\frac{1}{3}$   
 bc  
 bn  $\frac{1}{2}$   
 S  
 A  
 saxes  
 T  
 B  
 hn  $\frac{1}{2}$   
 tp  $\frac{1}{2}$  (cup)  
 tb  $\frac{1}{2}$   
 tuba  
 cb (pizz.)  
 MORALES  
 WOMEN  
 MEN  
 str.  
 vln  
 vla  
 vcl  
 db  
 mpr = acos  
 tamb.

*MORALES is obviously quite drunk.*  
*f (words)*  
 For bet-ter or worse let us drink to Em-ily

*crescendo coro - - - - - ff*  
 forced-off cou-lees will rouse them-selves, un-bid-den, for a night of love.  
 forced-off cou-lees will rouse them-selves, un-bid-den, for a night of love.

MORALES drains a bottle and steps forward to deliver a toast to an ecstatic EMILY, a slightly subdued JAKE. MORALES is somewhat worse for wear. His tone is appropriately askew. 141

(to TAIKO DRUMS)  
 SAO 1-3



**Example No. 6 (continued)**  
**Bandanna Act 2, mm. 141 – 143**

The musical score is arranged in systems. The first system includes Piccolo, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, Saxophone (Soprano and Alto), Horns (1st and 2nd), Trumpet, Trombone, and Tuba. The second system includes Eb Cornet, Timpani, and Morales (vocals). The third system includes Percussion (Piano and Harp) and Tambourine. The score contains various musical notations such as notes, rests, dynamics (p, f, sfz), and performance instructions like "(strangled)" and "parlato (extremely bright consonants)".



**Example No. 6 (continued)**  
**Bandanna Act 2, mm. 141 – 143**

The musical score is divided into several systems. The first system includes parts for piccolo, oboe, clarinet (1 and 2), bassoon, horn (1 and 2), Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. The second system includes horn (3), trumpet (1 and 2), trombone (1 and 2), tuba, euphonium, and timpani. The vocal part for MORALES is shown with lyrics: "cake. for rich-er or poor-er I raise a glass to the boy from the bar-rio".

At measure 142, the tempo and mood change to **PESANTE**. The piano and harp parts are marked with dynamics like *mf* and *p*. A box above the piano part indicates "MORALES raises his glass." with an arrow pointing to the vocal line. The vocal part includes a *sola* marking and a triplet of eighth notes.

Mona and Emily are the two lights of good in this work. Emily, whose character correlates with Emilia, Iago's wife in Shakespeare's version, is good without any personal dark side. Mona who is Desdemona, Othello's wife, is mostly good but had a past affair that haunts her marriage. These two characters are best friends, therefore linked in several ways. Mona's primary key is D Major though she has many passages in D minor as well.

Refer back to Example No. 1 for an illustration and note the accompanying strings as mentioned earlier. Emily's assigned key area is E Major. When they interact they often meet in the middle at E-flat minor. Example No. 7 shows a passage where all these elements are present. The section is just as we meet these two women for the first time. They discuss Emily and Jake's relationship as well as Mona's advice to Emily about men in general. The clarinets, Emily's signature, are prominently used. Note that the saxophones, foreshadowing the evil that will befall these two, are also prominent. This entire passage is significant to the plot because it is where Mona lends Emily her red bandanna. This bandanna eventually finds its way into Jake's hands and triggers the plot that leads to Mona's murder.



**Example No. 7**  
**Bandanna Act 1, mm. 16 – 18**

Handwritten musical score for Example No. 7, Bandanna Act 1, mm. 16-18. The score includes staves for Flute 1 & 2, Oboe 1 & 2, Clarinet 1 & 2, Saxophones (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Baritone), Horns (1st and 2nd), Tuba, Piano, Harp, Maracas, Vibraphone, and Xylophone. It also features vocal lines for MONA and EMILY with lyrics.

**MONA**  
*mf Smooth, conversational*  
 E-mi-ly, my deary... you

**EMILY**  
 suddenly... less clear a-bout my feelings for Jake.

Handwritten annotations include *sf*, *p*, *ALTO*, and *TENOR*.

**Example No. 7 (continued)**  
**Bandanna Act 1, mm. 16 – 18**

The musical score is arranged in a standard orchestral format. The top section includes woodwinds and vocal soloists. The middle section features the vocalists HANA and EMILY. The bottom section contains the orchestra, including percussion, harp, and strings.

**Instrumentation:**  
Hb<sub>2</sub>, Obs<sub>2</sub>, Bb<sub>2</sub>, S, A, T, B, Hb<sub>1/2</sub> (Tub<sub>2</sub> (sord)), HANA, EMILY, P, Hp, Hrn, Vik, Xyl.

**Lyrics:**  
HANA: win a man o-ver to your side... and the things that were cut and dried...  
EMILY: ... seem less so.

**Performance Markings:**  
The score includes various dynamic markings such as *p* (piano), *f* (forte), and *sf* (sforzando). It also features articulation marks like accents and slurs, and performance instructions such as *gl, ch* (glissando, chime) for the harp.



**Example No. 7 (continued)**  
**Bandanna Act 1, mm. 16 – 18**

Handwritten musical score for Example No. 7 (continued) from Bandanna Act 1, mm. 16-18. The score includes staves for Flute 1, Oboe 1, Clarinet 1, Bassoon 1, Saxophones A, T, and B, Horns 1 & 2 (via sordini), Voice (MONA and EMILY), Piano (Pf), Harp (Hp), Maracas (Mar.), Vibraphone (Vib.), and Xylophone (Xyl.). The vocal parts have lyrics: "A man will o-ver-slep the mark... I reached out for him in the dark last night and ran my".

**Example No. 7 (continued)**  
**Bandanna Act 1, mm. 16 – 18**

Fl 1/2  
 Cl 1/2  
 bc  
 bn 1/2  
 HORN A  
 EMILY  
 hand a-long... ... a spine of dark...  
 You have to draw a line... Has he... Has he  
 p simply  
 freely  
 fl 1/2  
 ob 1/2  
 cl 1/2  
 bc  
 Saxes S A B  
 HORN A  
 EMILY  
 forced you a-gain? p intense corte parato, energico  
 Oh, Ho-na. a flim - sy mem-branc... San - ta Ma  
 EMILY has been selecting onions from a stall. She clasps them to her breast, but they fall. EMILY makes a grab for the onions.  
 pf  
 Hp  
 Mar.  
 Vib.  
 (to Maracas)  
 (to Djembe)





Cassidy, Shakespeare's Casio, is Morales's newly promoted Capitan. The fact that he was promoted over Jake is a source of tension that leads to a fight between the two. It is after this fight that Emily gives Mona's bandanna to Jake as a compress for his injuries. In Shakespeare's Othello, Casio is loyal and true. In this version, Cassidy is loyal but also has baggage from the Vietnam War. This manifests itself in racist attitudes towards the townspeople and Jake. Example No. 8 shows this vitriolic attitude in and around the key signature of A minor yet never really settling as would be consistent with Cassidy's lacking moral compass. Saxophones and percussion denoting Cassidy's evil intent and his connection with Morales accompany the beginning of the passage. Toward the end of the passage, Cassidy's signature instruments sound strong sharp chords.

**Example No. 8**  
**Bandanna Act 1, mm. 24 – 26**

cl. 1

SAXES  
S  
A  
T  
B

CASSIDY

find that a slice of lem-on rind makes this horse-piss taste bet-ter. Life or death? It doesn't

*portato - very bright*

cl. 1

SAXES  
S  
A  
T  
B

CASSIDY

mat-ter to them. They don't care if they snuff it at forty. That's why they drink this stuff

25 **Stringendo**

(10)

cl. 1/3

bc

bn 1/2

SAXES  
S  
A  
T  
B

CASSIDY

down in Te-qui-la Al-ley. I'm now the right hand man to Mo-ra-les. His new Ca-pi-

*cresc. poco a poco as he becomes increasingly exercised.*

*p cresc. at f*



**Example No. 8 (continued)**  
**Bandanna Act 1, mm. 24 – 26**

The musical score is handwritten and includes the following parts and annotations:

- Flute 1 (fl 1):** Starts at measure 22 with a *f* dynamic.
- Clarinet (cl):** Starts at measure 22 with a *f* dynamic and a *(cresc.)* marking.
- Bassoon (bc):** Starts at measure 22 with a *f* dynamic and a *(cresc.)* marking.
- Trumpet 1 (tp 1):** Starts at measure 22 with a *f* dynamic.
- Trumpet 2 (tp 2):** Starts at measure 22 with a *f* dynamic.
- Trombone 1 (tb 1):** Starts at measure 22 with a *f* dynamic.
- Tuba:** Starts at measure 22 with a *f* dynamic.
- Contrabass (Cb):** Starts at measure 22 with a *f* dynamic and a *arco* marking.
- Timpani (Timp):** Starts at measure 22 with a *f* dynamic, *wooden beaters*, and *f sfz stopped* markings.
- Cassidy:** Vocal line with lyrics: "tain... Cap-tain Co-si-dy. I have to overlook the fact that he's a greaseball him-self. I look the other way." Includes a *f spat out* marking.
- Piano (Pf):** Starts at measure 22 with a *f* dynamic.
- Marimba:** Starts at measure 22 with a *f* dynamic.
- Vibraslap (Vibr.):** Starts at measure 22 with a *f* dynamic.
- Slapstick:** Starts at measure 22 with a *f* dynamic and a *SLAP stick* marking.



Jake and Kane correlate with Shakespeare's character Iago. Together they hatch the plot that drives Morales insane with jealousy. Jake is bitter because he was passed over for Capitan, he also feels the effects of his time in Vietnam. Added to that, he has been smuggling illegal workers across the border at night for extra money to pay for his wedding to Emily. He becomes convinced that Morales knows, which is true, and needs to get him out of the way to avoid going to jail.

On a softer side, he truly loves Emily, though he does not show it well. In Example No 9, Jake sings drunkenly of his affection and his worries of what Morales knows. Note the accompanying clarinets for Emily, the solo horn for Jake, saxophones for Kane and the keys of C minor and C Major.



**Example No. 9**  
**Bandanna Act 1, mm. 72 – 74**

72 *Piu mosso* (♩ = 132) (in 2)

bc  
 1  
 2  
 S  
 A  
 T  
 B  
 hn 1  
 tp (Cup)  
 Cb (pizz.)

JAKE takes a deep swig from the bottle, winces.

72 *Piu mosso* (♩ = 132) (in 2)

JAKE  
 hair hang down. Don - de es-ta mi que-ri-da! Mi char-ca es-ta que-

S  
 says A  
 T  
 B  
 hn 1  
 Cb (pizz.)

EMILY finishes, shuts off the lamp, exits.  
 JAKE loses his thread...  
 ...regains it.

JAKE  
 - ta. Nue-s - tro a-mor ha te - ni-do u - na vi - da cor - te. Mi sa-vor es-ta del-

**Example No. 9 (continued)**  
**Bandanna Act 1, mm. 72 – 74**

cl  $\frac{1}{3}$

bc

bn  $\frac{1}{2}$

str

tr

hn 1

cb (pizz.)

73 *Agitato*

JAKE

ga-da. In El Paso once I saw her skirt billow out like Marilyn's from the blast of a hot air vent. I knew I'd have to her... I would take her

mar.

softest molets

MAR.

1

ob.

2

cl.  $\frac{1}{3}$

bc

bn  $\frac{1}{2}$

cb (arco)

mf *parlato - very bright*

JAKE

for my wife. Only last week Morales asked me how's that. I lied. I made up something lame. An a-li-bi. I know he had it was... fake.

mar.





Kane is certainly one of the most colorful characters. He has nothing but self-serving, evil intentions. His character will do anything to seduce the others to get his way. He seduces the migrant workers to organize, he seduces Jake into hatching the plot against Morales and he seduces Morales into believing the lies. He is the proverbial snake in a not so idyllic Garden of Eden.

With that said, his music is primarily based on the chromatic and octatonic scales which allows him to slip in and out of other characters key areas easily. This next example begins with the piano sounding the *Bandanna* Chord as a very soft arpeggio. Kane is working on a very drunk Jake, trying to get him to sympathize with the plight of the migrant workers. He uses this as the vehicle to suggest that they use the bandanna in Jake's pocket to convince Morales of Mona's false infidelity. Note how Jake and Kane slip from the atonal nature of the *Bandanna* Chord to D minor using flutes, double reeds, piano and harp. Mona and Emily use double reeds and flutes, Morales percussion, piano and harp. One of Mona's tonal areas is D minor, this is significant since it is she who is murdered. Cassidy also makes an appearance in the orchestra between m. 83 and m. 84 with the emphatic chords sounded by muted trombone and tuba. Notice the slippery manner in which saxophones are used. In many ways all six characters are present, four being schemed against as represented by the orchestration, and two on stage hatching the scheme. This all combines into a very beautiful duet between the two characters on stage accompanied by harp, flutter tonguing flutes and the *Bandanna*

Chord sounding piano. Also notable is the manner in which the example ends. There is a brief passage of two measures sounded by the oboe and trumpet followed by the *Bandanna* Chord.

**Example No. 10**  
**Bandanna Act 1, mm 83 – 88**

83

1  
 fl

2

1  
 cl

2

1  
 bn

2

SAXES

S

A

KANE

JAKE

PF

Hp

Mar.

Vibr.

Glock.

San-ti-Anna?

red and white, ban-dan-na des-ent come from the hip peck-et of one of your cr-i-mi-nal-pick-ers, Kane...

JAKE pulls the bandanna from his back pocket.

83 KANE reaches out to take the bandanna.

veiled

pp

pp

damp (to catches)

damp

④ Do NOT accent the beginning note (or any other note) of the repeated wedges.





**Example No. 10 (continued)**  
**Bandanna Act 1, mm 83 – 88**

84 ♩ = 108

1  
fl

2  
fl

1  
ob

2  
ob

1  
cl

2  
cl

1  
bn

2  
bn

A  
sax

T  
sax

(pizz.)  
cb

84 ♩ = 108

JAKE

(lost, staring at the worm)  
p portamento

JAKE takes another drink.

JAKE is clearly incoherent, mesmerized by the worm in the bottle.

p pallido

piaz.

p sempre

p aspir, cupo

p senza vib.

p always damped immediately

dim.

pp

pp (no attack)

It comes from... the li-ly... white neck of... Lit-tle worm... Li-ly white one..





**Example No. 10 (continued)**  
**Bandanna Act 1, mm 83 – 88**

1  
 ff  
 2

KANE  
 e-ne-mies in this foil. For this red rose is staked in re-al-i-ty's

JAKE  
 gorged on fu-sel oil. White as ar-se-nic. Why do you re-coil?

PF

Hp

---

85

1  
 ff  
 2

KANE  
 (almost affectionate)  
 soil. Well use this ban-dan-na as a saare, a prod. Well make Ho-re-les think his white trash wife is having her

JAKE  
 Lit-He bud of man-na... Lit-He Asren's red... You cut such a dash... Lit-He sword of God...

PF

Hp

86



**Example No. 10 (continued)**  
**Bandanna Act 1, mm 83 – 88**

1  
 fl 2

(KANE'S the essence of nonbalance.)

KANE  
 sod bust by Cas-si-dy. The times ripe to make them pay. We'll settle their hash one of these fine

JAKE  
 Lit-tle Captain's stripe... Vic-tor of ev-ery af-froy... Lit-tle white ash... Why do you look a-

PF

Hp

dim. 3 1  
 dolce  
 dim. 3 1  
 espr. dim. 3 1  
 (-) sf  
 dim. F#



## CHAPTER 5

### THEMATIC PLOT DEVELOPMENT

Close attention to the two-measure passage at the end of Example No. 10 will show an important thematic harbinger of information. *Bandanna* is full of many such passages and often themes that were first presented by one character will be assumed by other characters or the plot, thus twisting their meaning. This two-measure passage will be named “Santa Maria Salve” because that is the first text the passage is given.

Example No. 11 is at the very beginning of the opera where a chorus of illegal immigrants sneaks across the border and pray to Saint Mary for salvation. It is followed closely by another plea to the Mother of God. This small two measure passage that begins as a plea for salvation is very fluid in what it means throughout the opera, but it is eventually twisted and begins to signal, mockingly, that salvation will never come.



**Example No. 11**  
**Bandanna Act 1, m. 3**

WOMEN *mf* parlamento

MEN *mf* parlamento

San-ta Ma-ri-a,

We struck out across the me-sas, the can-yons and the ar-roy-os for days and days.

**Energico**

Pf. (B) →

Hp. (B) →

T. DRUM  
SHÉKERE

Mtr.

"Bandanna"

WOMEN *mf*

MEN *mf*

sal-ve!

Ma-dre di Di-os

We saw the ghosts of Ca-be-za Da-va-ca and Be-ni-to Juar-ez a-long the way.

Pf. *pp sempre*

Hp. *pp sempre*

TALKING DRUM *pp sempre*

Shékere *pp sempre*

Mtr. *pp sempre*

Clearly it carries a very different meaning than it did in Example No. 10.

Example No. 12 is an instance where Hagen utilizes the “Santa Maria Salve” passage as a hook when Kane is rallying the illegal workers to unionize. Since they used it to ask for salvation, Kane uses the passage by singing “Now all shall be revealed.” All throughout this section, saxophones use little motives from the passage as a seductive accompaniment as in Example No. 13.

**Example No. 12**  
**Bandanna Act I m. 93**

Musical score for Kane's vocal line in Example No. 12. The score is written on a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The lyrics are: "Now all shall be re- vealed... For, if you or- ga- nize, there's a chance that you". The music features dynamic markings of *mf*, *p*, *dim.*, and *p*. There are several triplet markings (indicated by a '3' over a bracket) and a handwritten annotation above the staff: "(beginning quietly, but inexorably building)". The score is labeled "Kane Sings" on the left.

**Example No. 13**  
**Bandanna Act I m. 93**

Musical score for saxophones in Example No. 13. The score is written on two staves, labeled "S" (Soprano) and "A" (Alto). The music features dynamic markings of *mf*, *mf*, *mf*, and *mf*. There are several triplet markings (indicated by a '3' over a bracket) and a handwritten annotation above the staff: "(beginning quietly, but inexorably building)". The score is labeled "SAXES" on the left.

The very same motive is used to begin Act 2 followed by a fully orchestrated rendition of the “*Dona Nobis Requiem*” that also began Act 1. The dissonant harmony suggests that the cry for salvation is now a harbinger of tragedy.





The final example is an illustration of the subtlety Hagen is capable of achieving. This passage comes just after Kane shows the true depth of his depravity when he seduces then rejects a young cantina girl. He states, “I don’t want to seem arch, but I never stay when things go according to plan, and for the simple reason that I can, I’ll be making my merry way across the bridge of bones.” What follows is an intricate instrumental interlude that sets up the final murder. Here all the primary themes of the opera are stated, contorted and used to foreshadow the coming tragedy. Note the “Santa Maria Salve” passage used as a bass line. The passage ends with the ominous ringing of the *Bandanna* Chord.

**Example No. 15**  
**Bandanna Act 2, mm. 192 – 201**

ob 1

cl 1

bc(s)  
bc

bn 1

bn 2

hn 1  
(sord.)

KANE  
 white ones, all so light-ly furled. across the bridges of their bones into the lim-in-al zone in-to the o-ther

fl. 1

ob 2

cl 2

bc(s)  
bc

bn 1

bn 2

hn 2

KANE  
 world. I don't want a march but I ne- ver stay when things have gone accord-ing to plan and, for the sim-ple rea-son that I

hp

EF#GA  
BCD

solo mp

F4





**Example No. 15 (continued)**  
**Bandanna Act 2, mm. 192 – 201**

*allarg.* **PRESTO** (♩ = 144)

Fl 1  
 Fl 2  
 ob  
 cl  
 bc (cl)  
 bc  
 bn

*allarg.*

strs  
 V I  
 V II  
 VI  
 C  
 B

*allarg.*

hn 1  
 tp  
 tb 1  
 tuba

1  
 cb 2  
 3  
 timp.

*allarg.* **PRESTO** (♩ = 144)

The LIGHTS fade slowly to black as the YOUNG GIRL buries her head in her hands.

pf  
 hp  
 tgl.  
 cym  
 xylo



Example No. 15 (continued)  
Bandanna Act 2, mm. 192 – 201

INTERLUDE

193b

Solo  
flut.  
ord.  
(take piccolo 2)

Solo  
p  
espr.

Solo  
mp  
espr.

1  
2  
3  
cb  
(col legno)

Solo  
(wooden beaters)  
p  
mp simi

The scrim falls slowly, reaching the stage at the signal.  
(The red projection of onion fields slowly materializes.)

193b

pf

mar.  
vibr.  
xyl

**Example No. 15 (continued)**  
**Bandanna Act 2, mm. 192 – 201**

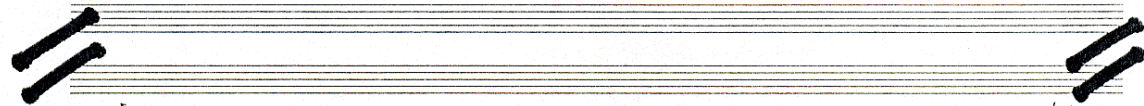
The musical score is arranged in a standard orchestral format. The instruments and their parts are as follows:

- Cl 1:** Clarinet 1, starting with a *mf* dynamic.
- alto SAK:** Alto Saxophone, playing a melodic line.
- hn 1:** Horn 1, featuring a *Solo* section with *mf* and *mf* dynamics.
- tp 1:** Trumpet 1, playing a rhythmic pattern.
- 1, 2, 3 (cb):** Cornets 1, 2, and 3, playing chords with *Senza Cresc.* markings.
- timb.:** Timpani, playing a rhythmic pattern.
- pf:** Piano, playing a melodic line with *mf* dynamics.
- mar.:** Maracas, playing a rhythmic pattern.
- vibr.:** Vibraphone, playing a melodic line with *mf* dynamics and a *bellip* instruction.
- xyl.:** Xylophone, playing a melodic line with *mf* dynamics and a *bellip* instruction.

Additional performance instructions include *(lowering scrim)* and *(to splash cymbal)*. The score concludes with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

**Example No. 15 (continued)**  
**Bandanna Act 2, mm. 192 – 201**

picc 1  
 cl 1  
 tp 1  
 tb 1  
 timp  
*f* (under)



In the darkness stage left, a black and white television set whose ghastly flickering provides the only light, and a mussed-up bed move on.

195

picc 1  
 ob 1  
 cl 1  
 bn 1  
 bn 2  
 tp 1  
 tb 1  
 tuba  
 TAIKO DRUMS  
*f*



**Example No. 15 (continued)**  
**Bandanna Act 2, mm. 192 – 201**

196

picc 1  
ob 1  
cl 1  
bc(3)  
bc  
bn 1  
bn 2  
alln sax  
hn 1  
tr 1  
tr 2  
tr 3  
tr 4  
cb  
Taiko Drums

196 MONA, wearing a chemise, is asleep in the mean motel room. The reverse of the neon motel sign flies in.











**Example No. 15 (continued)**  
**Bandanna Act 2, mm. 192 – 201**

200

The score is a handwritten musical manuscript for a band. It consists of multiple staves for different instruments. The instruments listed on the left are: Piccolo, Flute 1, Flute 2, Clarinet 1, Clarinet 2, Bassoon 1, Bassoon 2, Saxophone A, Saxophone B, Horn 1, Horn 2, Trumpet 1, Trumpet 2, Trombone 1, Trombone 2, Eb Cornet 1, Eb Cornet 2, Snare Drum, and Bass Drum. The music is written in a complex, rhythmic style with many triplets and dynamic markings such as *ff* and *pizz*. A rehearsal mark '200' is located at the top right of the first system. Below the main score, there is a section for Percussion with staves for Piano, Kettles, Vibes, S.D., and B.D. A note above the Piano staff reads: "The scrim begins quietly rising, reaching a fully-raised position at the sign (♩)". The Percussion section includes specific drum patterns and dynamic markings like *ff* and *pizz*.



**Example No. 15 (continued)**  
**Bandanna Act 2, mm. 192 – 201**

**SCENE THREE**

It is three weeks later, around ten o'clock in the evening. Three MARIACHI violinists stroll on. They sit at one of the cafe tables, still playing. A WAITER wordlessly brings them all Coronas.

201 *Strangely Sluggish* (♩=96)

Handwritten musical score for Example No. 15 (continued), Bandanna Act 2, mm. 192-201. The score is for Scene Three and begins at measure 201, titled "Strangely Sluggish" with a tempo of ♩=96.

The score includes parts for:

- cl 2** (Clarinet 2)
- bc (3)** (Bassoon 3)
- cb (pizz.)** (Cello/Bass, pizzicato)
- THREE ONSTAGE MARIACHI VIOLINS**
- piano**
- hp** (Harp)
- vibr.** (Vibraphone)
- tbl.** (Timpani)

Key performance instructions and markings include:

- p* (piano) dynamics for the woodwinds.
- Con molto vib.* (with much vibrato) and *simi.* (sostenuto) for the cello/bass.
- p warmly, as much on the G string as possible* for the violins.
- Tempo marking: *Strangely Sluggish* (♩=96).
- Stage directions: **JAKE** strolls in, dressed in jeans and a tee-shirt. He wordlessly signals the **WAITER** for a beer and seats himself at the other table. He unfolds a newspaper and begins to read.
- Instrument-specific markings: *no motor* for the vibraphone, *no motor* for the timpani, and *(in tubular bells)* for the timpani.
- Dynamic marking: *f* (forte) for the timpani.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

Although CBDNA members might be mixed in their opinions about the outcome of their commission, a close look finds that they received an extremely organic, well thought out work of art. This study merely scratches the surface of intricacies within. The next time *Bandanna* is performed will either be in another collegiate setting or at the request of a professional company.

It is truly unfortunate that the relationship between Hagen and the Austin Lyric Opera Company disintegrated. The work would have received a great deal more prestigious exposure. Had this relationship stood, it is likely that other professional opera companies would be willing to risk its production.

Regrettably, due to *Bandanna's* unique instrumentation, a professional rendition will be more likely to occur after the ten-year re-scoring restriction has been lifted. Staging the work in its current state could be cost prohibitive for a regional opera company. Initial bias of artistic directors against an opera accompanied by winds may also be a factor. Robert DeSimone in Appendix F addresses this bias when he discusses his initial reaction to the project. DeSimone states, "I was fascinated to see how the composer would address it. Would it sound like John Phillip Sousa orchestration?" He later admits, "I never missed the strings at all . . . It was terrific!"

Perhaps the recent revival of Robert Kurka's *Good Soldier Schweik* and its subsequent recording may help relieve some of that bias. The original scoring is, in the opinion of this writer, magnificent and should be preserved.

The uproar over the scoring of the final aria is understandable from an organization with members concerned about the messages we send to other artistic circles. Some might interpret the composer's intention as assuming that wind instruments could not create the desired effect therefore he went to the strings. Hagen was not thinking in these terms. He was thinking in terms of dramatic contrast. Both sides have valid points. The strings do create an "other worldly" effect. Yet in Hagen's re-scoring this effect is created by the woodwind trio very well albeit only at the end. It is doubtful that Hagen would approve of the re-orchestration being used as an *ossia* or alternative but might reconsider if it meant a performance of the work.

The lack of collegiate performances is mysterious. Perhaps college opera programs are not willing to look at *Bandanna* because they feel the need to stay in the main stream of the operatic repertoire for educational reasons. Perhaps it is because the vocal parts are very demanding. Another reason might be that the premiere was received controversially causing band directors to be hesitant to approach their colleagues with the project. No matter the reason, it is regrettable. The work is and was worth the effort.



CBDNA should be applauded for its willingness to put forth the effort and risk to create *Bandanna*. The size of the consortium was impressive and the scope of the project is analogous to landing on the moon for the organization. The benefits may not be immediately obvious, but the awareness that CBDNA has the resources and manpower needed to accomplish projects of this magnitude is invaluable and may open previously unimagined doors. Whether the members feel they got their money's worth is not the issue any more. *Bandanna* is clearly a wonderful and deep work of art that we can all be proud to have helped create.

Though still in its infancy, the uniqueness of this work both in the manner in which it came into being and through its artistic merits are fascinating. Only the future will determine whether *Bandanna* has true longevity or will fade into the background as a historical curiosity.

APPENDIX A

*BANDANNA* CONSORTIUM OF CONTRIBUTORS

Andrews University	Furman University
Angelo State University	Hastings College
Arkansas Tech University	Indiana University of Pennsylvania
Baylor University	Iowa State University
Butler University	Kansas State University
California State University–Fresno	Louisiana State University
California State University–Stanislaus	Mars Hill College
College Band Directors National Association	McLennan Community College/Waco Community Band
Central College	McNeese State University
Concordia University	Mercer University
Converse College	Miami University
Cornell University	Michigan State University
Duke University	Ohio University
East Carolina University	Oklahoma Baptist University
Eastman School of Music	Oklahoma State University
Florida International University	Pennsylvania State University
Florida Southern College	Plymouth State College
Florida State University	Rock Valley College
Franklin & Marshall College	Royal Northern College-England

Sam Houston State University	University of Kansas
Southern Illinois University	University Louisville
Southwestern University	University of Massachusetts
St. Olaf College	University of Michigan
Stephen F. Austin University	University of Missouri
Syracuse University	University of Missouri at Kansas City
Tennessee Tech University	University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Texas A&M University	University of Nevada-Las Vegas
Texas Tech University	University of North Texas
The University of New Mexico	University of Oklahoma
The University of Texas at Arlington	University of Oregon
The University of Texas at Austin	University of South Carolina
The University of Texas at El Paso	University of Tennessee
United States Military Academy Band	University of Wisconsin
University of Arkansas	University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire
University of Central Florida	University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
University of Colorado at Boulder	University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point
University of Connecticut	University of Wisconsin-Superior
University of Florida	University of Wisconsin-Whitewater



Western Michigan University

Western Kentucky University

Yale University

## APPENDIX B

### INSTRUMENTATION WITH SHAKESPEARE CHARACTER CORRELATION

**On Stage:**

Miguel Morales – Tenor, correlates to Othello

Mona Morales – Soprano, correlates to Desdemona

Jake Lopez – Lyric Baritone, correlates to Iago

James Kane – Dramatic Baritone, correlates to Iago

Cassidy – Bass Baritone, correlates to Casio

Emily – Lyric Mezzo Soprano, correlates to Emilia

A waiter and young Mexican girl – Mute

Two Mariachi Singers (male or female duo)

Leader of the company – Dramatic Baritone

Company of between 24-40 chorus members.

**In the pit:** (28 players)

2 Flutes (I, II=Piccolo; II=alto flute in G)

2 Oboes (II=English Horn in F)

3 Clarinets in Bb (III=Bass Clarinet in Bb)

2 Bassoons

Soprano Saxophone in Bb, Alto Saxophone in Eb, Tenor Saxophone in Bb, Baritone Saxophone in Eb

2 Trumpets in Bb (I=Flugelhorn in Bb)

2 Horns in F

2 Trombones

Tuba

3 String Bases

Percussion (4 players): Timpani Marimba, Vibraphone, Xylophone, Glockenspiel, Tubular Bells, 4 Taiko Drums (opt.), Ratchet, Bar Chimes, Splash Cymbal, Slap Stick, Tambourine, Two Bass Drums, Anvil, Claves, Suspended Cymbal, Afuche (opt.) Maracas, Djembe, Triangle, Shekere (opt.), Tenor Drum, Snare Drum, Field Drum, Tablas, Talking Drum (opt.), Crash Cymbals, Tam-tam, Guiro, 3 Roto-Toms.

Piano

Harp

Onstage Mariachis – 3 violins, 2 trumpets, guitar, bass guitar (or string bass)



APPENDIX C

AN INTERVIEW WITH DARON ARIC HAGEN HELD 4 OCTOBER 1998

**Edwin Powell:** As a composer, what draws you to theater music?

**Daron Hagen:** I became a composer as a child because it allowed me to express myself in an abstract medium in which no one could really assign a specific “meaning” to my most heartfelt utterances -- thereby providing me “emotional cover.” Paradoxically, theatre music is the opposite of abstract inasmuch as it has to be, at a superficial level at least, completely eloquent and open faced -- which provides the composer no “emotional cover” at all. As an artist, I have always tried, as Rumi put it, to “run towards the knife.” To me, composing operas is just that.

**Edwin Powell:** Does the fact that opera is an amalgamation of multiple art forms help to clarify your ideas as a composer or does it actually make it more of a challenge?

**Daron Hagen:** A born opera composer uses all the tools in his toolbox. Opera is about whatever the authors decide it is about. In the end, it doesn't really matter what events are transpiring on the stage. When the composer doesn't use all of the tools in his toolbox effectively, it falls to the stage director to clarify his points. Then again, Mozart's points seem pretty clear, but that doesn't stop stage directors from updating the stories and changing the context in which they are told. Opera is a most ruthless and challenging art form because, as an author, you must use all the available tools to assault every one of the audience's senses. The authors must *enthrall*, not just show up and do a nice job.

**Edwin Powell:** When Michael Haithcock approached you on behalf of CBDNA to write an opera with wind accompaniment, what was your initial reaction?

**Daron Hagen:** First of all, I was thrilled to receive the commission. My first concern was for the future of the piece: would mainstream opera companies be reluctant to revive an opera without strings? My second concern was also practical: you need to let wind players blow. Without resorting to amplification of the voices, how could a wind orchestra be handled in such a way that the score could be sung comfortably?

Finally, there was the question of what our story would be about. I was recovering from a divorce and wanted to write an opera about faith and betrayal. In addition, I had spent a good deal of time with Paul Muldoon on an opera about Lyndon Johnson that had been destined for the Austin Lyric Opera. I wanted to continue the exploration of the racial, political and sexual themes that we had been dealing with in our aborted LBJ opera. When I heard that Michael Haithcock was based in Texas, my first instinct was to combine all these themes by re-telling the Venetian story of Othello (again, "running toward the knife," to me, Verdi's *Otello* is opera's Mount Everest and I wanted to have a go at it) on the Texas-Mexico border.

Once we decided that our Othello would be Hispanic, everything else fell into line. I did want to find a way to respectfully incorporate some of the gestures and traditions of mariachi music into the score. An onstage mariachi band playing notated-but-memorized parts was my solution. That required a couple of string players. That made

possible a theatrical and orchestrational coup -- the use of three sustained violins that do not have to stop playing to take breaths while sustaining pitches, after 90 minutes of wind orchestra, to halo a completely static, prayerful aria. Those members of the audience who expected to hear winds all evening would be disappointed, but the theatrical impact would be devastating for everyone else.

**Edwin Powell:** Please comment on the manner in which your characters develop both emotionally and tonally.

**Daron Hagen:** The thing that makes *Bandanna* an Opera and not a Musical, other the fact that it requires operatically trained voices, is the fact there is beneath the surface perfume of attractive tunes a level of cohesiveness and, for lack of a less pretentious word, organic growth in key relationship, motivic development, repetition, inexact repetition, cells of information, and so forth that make the rhetoric -- the musical argument -- more sophisticated than a typical Musical.

The central compositional conceit of *Bandanna* is that tonal centeredness is equated with moral centeredness. Tonality is presented as sacred; everything else as secular. Bitonality and polytonality are meant to evoke a state of amorality. Highly chromatic passages are meant to evoke the transitions between these various states. Octatonic and twelve-tone passages are meant to evoke a state of moral confusion or immorality.

There is also a twelve-note “bandanna chord” that is associated throughout, with



the bandanna that figures so prominently in the story. This chord, very similar to one in Mahler's unfinished Tenth Symphony, has always struck me as the notated "death-cry" of tonality; associating Mona's death cry with the death of tonality was, for me, an immensely important moment not just for tying up the drama but for making coherent the opera's compositional dialectic.

Whenever a character sings something it can be "heard" on several levels simultaneously. The more levels an audience member is sensitive to, the more complex that person understands the opera to be. Every character's utterances can and should be perceived on a number of levels: it may allude to another composer's music or poet's words, a textual or musical motif another character sang earlier, or even a suggestive harmony. Such "deep listening" isn't required, though; the most superficial of listeners will still at least be entertained.

**Edwin Powell:** Can you tell me more about what you mean by "deep listening?"

**Daron Hagen:** Our generation grew up "deep listening" over and over to records with very high production values. The producer was just as important as the members of the band because of the way he helped the band to specify a hierarchy in the mix. I knew that the kids I grew up with, who knew very little about music, were listening in a very, very sophisticated way because we would talk about it. Alas, when I'd put on some Richard Strauss, with all the layers of information in real time, they wouldn't listen in the same way, even though they were capable of it.

It quite misses the point when so-called serious composers attitudinize about pop music listeners, dismiss them as unsophisticated, say, "I spent nine months of my life writing my piece; I don't want it listened to by someone who gives it less than their full attention." Dismissing the overwhelming majority of the people who actually listen to your music is a rather arrogant pose, don't you think? Rather than just dismiss them, my generation's job as composers is to get pop music lovers in their thirties and forties to listen to serious concert music and opera the way they "deep listen" to pop music. Serious listeners have the luxury of listening to recordings many times. It is my hope that *Bandanna's* subtleties and sophistication will become more apparent over the years, as scholars, musicians and music lovers get to know it better.

**Edwin Powell:** The mariachi band plays a very colorful on stage role.

**Daron Hagen:** Yes. The mariachi band represents the joys of the characters' secular lives; the disembodied "Chorus of the Disappeared and the Dispossessed" (and, obviously, the entire cast, when they sing Latin words from the Mass) give voice to their spiritual roots. The whole thing is about life and death and secular versus spiritual.

**Edwin Powell:** Did your thoughts on scoring change much after doing the *Night, Again* recording project with Baylor University?

**Daron Hagen:** I have been told that the *Night, Again* project was a useful addition to the wind ensemble repertoire because I was unintentionally writing for wind ensemble as I would for symphonic winds. Many opera lovers really do have the

uninformed, elitist attitude that a “band” in the pit will play loud oom-pah music. I am just beginning to learn how really varied and sophisticated the wind ensemble repertoire is. *Bandanna* is not a “band” opera; it is an opera that has (except for three basses) no strings in the pit.

**Edwin Powell:** Please discuss further your philosophy on how your orchestration contributes to drama.

**Daron Hagen:** Every character is associated with a different pallet of instrumental colors. As their characters evolve, so do the colors in the orchestration that accompany them. At the same time, emotional, psychological and moral states are created by the orchestration that comment upon what the character is going through. Wind players need to breathe -- this is powerfully evocative of Life. The saving up of the three violinists -- who do not “breathe” -- until the end, when Mona says her prayers just before she is murdered, is an orchestrational metaphor for Death. The orchestra is telling us that she is already in another world. When, after ten minutes of far-off sustained violins, her husband Morales strangles her with her bandanna, the winds return, in a ghastly, wheezing “air attack” of the twelve-note “bandanna chord.”

**Edwin Powell:** What is the role of the orchestra *versus* the voices?

**Daron Hagen:** The orchestra is both the omniscient narrator of the opera and a character in the opera. It creates the context in which the characters play out their internal and external lives. People often say what they think they ought to instead of

what they really feel: when Morales is drunk and giving his wedding toast, his words are happy but the music under them is not. He is in denial. Another example is when Morales is singing the same music that Mona sang in the first act where she says, “some sense of shame.” This ends up being a big motif and it comes back at the same moment that Morales describes Emily’s love for Jake. This is intertwined with the motif where Jake sang that his love for Emily was put to the test. So at the same time you have four different things being said at once. People instinctively understand these things, even when they don’t register them consciously. Opera’s ability to present multiple levels of meaning is one of its trump cards.

I tried to very hard to keep my repertoire of musical gestures pre-1940 because the real compositional innovation in *Bandanna* takes place in the vocal writing. The singers are required to move as freely across the spectrum from speech, rhythmic speech, *recitative, parlando*, song, to aria as they are required to move across the spectrum of musical styles (each of which required a different sort of vocal production) utilized in the score. Meticulously controlled and notated, I saw this as a direct extension of what Bernstein and Wadsworth were trying to do in the funeral parlor scene of *A Quiet Place*. The greater the emotional urgency, the greater the elevation of the text into melisma, even broad ‘melody.’ The challenge for both singers and composer is to not draw attention to the amount of technique involved in effectively blurring the lines between the various kinds of singing.



**Edwin Powell:** In working with winds as opposed to a traditional pit, is your concept of phrasing different?

**Daron Hagen:** Yes. Traditionally, in an opera the string parts are the biggest and the brass parts are the smallest, with percussion rather small. Loss of the strings, and the necessity of therefore dividing held chords up between different players caused all of the parts for all of the players to be more elaborate. You have to crosshatch and “pass off” lines, you have to do all of the things we know that you have to do when you write for winds in order to create the illusion of *la grande ligne*. It’s the thing we were just talking about -- how winds have to breathe but strings don’t. This means that the first and second parts become equal in importance and every part ends up being twice as long. Another difference is that the emancipation of the mallet parts is complete. This opera uses the three mallets: vibes, xylophone and marimba with harp and piano as an equally important section of the orchestra.

**Edwin Powell:** Why only two horns as opposed to four like the contract allows?

**Daron Hagen:** Because I didn’t want to fall back on using the horns to fulfill the role of sustaining chords the way that strings ordinarily do. It is like keeping chocolates out of the house if you have a sweet tooth. One other interesting thing is the sax quartet that is not often found in other opera orchestrations. They are associated with the villain all night long. Can’t imagine why.

**Edwin Powell:** I notice that you use brass mutes extensively. Would you care to

comment on this?

**Daron Hagen:** Using the various mutes available in the brass exponentially increases the number of colors you can get from them, many of which sound amazingly like the special effects you can ordinarily achieve in the strings, while allowing the players to “blow hard” but “play soft.”

**Edwin Powell:** I noticed, in the correspondence, that you sent Paul lyrics by Stephen Sondheim, Cole Porter, Irving Berlin, and Ira Gershwin.

**Daron Hagen:** It is fascinating to see an erudite Irish poet attempt to reign in his word play. His struggle to write Lyrics that also stand as Poetry mirrors this composer’s struggle to straddle the worlds of Opera and Music Theater. The effort causes a healthy creative tension and inspires the sort of close reading that inspires me. For instance, today Michael Haithcock asked me about a line in the seduction scene where Kane says to the little girl, “Why would a drain shy away from it’s own stink?” Mike asked, “What is he saying?” Well, he is saying about five different things, I answered, and that’s just the words. This is what really fires me up. It makes the characters more lifelike, more complex.

**Edwin Powell:** There is, in the libretto, this intriguing item you call a meta-text. Where does this come from?

**Daron Hagen:** This is something that Paul and I are very involved with and something that makes this opera go. When four characters are singing at the same time,

they can be singing for four different reasons. But if the things they are saying rhyme nevertheless, four parallel poems, four sonnets that happen to rhyme, then as they sing contrapuntally the manner in which I line up those rhymes creates the context in which the listener understands what each character is saying. The characters' lines then comment on one another, though they are unaware that they are doing it -- the way that one person in a crowded subway car may say the word "bamboozle" and then you hear it said a few feet away by a woman in an entirely different context. It's in the air.

If one character says "I do it out of some sense of shame;" then the next person happens to say, "just the same" while another chimes in, "accept the blame" and another says, "down in flames," the listener receives a meta-text, which he intuits. He doesn't *know* that he is hearing a composite meta-text floating on top of the others because again the surface perfume of the tunes is high; the tunes themselves purposely draw attention away from the cleverness of the craftsmanship. Lots of composers do it.

APPENDIX D

AN INTERVIEW WITH MICHAEL HAITHCOCK HELD 10 JULY 2000



**Edwin Powell** - Please outline the events that led to CBDNA's decision to commission an opera.

**Michael Haithcock** - In 1996 Tom Duffy as Chairman of the (CBDNA) Commissioning Committee ran a survey of what all CBDNA members were individually interested in seeing the organization front. There was a wide range of ideas that ranged from another piece by David Gillingham or Alfred Reed to a concerto for Yoyo Ma by a composer of his choice. A ballet and opera were included in the list of ideas.

The initial response to the survey was to commission John Harbison to write a work that turned into the ballet *Olympic Dances*. That commission was presented in 1997 at the CBDNA conference in Georgia.

Tom (Duffy) had been chairman of the Commissioning Committee for four or five years. He wanted to go on to other things so Alan McMurray, the incoming president, asked if I would take over. The CBDNA Board approved my appointment. I met with Tom after finding this (that Haithcock would chair the commissioning committee) out in Georgia and asked that he be sure to send me the files as soon as possible. He stuck out his hand and shook mine saying, "Well, here are the files. We have just completed this Harbison thing and other than the results of the survey, which are published in the *Report*, I have nothing to give you. There is nothing else. You have the guidelines for member driven consortiums and the survey and that is it."

Basically what that meant is that I had no baggage. Nobody was saying that there was another project in the pipe that I had to shepherd through. So, I came home, exchanged a couple of phone calls with Tom where we discussed the numbers of the survey and whether we thought it was really an accurate reading of the pulse of the organization.

Anyway, after consulting with Alan McMurray about this, what I decided to do rather than go from one biennium to another was to line up two or three commissions out. What I had hoped to do was get some younger composers, that I had been researching and tracking for several years, that had really developed an expertise in various areas.

So, enter Daron Hagen who I had never met but knew a great deal about his song writing and the fact that he wrote the *Shining Brow*. I obtained his email address from his publisher and wrote him saying that CBDNA was considering either a song cycle with wind orchestra or an opera with winds in the pit. Could we arrange a time to talk? He responded relatively soon. In our first conversation it became clear that while he would write a song cycle, he was really interested in an opera and would begin work right away setting it as a priority.

I had to decide whether to launch a campaign to do this at the end of March 1997 to get it ready for the 1999 premiere in Austin, TX or put him off and do something else. I decided after speaking with a number of people that the time was right.

We had a meeting in Austin with the Board in June (1997). Prior to this meeting I

contacted each member of the Commissioning Committee with a scheme to pay for it, they unanimously approved. I went to Austin armed with all the letters of approval and a batch of his music in a variety of styles and made a presentation on what this could be, they unanimously agreed to go forward.

**Edwin Powell** – What do you feel this type of commission can do, could do for our profession and has that changed since *Bandanna* premiered?

**Michael Haithcock** – I think the reason that a lot of the membership answered the survey the way they did is that many feel, in my opinion, that the band conducting profession, the wind ensemble movement however you want to call it, has a tendency to be isolated in and among itself. A lot of that is, perhaps, because it is housed in academic units. Having the ballet commission, only because it interacted with John Harbison, a composer of that ilk, was great for us because we got a professional dance company to tour with it. So, every time it is done, wider arrays of artists are exposed to what we are about. Since opera is perhaps the highest synthesis of all the arts, it seemed to me to be the logical next and a needed step. Opera is also the fastest growing classical music venue in the nation.

So that was the hopeful plan for commissioning the opera and after the fact there has certainly been more attention drawn to the organization and to what is happening in bands as a result. This is certainly positive.

I don't think that the full effect of this will be known for a number of years but

when people hear about the manner in which this consortium was put together, their first reaction is one of wild surprise because this kind of interaction is not usual among arts organizations. Had we been able to keep the Austin Lyric Opera in the fold, and had it been premiered in a professional situation rather than an academic one, it would have been a nicer touch. That did not happen so we had to move along. Twenty-five years from now, if the opera has had that many runs, we will be okay.

In terms of the impact of this piece, Joan Tower came to Austin to see the opera. She is now writing a piece. David Del Tredici came to Austin to see the opera. He is writing a piece and is having some of his other works transcribed for winds even at the grade three level. Ned Rorem, who some of us have tried to get to write a piece for years and was reluctant, is now writing a song cycle. A number of composers have contacted me unabashedly campaigning for us to commission them. We are not talking about the last Pulitzer Prize winners but very well respected composers who heretofore have yet to write for winds. I think that the amount of money and the energy that was focused into this project has sent a signal. None the least of which was also Fran Richards, who is in charge of ASCAP, being there and going back and telling young composers and middle-aged composers, “Hey, get busy. These guys will do a good job and you will get multiple performances.” So I think this commission laid a foundation for future interactions that will be significant.

**Edwin Powell** – My next question was going to deal with the reasons you chose



Daron Hagen but I think that you have answered that well. Is there any more you would like to add to that?

**Michael Haithcock** – Well, perhaps some people feel that we would have been better served if name a larger named composer like John Harbison wrote an opera. The truth is that John Harbison was writing an opera for the Metropolitan Opera and getting for it a quarter of a million dollars. A lot of the people I talked to said that opera is such a specialized field that people who write their first operas fail even if they are good composers in other places. There are many historical examples of that.

It seemed to me that what we needed was someone who knew what they were doing a little bit and wasn't going to have to feel their way through scoring for our ensemble while trying to write an opera. Daron seemed to me to meet the criteria best.

**Edwin Powell** – Clearly the Commissioning Committee and the CBDNA Board were in favor of the project from the start. Was it difficult to convince the general membership of the project's value?

**Michael Haithcock** – I don't know if I can answer that because the package I presented to the board was not only the opera but also the two band pieces *Bandanna Overture* and *Wedding Dances* that were drawn from the opera. So there was something for the upper end artistic purpose of the commission and something we could go home and play tomorrow.

There are probably many in the organization, who never said a word to me one

way or the other, that were negative. They were well mannered enough not to ask why we were doing this, or that it was too much money. These were things I heard through the grapevine.

But we raised the money, we put on the show and it is there for the membership to take advantage of in anyway they want. This is true of the two band pieces as well. I have not heard a good explanation as to why this was not a good idea since you can not put a price tag on what has come from it, particularly with the coming aboard of the Joan Towers, Ned Rorems, David Del Tredicis and Lord knows who else in the future as a result. Time will tell.

**Edwin Powell** – Please discuss the primary sources by which the commission was funded.

**Michael Haithcock** – What the board agreed to was that CBDNA would put twenty thousand dollars toward the project, which was the usual biennium budget for commissioning. They put that up to secure the deal and I was to raise eighty thousand dollars. We tried to get a grant from Meet the Composer and that didn't work because when they looked at us as an organization with all our various members they determined that we had too much accessible money.

Part of the plan was to raise the money from our membership, which is what we wound up doing. We created a tiered situation where for five hundred dollars you got the two band pieces, for a thousand dollars you got more. It was a five hundred, a thousand,

three thousand, five thousand ability to contribute. So we had eighty-two schools contribute slightly more than eighty thousand dollars as a result of all that. So combining that with the twenty thousand dollars that the organization committed we were able to meet our total obligation of one hundred thousand dollars to Daron.

**Edwin Powell** – The derived works are getting play. Baylor University, under your baton, is soon to release a recording of *Bandanna Overture*, *The Seduction Scene* and *Mona's Prayer*. Please elaborate on the role these derived and extracted works had in CBDNA's willingness to undertake the project.

**Michael Haithcock** – Early on in my discussions with Daron I made it very clear to him that there needed to be an approach to the project that wasn't just a one-time puff of smoke. There needed to be concert repertoire that brought winds and vocalists together. In my personal opinion, and this may have something to do with my background, our profession is lacking in that type of material. He was quick to respond to this and we talked over many possibilities. The pieces you mentioned are just the tip of the iceberg. There are all kinds of other pieces that can be pulled out and done separately if one would care to. I counted at one point and there are potentially thirteen programming possibilities from all the things we (Hagen and Haithcock) discussed. I think this made a big impact on the Board.

**Edwin Powell** – What are your thoughts on the aftermath of the premiere? Was it the success that you hoped or expected?

**Michael Haithcock** – The jury is still out on that, in addition to the things I have already said in regards to composers, that is pretty solid.

There is still an apprehension of the monster of opera and, due to lack of experience; there are a number of people who will never take the score seriously because it involves too many complicated issues. I see that as a problem with our profession not the score.

I feel that the libretto, while wonderful poetry, has some problems from an operatic standpoint. If I were to do the piece again, I might restructure the libretto in a way that would make it more accessible to the audience. But that is the opera world. Paste and cut, work, chop, work toward. This opera is still very much in its infancy. I hope that in terms of CBDNA's point of view, I am talking about individual members of CBDNA, that it is not, "Been there, done that." There is too much yet to be gained for the individual who works with this music for that to be a reality.

**Edwin Powell** – What led to your conducting the premiere?

**Michael Haithcock** – I mentioned the Austin Lyric Opera (ALO) earlier. Originally the Austin Lyric Opera was going to be part of the commission's consortium. They were not going to pay for any of the composition; we were going to do that. They going to promise us two things, a concert performance in Austin at the 1999 CBDNA Convention and then the next year a staged world premiere.

As we went from concept to the reality of the first act, I think that the best way

to put it is that there was an artistic disagreement between Joe McLain, the Director of the ALO, and the composer. I think that both individuals were right. Daron had a feeling that Joe wanted to compose and Joe had a feeling that Daron wanted to be the dramaturge. They just pulled away from each other.

To Joe's credit, he offered to continue with a concert version but he would not go forward with a stage production given what he felt were the issues involved. At that point the CBDNA Board felt that it would not be in our best interest to depend on the ALO to give the piece a fair shake. It was one thing to think that they were working toward a staged version and another if it became just something else they did. Furthermore, it became obvious to me that the relationship between Joe McLain and Daron Hagen was not one in which CBDNA needed to be in the middle.

So at that point Robert DeSimone, who is in charge of the opera program at the University of Texas (UT), which is quite a fine collegiate opera program, said that he would be willing to take on the premiere. He did not have the same reservations that Joe had.

In fairness to Joe, mounting a professional opera production from scratch is very expensive. You can't afford for it to go south. It could ruin the rest of the company. In academics we do not have the same budget requirements and worries so the University of Texas was able to do it.

Jerry Junkin, the Wind Ensemble conductor at UT, was also hosting the



conference and the Wind Ensemble was playing their own concert, so he didn't feel he could do all that and conduct the opera. So Alan McMurray and Jerry asked if I would conduct because of my work on the project, my relationship with Daron and because I was close enough to make it back and forth to Austin for rehearsals.

**Edwin Powell** – As a conductor who primarily conducts winds, how did you approach this new monster of opera?

**Michael Haithcock** – I mentioned my background earlier. I think that my background in choral conducting over the years paid off. I took a number of voice lessons while in college. I was not afraid of what I saw. From that point of view I simply looked at the choral writing like I would look at a church anthem. I looked at the text and melodic lines like I did when I studied voice.

In addition, I dealt with it like I would any other score. You just have your attention spread in different ways because of the forces. I think also my background as a pianist helped because I could sit with the vocal score and hash out the music before really dealing with the orchestration.

**Edwin Powell** – Did your perceptions of the work change after receiving the fully orchestrated score?

**Michael Haithcock** - No. Not really because I guess the approach I took was that I learned the piece at the piano, playing the vocal lines, the choral lines then playing the accompaniment as my limited technique would allow. The orchestrated version of the

score was more of a logistical issue than a musical issue. Daron's orchestrations are so good, so colorful that it was easy to make the transition from the piano to the ensemble.

**Edwin Powell** – What were your primary concerns heading into rehearsal?

**Michael Haithcock** – Oh, well first that I wouldn't screw up (Laughter). That was number one on my list. And I mean that with all seriousness. I felt a great deal of responsibility to this organization (CBDNA) and my profession. I was not going to go down to the University of Texas and this opera program and not handle the situation as professionally as possible.

So I spent a great deal of time making sure I knew the opera as well as any piece I would conduct. In fact I realized very quickly that I knew it better than anyone there until the composer arrived, of course. That was easily put to rest.

The rhythmic demands of the choral parts are extensive when compared too much of the operatic repertoire. I was concerned going in, and this proved to be accurate, that this was going to be an issue. The chorus is not just a "stand and sing" chorus. They have a lot of activity while they are singing. Crawling across the floor, dancing, fist fighting, there are a lot of things for them to do. Robert DeSimone labeled it a chorus show and I understand what he means by that.

Not knowing any of the lead singers, I was concerned about how they would be able to meet the demands of the vocal lines and the difficulty of forging together this new piece while simultaneously developing a relationship. Those were my biggest concerns.

**Edwin Powell** – What about issues of balance given that you have a sizable pit without strings?

**Michael Haithcock** – My experience with conducting Daron’s *Cello Concerto* gave me great confidence in him as an orchestrator. I felt reasonably sure that he would write it in such a way that the voices would be heard. I knew I could restructure the way people sat in the pit. He put in the score places where you can leave people out if it is too loud. What we wound up doing was putting carpet down in strategic places. We also considered putting black cloth over the pit. I figured there were a lot of technical ways we could fix that so I did not spend a lot of time worrying about balances.

**Edwin Powell** – *Bandanna* is tied together by multiple factors, instrument to character associations, key and character relationships and others. How did you approach these in order to enhance the drama?

**Michael Haithcock** – I can answer that two different ways. As I was learning the score, I kept copious notes on all the things you mentioned. I had two margins. One was what key went with what. The other was that I kept a running list of questions about what certain things meant in the libretto. I wanted to make sure I understood all the little innuendos. Sometimes these questions turned out to be nothing. Sometimes they would reveal a dramatic revelation about a character. I can’t tell you the number of hours I spent on this issue. I wanted to make sure that I knew every intention of the creators.

When it actually comes down to effecting the drama though from the conductor’s

point of view in the pit, you only have the same tools that you have in making any music dramatic. You can only do with the resources in front of you what you feel inside in terms of dynamics and tempo, quickening and slowing, things that make music musical. The rest of the drama is up to the stage director.

**Edwin Powell** – Yet your awareness of those relationships effects your interpretation of tempi, etc.

**Michael Haithcock** – Yes. In this particular case it was very difficult to interpret tempi because the composer was there and insisted on the tempi he marked even in the face of the fact that they did not work in many places (chuckle). I will never forget after rehearsing the fight scene to death for two straight days, almost six hours of rehearsal, calling Daron in New York City from Austin and said, “This is too fast and is not going to work.” His response was to trust the score. We never got it to the marked tempo of 152. In fact at 152 the words are almost unintelligible.

So, other places like the seduction scene you mentioned, the tempo is marked half note equals 60, almost twice as fast as the tempo we wound up taking because of what the singer needed. There was a constant evolution; I guess would be the best way to put it, about what I was having to do in the process. Rather than having the freedom to say, “This is how I feel about the tempo,” I had to come to my own conclusions but also keep what Daron wanted in my ear as well.

There were times when I went with what Daron said it had to be even though it

was against my musical instincts. There were also times when I went with my instincts and ignored him. I think that all of those little dramas are part of the collaborative beauty of opera.

Once singers start singing all the collaboration ceases because when you have soloists out there doing it by memory you have to be prepared to go where they go and do what they do.

**Edwin Powell** – Please discuss the collaborative nature of this project in terms of conductor, composer, librettist and artistic director. Even the relationship between Baylor University and University of Texas if you will.

**Michael Haithcock** – Let's start with Baylor and UT. Jerry Junkin and I have been personal friends for almost twenty-five years. There was never any question in my mind that once I agreed to do this, which I was reluctant to do at first, that everything there that needed to be done would be done.

I met Robert DeSimone in October for the first time. The next time I saw him was at the first rehearsal and he was very relaxed and created a cordial professional atmosphere. He was a consummate professional and he made me feel responsible for the things I should be responsible for. We discussed issues of tempo and pacing in relationship to the singers in a very collegial atmosphere that was very focused what was best for the music. I think that was just great. When you add the dynamic of a composer to a process that is not yet finished it takes on a whole new dimension. It is one thing to



have a composer talk about an established piece of theirs. It is another to have the composer talk about a piece the day before the premiere. It is another thing to have the composer there for two weeks at every rehearsal writing down every thought that crosses his mind. There were times when that was very helpful. There were times when that was micromanagement. There were times when it was very reinforcing to hear him say, “Yes that is exactly how I wanted it.” There were times when it was devastating to hear him say, “Well how could you do it like that?” But, I think the thing that it did for me was that it really helped me grow musically. Not because I was seeking his approval, but I got to the point where I worried less and less about what he was thinking and gradually began to depend more upon what I was feeling.

**Edwin Powell** – How was the presence of Paul Muldoon, the Librettists?

**Michael Haithcock** – Well, Paul was there one day. He flew in the night before the premiere, talked during the premiere day events, and seemed very happy to have been part of the project. His job was basically done.

He brought a certain air of legitimacy to the event because of his stature as a poet. It is interesting because the poetry in the libretto is great poetry but I am not sure it is great libretto. But that is something that will be argued if the piece has a life over the course of the years.

**Edwin Powell** – In regards to the libretto, you mentioned revisions. What adjustments did you recommend to Daron Hagen?

**Michael Haithcock** – In the original scheme the first act was going to be an hour and the second act was going to be fifty minutes. The way it actually came out was that the first act was an hour and twelve minutes and the second act was an hour. I think that the first act is too long for the listener. The first act contains so much information and at the end are these double duets with Jake and Kane, then Jake and Morales.

So what I have purposed to the composer was ending the first act at the forty-minute mark, which is the place where Jake is holding the bandanna and saying that he is going to fix Morales. It is a very dramatic moment and it sort of fades into nothing.

Then I suggested to skip scene three and start act two with scene four. If you recall scene four has an ethereal introduction then goes into the onion field scene where Kane is rallying the migrants. My feeling is that the first act lays out the problem. The second act is all about seduction. In scene four Kane seduces the field workers and we began to find out through his dialogue just what kind of person Kane really is. At the end of this scene there is a heated exchange between Jake, Kane and Morales leading to a Morales aria. This aria can be postponed.

At this point we insert scene three with Morales and Jake leading from there into Morales' aria. So you have the confrontation between Jake and Morales in the field after Kane has left. Then the scene changes to the cantina and insert Kane's seduction scene. At the end Morales could come in with Jake following, they finish their business, Morales leaves and Kane seduces Jake into the scheme that eventually will cause the

tragic end of the opera. This would be the conclusion of the second act but with one addition that requires a scene change.

Then do the second act (now the third act) as is, but snip out the seduction scene. This basically creates three forty-minute acts. I think it would tighten the story and the audiences' ability to focus on the libretto. It would take a stage director to make a commitment in order for Daron and Paul to agree to it. From a business standpoint, they should do it before Carl Fischer publishes the vocal score, but if the composer does not want to do that, it is his business.

**Edwin Powell** – What would you say to a wind conductor considering this or any other opera?

**Michael Haithcock** – I would hope that they have enough ability to struggle to the piano to play through and sing, whatever the quality of their voice, the text and pitches together in a way that allows them to feel what the vocalist has to do. That is important no matter which opera. They need to have the freedom of knowing the score so well that they can say the words before the singer does. There is an incredible feeling of empowerment in that.

I think that sometimes it is too easy to learn a score along with the group. In opera you can't do that. Technically, as a conductor, the flexibility of expression that is required to do the discipline of opera is something that every conductor should do. I would encourage them to roll up their sleeves, get in there and not be afraid of it.

**Edwin Powell** – Though you have addressed a bit, did your mode of operation change much in the implementation of your rehearsals and their preparation?

**Michael Haithcock** – It is interesting because I had the least amount of time with the wind group. Before the dress rehearsal I had perhaps six hours. Not much time. I really had to trust them and make points that applied many places. At the same time we had to go through things enough to know whether they were making mistakes or if there were mistakes in the parts. So the rehearsals were a combination of “getting to know you” for everybody because there were mistakes in the parts, as is inevitable.

I met with many of the soloists individually and with the arias and so forth that I could accompany, I could work with them and react to them as a coach might. In those situations you are ultra picky. So you are not going through blocks of music at a time like I wound up having to do with the winds in order to get things done.

With the chorus we tried to work the rhythms with just speech and no pitches since they could only sing some of these things so many times before they gave out. The difficulty of the rhythms needed a great deal of repetition to come together.

I found I needed a different strategy for each situation. Then in the big situations where we were working drama as well, I had to be sensitive to whether we were going back for the drama or for the music. The closer we got to the performance the less we worked separately. There were days when we would run an entire act during a rehearsal. So I found that I had to be in many different levels of preparation at one time.

**Edwin Powell** – As an artist, how has this endeavor changed your approach to making music, or has it?

**Michael Haithcock** – Well, I think that it has changed my approach in that in order to conduct a piece that is two hours long and fifteen minutes long, in the time frame we had to work with, it really reinforced to me that you have to trust people. You have to work hard and prepare but you have to trust people. Most of all you have to trust yourself. You have to be willing to allow yourself to be vulnerable to the moment. I think that sometimes in our profession, because we deal mostly with students, because we deal with a lot of music that is for lack of a better term as much mathematics as anything else, it is very easy to lose sight of that. It is very easy to try to work everyone toward perfection and in the process iron out expression.

This project reminded me that, in a holistic sense, there is a higher level of music making that is much more enjoyable if you open yourself to it. The feeling in singing all these lines, in learning the piece reminded me of the fact that, in a way, everything is song.



APPENDIX E

AN INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT DESIMONE HELD 11 MARCH 1999

**Edwin Powell** – Please outline your background.

**Robert DeSimone** – I was raised as a pianist. At an early age I had the beginnings of a solo concert career, which was fortunately successful. It did not supply for me the avenues of satisfaction that I hoped or thought it would. Being Italian, I was raised with opera. My Uncle was a singer and my Grandfather conducted some, so hearing opera was very natural in the household.

I probably, more than anything, wanted to be a singer. I studied voice and at the time I was a so-called lyric tenor. There didn't seem to be a very good market for that. I also was not encouraged much by my family because I was already a pianist. We had engaged so much effort into my being a pianist they really wanted me to do that.

Time went on and I eventually, nearly in the middle of a concert season in New York, stopped dead in my tracks and asked myself I really wanted to do. Opera was my great interest so I set about that task.

I knew I probably wasn't going to be a singer. I had many performing arts experiences, so the combination of these is what led me to be a stage director and conductor. So I set about the task of writing to every well known, and some not so well known, stage director I could find. I poured out my soul to them letting them know how inordinately talented I was, what a genius I was and if they just gave me the chance.... Some of them answered and some just ignored me but one very, very, very,

VERY! important stage director by the name of Everett Rapp answered my letter. He happened to be on a vacation in Venice and I found it significant that not only would he answer me but while on vacation. So we started a correspondence. I still have the letters today.

I guess that after enough letter writing, prodding, whatever, he agree to let me come to Geneva and do some work with him. He wouldn't pay my way and would not give me a cent but if he liked what he saw then he would talk to me further. So I said fine and that is what we did.

So my work as a director came about through a practical point of view. I shouldn't say I had no school since I have a directing degree from here (University of Texas) both at the masters and doctoral levels and devised those degrees so people (future directors) would not have to go and sit in the theatre for years and years although that is also important.

So that is how I got started. In my first job, because of my keyboard skills, I had to pull double duty as a vocal coach. I had been doing that all my life so this was very natural for me. Once this fell into place it seems that it all went so quickly I never turned around to look back.

I was in Europe for quite a while in both the German and Italian theatres. Eventually I wanted to get back to the States and I got my management to get me back. My biggest entrée to be permanently back in the States was a contract with the Seattle

Opera in Seattle Washington. They liked my work and asked if I would be interested in becoming their first resident Stage Director. So I did that. They let me continue my outside work and one thing led to another.

I did not have an interest in the University setting until I was approached by the College-Conservatory in Cincinnati. So I went there and spent a season in and out and it gave me a taste of what university life would be like. They wanted me to stay and unfortunately that didn't work out.

Shortly after, the University of Texas (UT) called me unsolicited. They asked if I would come and direct as a guest. I happened to have the time and said yes. At the time they were doing an international search for a director and they asked me if I was interested. I said, "No, I wasn't interested in coming to Texas, my work was so full I wouldn't have the time." Somehow my name kept surfacing for them. Eventually I said that I would try it and see what it was like as long as I had the flexibility to maintain outside work. The rest is history. It has been a marvelous marriage between education and a professional setting.

There is no doubt that I am a different individual now as an educator than I was when I walked in the door because you really have to learn as a professional to become an educator to adapt and so forth. From that sense I am really blessed. This is my fifteenth year in Texas. I came in 1983 but really put down roots about five or six years ago. Before that I was still doing a great deal of traveling.

**Edwin Powell** – How did you find out about *Bandanna* and what convinced you to stage it at UT?

**Robert DeSimone** – It was through Jerry Junkin. He approached me about the work saying that the (CBDNA) conference would be here. I have an interest and always have in producing new works. This (UT) Opera Theatre has somewhat of a reputation for that since we used to try to do one every two years.

I took a look at the score and thought that the *Othello* scenario was interesting. I was concerned about the forces coming together. The time of year meant we would have less rehearsal time than normal. As is always, the situation between choruses and opera programs are somewhat difficult. So I said that if I could have some guarantees for support then I wouldn't have to go out and do it all myself. Jerry was very helpful in this.

Then I met Daron and Michael in October. We talked about the work and this brought some more into view. Then I was gone from the University for quite a number of weeks directing at another location. So through email and phone we began to put it all together.

**Edwin Powell** – So you had no reservations seeing that the project was a world premiere?

**Robert DeSimone** – No, number one I am a big advocate of new works and have enjoyed the experience of doing them over most of my career. I find it exhilarating for



myself as a director. It certainly is a new adventure from dealing with the standard repertoire be it Mozart, Puccini or whomever. And I think that in this setting it is very important for young people on occasion to experience new works. If they are indeed going to have any profession career, from the singer to the instrumentalist and design team, they should have a little bit of experience while in their university setting.

The university setting seems to be the natural venue for composers to have their works performed. Mainly because regional companies cannot take the chance on new works economically. Therefore much of it has fallen to the universities. While we may not be able to give the same rendering that a fine regional company may, it is a production for the composer and that is part of musical history.

**Edwin Powell** – You mentioned that the *Othello* scenario intrigued you. Was this the primary impetus in getting you to explore *Bandanna* further.

**Robert DeSimone** – It certainly was a large part of it. I played through the score and found it interesting. I thought that the retelling of the *Othello* story was an interesting twist. The way it was used in the opera was certainly effective. There was another part of me that saw that this would be good for the students and the school of music and I thought, “Why not try to help this conference.” I think that being a colleague, where possible, is an important thing in higher education. So all of those things in play made me decide that we should do it. After meeting Michael and Daron, it was solidified in my mind.

**Edwin Powell** – What process did you go through when casting?

**Robert DeSimone** – The students audition at the beginning of the fall semester for the opera program. We take about twenty-five singers. Those singers are placed in a practicum class. From this class they graduate into the UT Opera Theatre. I look at the highest level of students for the UT Opera Theatre because it is the showcase. This of course came into account when I looked at the score to see if we had the personnel.

I felt we had personnel for some of the roles but there are obviously two major roles, Morales and Kane, that I felt that we could not in anyway approach as students. So I went to Bill Lewis (UT Vocal Faculty), gave him the score and asked if Morales might interest him. It interested him immediately.

I went to another colleague on the voice faculty about Kane. Unfortunately he could not perform the work due to a leave of absence scheduled for the spring semester. Hence my conversations with Daron about Paul Kreider, which turned out to be a Godsend because he is such a marvelous performer. He was a great asset, I don't know what we would have done without him. He is a very fast learner, a wonderful talent and is very exciting on the stage. With those two characters in place, the opera seemed feasible. Daron and I spoke at great lengths about the type of voices he was hoping to have in each role. I stressed the fact that we were looking at student talent for eighty percent of the cast and that he would have to take my word. So that is how the casting of the soloists came about. The company was an amalgamation of the students in the opera

program and students from the choral area. That eventually worked out quite well.

**Edwin Powell** – For those of us who are new to the world of opera, please discuss some of the processes your mind goes through when putting together a scene.

**Robert DeSimone** – I have no idea, I just do it. That is not really true. Over a period of years you stop thinking about certain aspects of your process it almost becomes automatic. I was intrigued by the fact that this was set in boarder Texas. The whole Hispanic issue, the tension between Anglos and Hispanics, the boarder itself, the Day of the Dead, I found all this interesting. I went and did a lot of research on all of that.

Though not the impetus, I went to Mexico over Christmas and New Years, so I was actually looking for a certain amount of research while I was there. It is extraordinary because customs and culture that are indigenous to a country often will have very little written history. So you come to a place like Austin and go to the library and find an incredible amount of information on the Day of the Dead and so forth. So that was certainly one avenue.

Part of my vantage as a director is the theatricality of a work. And I thought the work had strong potential for this. It contains very, very potent scenes. I gave a lot of thought to who the people were and how they evolved within the opera. As a kind of minimalist opera, the composer was very specific about the stage not being filled with a great deal of scenery, I was concerned about getting from scene to scene. I happen to

enjoy that process very much.

While I am not a frustrated set, lighting and costume designer, I have such extensive experience with those aspects that they also begin to come into focus when I am thinking conceptually about the characters. So as I started working with the design team, what with the bantering of ideas back and forth, certain possibilities began to come forward. And after a while the ideas just come into focus.

I am also a director that has an endless fantasy world and I take pride in that. I can sit and fantasize about things forever. I don't have any problem with deciding that an idea just doesn't work. I get my first twenty ideas then I probably throw those away and get another thirty.

Through that process of elimination and maturation in my thinking, it eventually comes down to what I think it will work for the given exercise. If I were doing this opera again in different setting, with different singers and design team, I probably would do many things quite differently than I did here. If we had more time, say eight weeks instead of six, I might consider different alternatives.

**Edwin Powell** – I remember on a very microscopic level you spending a tremendous amount of time in rehearsal with Jake at the moment of revelation and what he was doing with the bandanna.

**Robert DeSimone** – I would hate to think that I micro direct but I really like detail. I equate the stage like a wonderful garment by a designer. You have an

extraordinary piece of fabric but over this fabric is an incredible amount of detail that is either décor or how it is constructed. Those layers I think are very important for an audience. If you can't go into an operatic performance and find credibility in everything that is on the stage, even suspended credibility, I think it would be hard in today's world to enjoy the experience because of where television and movies have gone.

This moment you are talking about, while we do know of the bandanna previously, it is the first time it is really conceived as the tool to be the downfall of Morales. That was very, very important so we spent a great deal of time on how it was coming out of his pocket and how it was positioned in his hand.

Where the company was concerned, and I deliberately call this group of singers a company and not a chorus for the reason that I wanted them to be as individualistic as possible and not react only as a unit. Because of the naturalism of the work we spent a good deal of time individualizing them and a lot of that was successful.

**Edwin Powell** – When you discovered that *Bandanna* was a CBDNA commission and that the accompanying ensemble was primarily wind and percussion, what were your thoughts?

**Robert DeSimone** – I'll tell you that this was also very intriguing. There aren't many works with this type of instrumentation. I was fascinated to see how the composer would address it. Would it sound like John Phillip Sousa orchestration? Before we left for Christmas break, there was a meeting with the orchestra and I went and



sat in and found it very interesting. It was exciting. I never missed the strings at all and I think that when they were needed they were on the stage with the mariachi violins and such. It was terrific.

**Edwin Powell** – Did the instrumentation influence your staging or casting in any way?

**Robert DeSimone** – Did it influence the casting, no. Did it influence me as a director? If it didn't, I shouldn't be directing opera. Where the orchestration is going, its commentary on the emotion, I look at it as a musician first so I take cues from the music. In that sense, it was very important to me as to where the opera was going directorially and emotionally. We always have certain acoustical problems in the theatre so this was a concern but because of the instrumentation and the through the rehearsals this worked itself out.

There is no doubt that it was a loud orchestration. Brass and percussion are going to be loud; they will not do what strings can do. But it also gave a certain presence to the score that one may not often find in other operatic literature with a full compliment of strings. It certainly is not what you would call an accompanying orchestration. It is a vital self-standing orchestration.

**Edwin Powell** – So after living with this for several weeks what are your thoughts on its potential longevity and future performances?

**Robert DeSimone** – There seemed to be great excitement from the Band

Directors at the conference. It is very easy when in the hype of the opening to think one thing but then you go home, reality sets in and one tends to distance ones self, put it away and get into other aspect of their professional life. The work is musically very complex. It needs a lot of rehearsal time both musically and dramatically. The aspect of casting Miguel Morales and James Kane is something that could pose significant issues to some institutions. I would hope that it will have future performances and I believe that it will. I think that there will be five or six productions in the next few years. It is a work that deserves to be performed. I would love to experience it in another state to see what the reaction is. There is an indigenous Texas quality to the work so it might be very interesting to see how this might be performed in say Connecticut. Who knows, it is difficult to look into the crystal ball.

**Edwin Powell** – Do you think that professional companies might have an interest in *Bandanna*.

**Robert DeSimone** – Regional and professional companies can rarely afford to produce new works. The financial considerations might be insurmountable because they all need to do another *La Boheme*, that brings tickets in. Coming up with singers who have perhaps never sung the work is a big accountability. Preparing choruses who only meet once a week. In this case Daron wrote really for several choruses, that is a lot of bodies. The other thing is what to do with the agreements with the string players who won't play in this production. What would have to happen is that someone will need to

champion the work so completely and totally that those obstacles could be overcome. I think it would be a big success since it is such an accessible opera.

**Edwin Powell** – After the fact, what are your thoughts on the relatively close collaboration between all the elements?

**Robert DeSimone** – In my role as director I do not consider myself a creator or an originator. I am the interpreter and am best at that. My ideas are all derivative and I enjoy that. I am also not a solitary individual in my work. I work best with collaboration and teamwork. My ego is not one that says, “I alone will do this.” I also feel that I am only as good as the people I am working with as well. In this particular case having people like Michael (Haithcock) and Daron (Hagen) was all really exciting. I happen to thoroughly enjoy the process. I find this to be the core of what being in the theatre and a theatrical setting is about. It is not about my ego and having my name above others as the Director. I think that anyone who feels that way does not belong in the business.

I thought that this was a marvelous collaboration with an overall respect for each other’s specialty and experience. The educational value of having everyone here was extraordinary. It was an incredible learning experience for the students to work with a living composer, to see his presence, to understand him as the man who created this music how he perceived it. That is extraordinary on any level. I think that the hands-on experience with conductors, directors and composers is by far the best form of anyone who wishes to perform. Everyone came together as a family to give birth to this work.

That was very exciting and was felt very strongly by the students. I don't think that there is anything that is more positive than what they went through. They kept saying that once this was over, Mozart would seem easy.

**Edwin Powell** – Is there anything else that you feel should be addressed?

**Robert DeSimone** – I think that we discussed it a bit but tempo became an enormous issue in the opera. The tempi that were printed were quite different from the tempi that were actually used in rehearsal and where it all ended up. It is interesting because tempo is all relative to the needs of the opera and abilities of the people who perform it. This issue was always foremost.

It was also interesting to observe a composer who is relatively new to opera progress. There was many times where Daron would say that this has been a real education for him to be in this setting and see how it all was coming together. Those were things that were very powerful to me during the process and I thought about them quite a lot.

One final thing is that, since *Bandanna* is accompanied by winds it will perhaps be performed by conductors who have little experience to the theatre. This supplies both a wonderful opportunity and monumental challenge. What winds do is very different than what singers do. So how does the conductor with little stage experience tune himself to all of those new functions? It is interesting. I hope to be able to work more with talented and flexible conductors like Michael Haithcock. The bottom line is that it is

incredible to think that this first performance will be the first blueprint for the future. It will always be looked at as the first rendering. It was great to be a part of that.

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