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THE GAMBLER'S SON: A PERFORMANCE COMPANION GUIDE OF DR. TYLER GOODRICH WHITE'S OPERA

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THE GAMBLER'S SON: A PERFORMANCE COMPANION GUIDE OF DR. TYLER
GOODRICH WHITE'S OPERA

by

Patrick McNally

A DOCTORAL DOCUMENT

Presented to the Faculty of
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(Vocal Performance)

Under the Supervision of Professor William Shomos

Lincoln, Nebraska

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THE GAMBLER'S SON:

A PERFORMANCE COMPANION GUIDE OF DR. TYLER GOODRICH WHITE'S OPERA

Patrick McNally, D.M.A

University of Nebraska, 2021

Advisor: William Shomos

This document is intended to be a practical tool for anyone interested in performing or developing a deeper appreciation for the opera *The Gambler's Son* by Tyler Goodrich White. Premiered and produced by UNL Opera in October, 2019, *The Gambler's Son* is based on Mari Sandoz's *Son of the Gambler's Man* and Robert Henri's *The Art Spirit*. The document presents brief biographies of the composer Tyler Goodrich White and his wife, the librettist, Laura White. A discussion of the work's inspiration and evolution includes a review of the process by which the two works of literature were melded into one cohesive libretto. Preceding the analysis of the opera, this study places *The Gambler's Son* into the context of modern American opera in the 21st century. Sixty-three contemporary American operas that premiered five years prior to *The Gambler's Son* were considered for comparison. The analysis of the opera is presented from a performance perspective. White uses a serial twelve-tone technique to structure the opera. However, unlike many post-tonal operas, *The Gambler's Son* contains memorable recurring musical themes akin to the Wagnerian leitmotif. The document provides analysis of those musical themes, emphasizing their important role in giving the opera musical, dramatic, and aesthetic quality and accessibility. Following the analysis, vocal and dramatic

demands of the cast are presented, role by role, along with historical information about each character. Musical and staging information on the world premiere is provided, as well as suggestions of possible adaptations for future productions. The appendix features a line-by-line analysis of the sourcing of the libretto, a cataloguing of the major musical themes, extensive interview transcripts with the composer and librettist, a program from the original production, a list of themes, and a number of production images from the premiere. The author of this document, baritone Patrick McNally, created the role of John J. Cozad in the 2019 premiere production.

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CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

In 2019 I had the honor to be part of the premiere cast of the opera *The Gambler's Son* by composer Tyler White. The composer said in interviews that what he was after was “to write music that seems familiar, but that you've never heard before; and you wonder why you never heard it before because it feels so natural.”¹ With this opera he has achieved that goal. This opera deserves scholarly study which puts the work in context of its time and reveals the elements that make it worth producing. This document serves the producer considering this work by providing the opera's context, strengths, and requirements, the director who is looking for ways to adapt or cast the work, and the singer who needs character insights and excerptible arias.

Tyler White completed the composition of *The Gambler's Son*, in 2019. The opera is in two acts with scenes within each act alternating between the 1903 present and the 1870s past (for a full synopsis and program notes see the original program found in Appendix E). Under the direction of William Shomos (Director, UNL Opera), it premiered in Cozad, Nebraska, Thursday, October 17th, at the Cozad High School Auditorium with a reduced chamber orchestra and paired down set. It received its full orchestral, fully staged premiere November 15th, in Kimball Recital Hall at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) as well as a second performance on

¹ White, Tyler. Interview by author and Kao Zhou, Lincoln, March 4, 2020, transcript, Appendix C.

November 17th. White's operas have yet to become established in the operatic canon. This document serves both to bring to light an under-explored composer and work, and to provide analysis that will deepen appreciation of the compositional and theatrical elements of the work. The goal is to serve as an aid for musicians and companies looking to produce the opera or excerpts, and to serve as a guide for listeners who want to understand better White's composition and the sources, subjects, and musical themes of the opera.

Tyler White generally refers to his recurring musical ideas as themes and they have a clear relationship to Wagnerian leitmotifs. While some are short and motivic and others much broader and more thematic in nature, this document will refer to recurring musical figures broadly as themes using the language of the composer. Although Tyler White uses serial techniques, this document limits the scope of the discussion only to those themes and salient musical features that I believe can be accessed by a general opera going audience. The purpose here is to give guidance to future performers that will aid them with the score, though further analysis of White's structural approach and his use of tone rows, while beyond the scope of this document, may be of interest to scholars going forward. (See Appendix C for all interview transcripts with Tyler White)

This document begins with two short chapters, one on the composer and one on the librettist. These serve to give background on each of them discussing their attachment to the material, their influences, and process in order to provide context for the creation of the opera and the libretto. Next the opera is put into the context

of modern American opera as a whole and compared to 63 other works that premiered within a five-year window of *The Gambler's Son*. With that context established, analysis of the musical themes that tie the show together both musically and dramatically is provided. Once the thematic material is made clear and dramatic context has been established, a role-by-role breakdown of each character's notable features and excerpts is laid out. After the characters are made clear, a chapter on the premiere is discussed. The layout is designed to go from broadly focusing (on the lives of the creators) to a specific focus on details of the work (elements that were of note in the premiere performance).

The impetus for *The Gambler's Son* came in 2001 when Jane Rohman, a leader and patron in the Lincoln arts community, suggested *The Son of The Gamblin' Man* by Mari Sandoz as the subject for an opera and lent White a copy of the book. He read it but struggled to see how it could be turned into an opera, due to the sheer number of events that occur within the story. It was not until 15 years later in 2016, when, between projects and "searching around for something ambitious to do,"² he went back to the novel. Still, he did not see how to transform such a full sprawling chronicle into a serviceable plot, so he turned to his wife, UNL professor of English, Dr. Laura White who crafted the libretto. With her help, Dr. Tyler White was able to go back to Jane Rohman to discuss the commission and put the opera together. The work was created with the generous support of Jane Rohman, the Family of Willard Bellamy, the Family of Ivan and Shirley Paulsen, the Lincoln Community Foundation,

² White, Tyler. Interview by author and Kao Zhou, Lincoln, March 4, 2020, transcript, Appendix C.

the UNL Friends of Opera, and the Wilson Foundation. The production tour to Cozad was made possible by a generous gift from the James C. and Rhonda Seacrest Tour Nebraska Opera Fund.

Sandoz's *Son of the Gambler Man*³ tells the true story of the founding of Cozad, Nebraska, of its larger-than-life founder, John J. Cozad, and of Cozad's son, the illustrious American painter, Robert Henri. *Son of the Gambler Man* is an action-packed story that pits the character of Cozad against nature, against society, and against himself as the town struggles from one challenge to the next. The conflict in Cozad climaxes with John J. Cozad killing Alfred Pearson, and Cozad and his family are forced to flee the town they founded and change their names. The book concludes with Henri painting a portrait of his father. Further discussion of Sandoz and the novel can be found in chapter three.

During the 15 years he spent away from the project, Dr. Tyler White had researched Robert Henri and had become enchanted by his writings in the book, *The Art Spirit*⁴. *The Art Spirit* contains Henri's anecdotes, philosophy, and practical art knowledge, which White felt connected to as a musical artist. While no overarching conflict exists in *The Art Spirit*, the work contains great humanity, and deep sentiment. Many lines in the opera come directly from this text, and a complete breakdown of where each libretto line comes from can be found in Appendix D.

Together Drs. Tyler and Laura White developed a frame story for the opera in which Robert Henri is painting his father's portrait, and the action of the Sandoz

³ Sandoz, Mari. *Son of the Gambler Man*. Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1976.

⁴ Originally published: Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1923.

novel occurs as a flashback. The primary conflict in the frame story is that the two men cannot understand each other in the present without sharing an understanding of their past. This overarching goal helps unify the numerous events that occur throughout *Son of the Gambler's Man*. The frame story accomplishes two goals: first it allows the material from *The Art Spirit* to be incorporated as Henri paints, and second it takes the focus off the myriad events in *Son of the Gambler's Man* to allow for a more relationship-driven story of the two men coming to understand each other by examining their shared past. The opera is no longer just a tale about the founding of a town where catastrophic events lead to its ruin, but it becomes a story of two men looking back and experiencing that trauma through one another's eyes. The opera ends with the two men coming to an understanding of why each behaved the way he did, admitting mistakes, and offering forgiveness. The result is an opera that presents a story that has both the depth of *The Art Spirit* and the drama of *Son of the Gambler's Man*.

The music also is an important element in unifying the two source materials. White has written a highly structured serial-based opera; however, he has made it accessible through an imaginative use of musical themes. The thematic material helps the audience identify the time period and the characters; through White's musical manipulation of the themes, we hear the drama play out. Later in the opera, as both Henri's and the audience's understanding of characters becomes more complex, those themes become layered, reappear in new context, and begin to move across time periods. In short, the tone rows provide a structure, and the themes

facilitate the drama. Throughout the analysis, extensive interviews with the composer and librettist provide clarity of their intent throughout this document.

With a strong libretto that melds well with a complex, but accessible score, *The Gambler's Son* is a unity that produces a work greater than the sum of its parts. The humanity of *The Art Spirit* complements the action driven *Son of the Gambler's Man*. The historical nature of the characters gives them real depth and grounds them, while the poetry of Henri's words lifts their struggles to artistic and moving heights. While not overtly political in nature, the opera touches on themes of generational misunderstanding that are still relevant today. The opera contains multiple arias that make excellent excerpts. This document presents suggestions for the best means of extracting these excerpts with input from the composer. It is my hope that when this work sees performances in the future it can be approached with all the richness provided by this analysis and the wisdom of interviews provided here by its creators.

CHAPTER TWO TYLER GOODRICH WHITE AND THE INSPIRATION FOR THE COMPOSITION

Biography

Tyler Goodrich White was born in 1961 in Atlanta, Georgia, and was raised by a musical, artistic, and academic family. His father, musicologist Chappell White, a PhD graduate of Princeton University, specialized in the study of 18th-century violinist and composer Giovanni Battista Viotti, with a secondary focus on the music of Richard Wagner. From the 1950's to the 1970's Chappell White was the chair of the Department of Fine Arts and then the chair of the Department of Music at Emory University as well as a violinist and member of the Atlantic Symphony Orchestra. White's mother, Barbara Tyler White, was an American citizen raised in Brazil. At 18, she returned to America for college to major in archeology. This rich cultural background provided young Tyler perspectives from both classical Western music and South American traditions.

White remembers evenings as a young boy at his maternal grandfather's house. Right before bed, he would hear tango music wafting up from the downstairs living room, akin to "after-dinner liqueur." In the words of White himself, "Music was part of the world I was living in. It was always there, I never needed to be pushed into it, but it was always available."⁵ At the age of four, Tyler began violin lessons in contrast with his older sister who was studying piano. The study of instruments at an early age started his musical journey off at a fast pace. At age nine,

⁵ White, Tyler. Interview by author and Kao Zhou, Lincoln, March 4, 2020, transcript, Appendix C.

he took an interest in composition, writing down tunes to play on the violin for fun. Just a few years later, White was given the opportunity to explore conducting in his junior high orchestra. Tyler loved reading from a young age, which provided him a wide range of interests besides music, such as architecture and history. Having multiple passions, Tyler pondered various paths for his future career.

In high school, White also began learning the viola. High school also helped introduce him to Robert Shaw, the director and conductor of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, which became an important turning point in Tyler's early career. White's senior year his high school orchestra took a trip to Kansas State University to collaborate with the famous Shaw on the Bach B Minor Mass. Shaw took a shine to White, and quickly recognized his talent and potential. The two developed a mentor-mentee relationship. Shaw invited White to attend rehearsals with the Atlanta Symphony at any time, and he gave permission for young Tyler to borrow his scores to study whenever Shaw did not need them. In Tyler's words, "They were remarkable documents. He was so meticulous marking his scores, such as dynamics and bowings in different colors."⁶ From these experiences, Tyler not only learned how to prepare for orchestral rehearsals as a conductor, but also gained further insight into the compositional process. This mentorship was key to Tyler's future as a composer and conductor.

White's talents were recognized, and at the end of high school his choice came down to Harvard University or the University of North Carolina. He chose the

⁶ White, Tyler. Interview by author and Kao Zhou, Lincoln, March 4, 2020, transcript, Appendix C.

University of North Carolina, where he was granted a full scholarship, because he wanted to focus more on the musical performance field at the undergraduate level rather than the largely academic approach to music study at Harvard. Although Harvard also has a wonderful music performance program, Tyler thought he “...was not yet ready to devote himself to the academic world at that time.”⁷ He studied violin under Professor Richard Luby for his first two years in North Carolina. The next two years, his main focus turned to viola and composition. During his senior year of college Tyler received a life-changing commission from Robert Shaw and the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra to write a symphony. “To my surprise, it was out of nowhere and gave the unknown me a commission as part of a major commissioning project that included the commissions from Leonard Bernstein and Philip Glass.”⁸ It was a great honor but also a monumental challenge for the young composer. Shaw had faith in the young composer’s talent, and even White’s early work showed great promise.

The commission also affected White’s decision of where to go for graduate school. White was struggling with how to balance musicology and composition as he was interested in both. Cornell turned out to be the perfect school to combine his passions. The motto of Cornell University spoke to Tyler White on a deep level, “I would found an institution where any person can find instruction in any study.” At Cornell he was allowed to design his own curriculum to meet his needs to explore

⁷ White, Tyler. Interview by author and Kao Zhou, Lincoln, March 4, 2020, transcript, Appendix C.

⁸ White, Tyler. Interview by author and Kao Zhou, Lincoln, March 4, 2020, transcript, Appendix C.

both his passions. After a year of graduate study and combining both areas, he gradually realized that the composition degree was more important to him. This decision allowed him to focus on his commission for the Atlanta Symphony, and in September of 1984, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra successfully premiered Tyler's Symphony No.1 *Triptych for Orchestra* with Robert Shaw conducting. Although the critics did not fully understand the work at the time, the audience liked it very much. At the reception after the concert, Tyler still remembers a senior music lover holding his hand and saying, "I hate modern music. Your music sounded like the stuff I hate. But I liked it!"⁹

In 1985 this work won the award of Indiana State University's New Music Competition and was nominated by Robert Shaw and the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra for the Pulitzer Prize in Music. The success of the first symphony not only brought great honor to Tyler, but also strengthened White's determination to devote his career to composition. White furthered his compositional skills through opportunities as a visiting scholar at Copenhagen University in Denmark in 1986-87 and at the Conservatoire Américain de Fontainebleau in France in 1988. Following these experiences, White returned to Cornell University to continue his Doctor of Music Arts program in composition with Steven Stucky and Karel Husa. As assistant conductor of the Cornell University Orchestra, White also took a minor in conducting, studying with Edward Murray and Husa.

⁹ White, Tyler. Interview by author and Kao Zhou, Lincoln, March 4, 2020, transcript, Appendix C.

In 1989, before graduating from Cornell, Tyler accepted his first job at Trinity University in Texas. There he taught music theory and viola performance and conducted the symphony orchestra for five years. In 1994, he and his family moved to Lincoln, Nebraska where he accepted a tenure-track professor position in composition and conducting at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Since coming to Lincoln, Nebraska, Dr. White has balanced his full-time teaching load with other professional opportunities. In 1998-9 he completed his first full opera, *O Pioneers!* which was later revised and mounted at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and is seeing further revisions today in 2021. In 2000, he was named Resident Conductor of the Lincoln Symphony Orchestra, a post he held until 2019. In 2019, Tyler was named the LSO's first Composer-in-Residence. A prolific composer, his oeuvre covers a wide range of genres, from solo and chamber works in both instrumental and vocal fields, to large-scale operas and symphonies. In total, he has composed over 40 works over the span of his career.

In 2001 Tyler White wrote his *Caldera* for band, and in 2002 Tyler White's chamber work for solo flute, harp and strings named *Elegy for the orphans of terror*, (an arrangement of the aria from his first opera, *O Pioneers!*) was written as a memorial for the victims of 9/11. In 2005 his Symphony No.2 *Mystic Trumpeter*, commissioned by the UNL's Walt Whitman Conference, was premiered by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Symphony Orchestra. *Mystic Trumpeter* is a three-movement symphonic work for baritone and orchestra, similar to Mahler's *Song of the Earth* and Shostakovich's Symphony No.14 and is a vocal symphony based on

text fragments by Walt Whitman. This work proved to be a milestone for White in exploring his development of symphonic forms as an American composer within the 20th century with its use of vocals, drama, and its compact nature. The following year, White wrote *A Brand-New Summer*, commissioned and premiered by the Lincoln Symphony Orchestra. The piece is a three-movement work that was inspired by the composer's family life. The first movement is fast and full of rhythmic drive, inspired by Tyler's youth. The second movement is slow and features solo horn, strings, and piano said to be in memory of the composer's father who died in 2004. The third movement is for his mother and represents her early life in Brazil. It starts with a religious song and develops into a dance in the style of a samba. In 2018, this work had its Asian premiere as the opening piece for the final concert of the American Music Festival in the Sichuan Conservatory of Music where it was well received by the audience and critics alike. *A Brand-New Summer* was awarded the American Prize for Composition (Orchestral Division). In 2015, Tyler White received a commission from the Hastings (Nebraska) Symphony Orchestra for the symphony's 90th anniversary. The commission was a 16 minute, one-movement orchestral work titled *Flyover Country*. Its structure reflects the layout of the traditional symphony. The piece was designed to go along with photographs of Nebraska by award winning photographer Jorn Olsen.

In 2021, as an educator White has also contributed to youth education programs within his region. His string orchestral work *Escola de Samba* has been widely performed by many youth orchestras throughout the Midwest. As an

outstanding composer, musicologist, and educator, he enriches those around him with his personality, charm, rich experience, academic rigor, and passion for music. Over the years, he has trained numerous students from the undergraduate to the doctoral level from all over the world at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Inspiration for the Composition

In 2001 Jane Rohman suggested *The Son of The Gambler's Man* by Mari Sandoz as the subject for an opera and even lent White a copy of the book. He read it and immediately didn't see how in the world one could turn it into an opera. Dr. White let the matter lie until about 2016. And so about 15 years later, when between projects and searching around for something ambitious to do, he went back to the novel, read it again, and thought better of it. He still did not see how to make such a full sprawling chronicle into a serviceable plot, so he turned to his wife, Dr. Laura White. She saw the work's awesome possibilities. With her help on crafting a libretto, Dr. Tyler White was able to go back to Jane Rohman about the commission and putting the opera together. *The Gambler's Son* enjoyed its full premiere in November, 2019, on the campus of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (see Appendix E for full program), after having a smaller scaled premiere with reduced orchestration in Cozad, Nebraska, in October of the same year. Financial contributions from local Lincoln patrons and community foundations supported the creation of the work.

CHAPTER THREE
LAURA WHITE AND EVOLUTION OF THE LIBRETTO

Biography

Laura Mooneyham White was born to Louise Latimer Gillespie, a homemaker, active in opera guilds, choirs, and church, and John Garrigues, a classics professor. She was raised in Georgia and Florida. She received her Bachelors in English from Yale in 1980, and her master's degree (1984) and doctorate (1986) in English from Vanderbilt University. Her specialization was Jane Austen's novels, narrative theory, and the novel form. After receiving her terminal degree Dr. Laura White was appointed assistant professor of English at Trinity University in San Antonio Texas. While there she published her first book, *Romance, Language and Education in Jane Austen's Novels* in 1988. She was granted the title of associate professor in 1992.

In 1994 Laura married Tyler White, and relocated to Lincoln Nebraska, where she became a visiting associate professor of English. She published a series of "Critical Essays on Jane Austen" in 1998, and was granted the title of associate professor of English in 2000. Dr. Laura White was granted full professor in 2010, and published her book, *Jane Austen's Anglicanism* in 2011. At Nebraska she taught classes on poetry and read and Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* many times, both of which she cited as inspiration for the libretto of *The Gambler's Son*.¹⁰

¹⁰ White, Laura. Interview by author, Lincoln, June 1, 2021, transcript, Appendix B.

Evolution of the Libretto

When Tyler White was approached by Jane Rohman to write an opera based upon Mari Sandoz's novel, Laura White was initially against the idea of another opera, having seen the stress he had experienced writing both libretto and music for his first opera, *O Pioneers!*. They came to the agreement that the project made the most sense if she wrote the libretto and he wrote the music. Where Tyler White had cared very deeply and personally about the source material for his first libretto, Laura White was not terribly familiar with the two source materials for this new work. However, she viewed this as an advantage. She felt she had the freedom to approach her job with fresh eyes and let her trim those sources to create the best drama.

The first source, *The Son of the Gambler Man*, is by Mari Sandoz (1896-1966).¹¹ Sandoz willed herself to become one of Nebraska's greatest writers. She devoted her life to writing about pioneers, ranchers, Native Americans, and all the other characters who settled the plains. Raised in Nebraska, she was only given an eighth-grade education, was discouraged from reading (especially fiction) by her father Jules, and worked many low paying jobs.¹² Despite her lack of a high school diploma, she managed to enroll at the Lincoln Business College in 1920 at age 24 thanks to a sympathetic dean. Sandoz attended the business college for the next eighteen months, and she took courses in composition, shorthand, and spelling.

¹¹ Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopedia. "Mari Sandoz." Encyclopedia Britannica, June 16, 2021. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mari-Sandoz>.

¹²Commire, Anne, and Deborah Klezmer. *Women in World History : a Biographical Encyclopedia*. Waterford, CT: Yorkin Publications, 1999.

Oddly enough it was when her ailing father made his final request to have her write his life story that she began to attempt to get published in earnest. It took years, and she submitted and was rejected from publication many times until her first success with her novel *Old Jules*.¹³ Her Great Plains series stands as her central achievement because of its singular interpretation of the High Plains region. It is a series of six books at the center of her writing that are detailed researched histories and dramatic episodes that chronicle the growth of the Great Plains region of the United States.

The novel, *The Son of the Gambler Man* paints a vivid picture of the founding of the town of Cozad, Nebraska, and contains within it many interesting characters and intriguing events. The impetus for the work came when Sandoz was approached by the lone surviving nephew of John J. Cozad, Dr. Robert Gatewood. He asked her to write the story. The Sandoz book is filled with the struggles of the pioneer spirit, horse thieves, violent cowboys, the hint of marauding Indians, betrayal, harsh weather, insect plagues, economic disaster, and familial devotion. The action is based on real historical events and Sandoz filled in some of the relationships. However, it was not one of Sandoz's best received works and suffers from the trap of proceeding from incident to incident rather than developing a narrative arc. The frequent shifts of perspective from that of the son, Robert, to that of the father, Cozad disrupt the narrative. Laura White derived the vast majority of plot points from Sandoz's novel. (See Appendix D for specific sourcing)

¹³ Case, Emily. "Historical marker commemorates Sandoz's work". *Journal Star* (Lincoln, Nebraska), Updated Sep 27, 2018.

The second major source of the libretto is Robert Henri's *The Art Spirit*.

Robert Henri (1865-1929) was the son of John J. Cozad, the "son of the gamblin' man," an American painter, and teacher. Born Robert Henry Cozad, he changed his last name to Henri (pronounced: HEN-rye) after fleeing the town of Cozad. The book is a collection of notes, articles, fragments of letters and talks to students, bearing on the concept and technique of picture making, the study of art generally, and on art appreciation. The book was compiled by Henri's pupil Margery Ryerson, and points to his impact on a generation of American painters that followed him. Continuing to be an inspiration to artists, the book, originally published in 1923, has been rereleased in revised editions in 1960, 1984, 2007, and 2019. Many of the lines sung by Henri in the opera come directly from this source (see Appendix D).

Laura White used the source materials in five main ways: word for word adaptation, slightly modified adaptation, adaptation constructed from narrative, adaptation that is a conflation of scenes, and wholly original contributions. Word for word adaptations such as, "so you pull a gun on me on my own premises, you broken-down would-be jackleg!" (*Son of the Gamblin' Man* p. 106) that come directly from the Sandoz set the tone and dialect of the piece. Many of the comprimario characters are directly adapted from the Sandoz novel, such as Man 1 in Act 1, scene 2 and the Dealer in Act 2, scene 3. Lines from *The Art Spirit* appear throughout *The Gambler's Son* as well. For example, in Act 1, scene 4 the line Henri sings, "what were the signs there, in that landscape?" is a direct quotation (*The Art Spirit* p.15).

White uses slightly modified adaptations throughout the libretto. Much of what Henri sings is from *The Art Spirit* but has been adapted slightly rather than quoted directly. Henri's original, "Somehow, things, places overlapped. Memories carried into each other" (*The Art Spirit* p. 15) becomes "We do not remember, all things overlapped, memories into memories." White makes modest changes to Sandoz's text as well. Cozad's "I won't have any of my colony needy, starving" (*Son of the Gambler's Man* p. 80) becomes, "I will not have my people starving." The changes were made with the intent of "stitching them [the sources] together like a found poem."¹⁴

The librettist constructed key points in the opera out of narrative sections in the novel, including stage directions for the orchestral grasshopper plague and cattle stampede. Some dialogue is also constructed from narrative, for example "John Cozad nodded as the step was put down for passengers, and, reaching a hand around for their calloused clasps, promised to do what he could as soon as he got his colony in" (*Son of the Gambler's Man* p. 30) becomes "Well, gentlemen, I will do what I can, but we must wait 'til our colony is fully in" in the opera.

White occasionally adapts the source material through conflation. The King O'Dell scene (Act 2, scene 1) is sourced from chapters seven and nine in the Sandoz. These two chapters cover events separated by considerable passage of time. White, however, combines them into one single event for the sake of what she calls "thrif." Another example is the Gould petition announcement, in which material from

¹⁴White, Laura. Interview by author, Lincoln, June 1, 2021, transcript, Appendix B.

several chapters of the Sandoz is condensed into a single line: "The petition I warned you about, it passed."

Dr. Laura White has also made a couple of significant original contributions. The character of Henri's secretary is White's original creation, and Theresa's aria (Act 2, scene 2) is White's own invention entirely. White intended the secretary to serve as, "a comic device" that "holds it [the opera] together."¹⁵ On her creation of Theresa's aria she said, "It's just a poem I wrote. It's the first thing I wrote. I wrote it before I did anything else. I felt my way into her and felt sorry for her. I knew it should be a ballad or a ballad form at any rate. Which it mostly does with all that repetition. . . there's no anguish in the words, it's all understated."¹⁶ With the exception of Theresa's aria, the rest of White's original contributions exist to link together the events of the drama from the sources.

It is of note that the librettist had issues with some of the source material, and found the Sandoz to be, "not that good a book because it's too stuffed. Her impulse to be true to the facts which she knew overrode her sense of dramatic development. So, she was willing to have chapter after chapter where it's one thing after another."¹⁷ Her critique of the Sandoz is echoed in Marian Barnes' *An*

Evaluation of the Novels of Mari Sandoz in which Barnes writes,

"*Son of the Gambler Man* becomes a series of incidents too. A community is built but without any specific progression in development. The reader is not even sure this is John Cozad 's story since he is the 'gambler' man.' The incidents of prairie life shift emphasis from John Cozad to his son Robert and back again. There are horseback rides, plum picking, organization of a

¹⁵ White, Laura. Interview by author, Lincoln, June 1, 2021, transcript, Appendix B.

¹⁶ White, Laura. Interview by author, Lincoln, June 1, 2021, transcript, Appendix B.

¹⁷ White, Laura. Interview by author, Lincoln, June 1, 2021, transcript, Appendix B.

Dramatic Club, saloon fights, and common settler talk, but they have no clear-cut relationship to one another.”¹⁸

This may explain some of the text changes and additions from the sources to the libretto.

The method by which the librettist approached the work was to look for major plot points that would make good dramatic impact and add the most to the overall arc that leads to the shooting. Dr. Laura White stated,

“I didn’t even read the whole book by the time I had finished the libretto because I had found what I needed. All I needed were some good scenes, like the wheelbarrow scene, or taking the axe to the faro table. Those are nice dramatic scenes and they also fit in perfectly with the developing arc of Cozad’s... the doomedness of it all in spite of his great expectations. So all I needed was a few touchtone scenes like that and then of course I cut to the disaster of the petition. I just don’t need all the other stuff. I did want to leave in the cattle stampede and also the grasshopper plague because that would give Ty something interesting to do. And then the thing that really I did, and was really Ty’s and my idea together was to make a big thing of the frame story which is very lightly mentioned in the Sandoz.”¹⁹

A significant structural component of the libretto is the framing device, through which Sandoz's story is realized through a series of memory flashbacks to the 1870s and 1880s, framed by the present 1903. The use of the frame story may have been Tyler White’s idea initially, however, in Laura White’s words,

“The frame story was sort of Ty’s idea that we agreed on very early on. He also saw that it would be a way to introduce *The Art Spirit* stuff and make Henri a full-blown portion of the work because that whole element isn’t really present in the Sandoz. It’s because he had read *The Art Spirit* and had been so moved by it. And that was fine by me. It added richness and depth to a work where just the plot alone would not quite be good enough because it ends too incompletely. This had more resonance.”²⁰

¹⁸ Barnes, Marian. "An Evaluation of the Novels of Mari Sandoz" South Dakota State University, 1968. p31.

¹⁹White, Laura. Interview by author, Lincoln, June 1, 2021, transcript, Appendix B.

²⁰White, Laura. Interview by author, Lincoln, June 1, 2021, transcript, Appendix B.

Key to this is White's invention of the character of the Secretary who sets the story in motion by bringing the characters on stage, effectively introducing them, and explaining why they are there. She also brings the work to a close by revealing Henri's portrait to the audience. The Secretary both bookends and grounds the work serving as a frame herself. Through Laura White's adept use of the framing device, the two sources merged into one coherent opera. We also get a balance of the action of the Sandoz with the reflective nature of the Henri that leads to good dramatic pacing.

It is clear that Tyler White had a deep connection to the text of *The Art Spirit* and was inspired by many passages. When Laura White was brought on to the project she was given a series of quotes from *The Art Spirit* that Tyler White wanted her to help him set. Laura helped him by setting up scenes that allowed for those quotes, but also suggested cuts to extended musical treatments of particular texts. She stated,

Audiences don't have the patience. They're really into the story hopefully, and if it feels delayed, they're not willing to listen to extended musical treatments of things. I think all in all I helped him get rid of 40 minutes or so which is good!²¹

She served to help keep the work dramatically compact and driven.

Once the design for the work was figured out Laura White wrote the libretto very quickly. While this was her first libretto, her background researching and teaching narrative, narrative theory, novels, and drama facilitated the construction

²¹White, Laura. Interview by author, Lincoln, June 1, 2021, transcript, Appendix B.

of the libretto. She had seen a lot of operas and felt she understood how most of their stories are constructed. She wrote through Act 1, scene 7 in the first month, stepped back from the project for three months, and then finished the rest of the libretto when she came back the month after.

When it comes to her major invention for the piece, Theresa's aria, Laura White stated how she found her way into the character,

"Women don't like being betrayed over and over again. I think it was helpful to know that they were from Virginia, that they were southern. That her family was southern... I'm from Florida and Georgia. Where the codes of honor that Cozad supposedly holds to ('You sir are a gentleman' he says to the rattlesnake and so on) presumably really matters to him, but he is behaving badly to his wife."²²

However, there is still conflict within Theresa which Laura White explains,

"They married for life, it's just he keeps disappointing her. And she loves him. He's an extraordinary man. And in many ways he, in some ways, is a good man, and in some ways not. Every time she says it we know she knows it's not fully true."²³

There is an additional major addition by Laura White in the libretto in which Henri and Lee forgive one another in the final scene of the opera. This forgiveness is not in the Sandoz explicitly. The librettist says about the forgiveness, "it was invented, but you know it stands to reason, doesn't it? They were on good enough terms [for Cozad] to want his son to do his portrait. That just implies that they were in rough comedy at any rate." There is one other strong motivation for the addition by the librettist, "well it does make for good theater."²⁴

²²White, Laura. Interview by author, Lincoln, June 1, 2021, transcript, Appendix B.

²³White, Laura. Interview by author, Lincoln, June 1, 2021, transcript, Appendix B.

²⁴White, Laura. Interview by author, Lincoln, June 1, 2021, transcript, Appendix B.

According to the librettist the story contains three of the major conflicts in literature: man against nature, man against society, and man against himself. These are all seen through the character of Cozad. In her words, “Nature you get with the stampede, you get with the snake, the grasshoppers, the drought. Particularly in the first half of the opera.”²⁵ The town turning on Cozad is a clear example of the conflict of man against society. The librettist agrees saying, “he does everything he can to get people through. But they don’t appreciate it. They’re pissed because they have no crops.” Lastly Cozad struggles with the gambling man he is against the upstanding town leader he wants to become. While he does not fully succeed in this quest the librettist states, “but he’s not broken which is nice. Which is also redemptive.”²⁶

The libretto manages to tie together the two source materials through use of framing and by telling the story in an economical way that does justice to all the events. Henri and Lee (the outer frame) are on a journey to understand one another through the numerous events Sandoz has laid out, thus providing the events in Sandoz the through-line they need to keep them connected and give them a dramatic arc. White’s libretto offers a very tight version of the Sandoz that still makes the final climax of the shooting seem both exciting and inevitable. Lastly the opera provides representation of Theresa and a humanization of Cozad not found in the Sandoz.

²⁵White, Laura. Interview by author, Lincoln, June 1, 2021, transcript, Appendix B.

²⁶White, Laura. Interview by author, Lincoln, June 1, 2021, transcript, Appendix B.

CHAPTER FOUR
THE GAMBLER'S SON IN THE CONTEXT OF MODERN AMERICAN OPERA

This chapter places Tyler White's opera, *The Gambler's Son*, into the context of modern American opera (2014-2019) readily available for public consumption (e.g. commercially or otherwise available scores and/or recordings). For the purpose of this discussion, I watched or listened to 63 operas that premiered within the five-year time window. A list of those operas, along with their premiere dates, can be found in Appendix A. In many regards *The Gambler's Son* falls in line with the types of works being produced, but it varies in ways that make it distinct.

Regarding the subject matter of modern opera at the time of *The Gambler's Son*, the most prevalent observable trend was the tendency to produce dramas. Only four out of the 63 operas were comedies: *Alice's Adventures Under Ground* by Gerald Barry, *Dinner at Eight* by William Bolcom, *Great Scott* by Jake Heggie, and *Scalia/Ginsburg* by Derrick Wang. However, the comedies each contained normative elements that make them very much like other operas in the period. None were such outliers that they would qualify as avant-garde. We seem to be in an era of modern opera where comedy is such an exception rather than the rule that to produce a comedy is a somewhat eccentric proposition.

Fewer than one in three of the operas examined were original stories, while most plots were based off pre-existing stories or based their action off of real-world events or people. It is common for operas now to take well-known stories, people, or events and adapt them to the opera stage. There are the occasional works that stand

out as exceptions to this like *prism* by Ellen Reid, which is based on the experiences of the composer and the librettist. Another exception would be *Angel's Bone* by Du Yun, which has a one-of-a-kind libretto that is an allegory for human trafficking, with a story original to this opera. Most works are adapted from known stories, like *Marnie* by Nico Muhly, which is based on the novel of the same name (previously adapted into a well-known film directed by Hitchcock).

One common trend in subject matter is opera written about well-known individuals, real or fictional. Examples of this include the comedies *Alice's Adventures Underground* (concerning Lewis Carroll's fictional Alice) and *Scalia/Ginsburg* (concerning the relationship between the two Supreme Court judges). Dramas like *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs* by Mason Bates is a biographical-like account of the life of Steve Jobs. By contrast *JFK* by David T. Little tells of just one day in the life of the famous former president. *Charlie Parker's Yardbird* by Daniel Schnyder covers a lot of the jazz musician's life, but also dives into a great deal more culturally than the other examples. Producers seem to be betting that audiences want something familiar to hold onto while they explore something new, and one formula new opera tends to employ is the use of familiar known individuals for subject matter.

Another recent trend in subject matter has been political opera. Many operas regarding civil rights have come out during this period. *Fellow Travelers* by Gregory Spears, based on the novel of the same name, explores homosexuality in the McCarthy era. *Stonewall* by Iain Bell is about the Stonewall riots that sparked the

LGBTQ movement. *An American Soldier* by Huang Ruo, which concerns racial harassment in the US Army that led to a suicide, came out around the time the popular hashtag #stopasianhate became a necessary trend. *Better Gods* by Luna Pearl Woolf directly addresses American imperialism as its main antagonist. *Blind Injustice* by Davenport Richards, four stories of miscarriages of justice and poor witness testimony, directly takes on the criminal justice system. While all art may be seen as political if viewed through the right lens, these works and half of all works produced in this period are overtly taking to task a cultural, societal, or explicitly political force.

A notable trending subcategory of politically themed operas written between 2014-2019 is works concerning race and racial inequality. *A Gathering of Sons* by Dwayne Fulton addresses justice, retribution, and racial inequality with a mix of magical realism.²⁷ *Blue* by Jeanine Tesori is the tragic story of an African American family in which a son, who rejects his father's police work, is shot at a protest by a different officer. *Girls of the Golden West* by John Adams is about racism during the founding of California. *The Central Park Five* by Anthony Davis is based on the Central Park jogger case. Themes of social justice and injustice in the justice system pervade many of these works as well, but not always. Even *The Summer King* by Daniel Sonenberg, which is about the life of baseball player Josh Gibson, is about the conflict and oppression of a minority.

²⁷A realistic view of the modern world while also adding magical elements, often dealing with the blurring of the lines between fantasy and reality.

This is not to suggest that all operas written between 2015-2019 are politically driven. Works like *The Shining* (Moravec), based on the novel of the same name, *The Wake World* (Hertzberg), about a journey to adulthood, or *Jane Eyre*, (Joubert) based on the gothic romance, present examples of modern operas that are not overly political.

The Gambler's Son fits into some of these categories but not particularly well. It is indeed a drama composed in a period where almost all works being produced are dramas. But, while like many new operas, the story is based on real events, those events of *The Gambler's Son* are not particularly well-known. Part of the reason to remake a Hitchcock classic like *Marnie* (Nico Muhly) or tell Charlie Parker's story is because they are well-trod. This is not true of *The Gambler's Son*. Nor does *The Gambler's Son* weigh heavy in political commentary like many of its contemporary works. *The Gambler's Son* explores a generational divide, a father and son relationship, somewhat akin to *Taking Up Serpents* (Kamala Sankaram), about the generational divide told through the stories of Pentecostal snake handlers. While this may relate to the generational divide between baby boomers and millennials and could be viewed as part of the "ok boomer" political divide, *The Gambler's Son* works more like *Riders of the Purple Sage* (Bohmler and Kohn) where political issues of women's independence, abuse of power, and guns are issues raised, but not as the main conflict.

As for musical qualities at the time of *The Gambler's Son*, minimalism remains common throughout American opera with approximately a dozen of the works

being composed in a minimalist style, and the majority of the works include sections described by reviewers as minimalist. However, minimalism has become so commonplace in film and television scores to the point of becoming a trope. For some works like *Crossing*, use of minimalism is unfortunately reviewed as “cliché that has by now sifted down to TV shows.”²⁸ Also influenced by film scoring is *Riders of the Purple Sage* (Craig Bohmler), a pulp fiction western with an extremely tuneful John Williams-esque movie music sound. According to reviewer Kerry Lengel of *The Republic* wrote, “Bohmler taps into the musical tropes of Hollywood Westerns.”²⁹ A similar number of the works were primarily post-tonal. Of the very few comedies produced they nearly all share in common a tuneful approach, have less dissonance, and favor tonal harmonies. Also, nearly a third of the works listed are chamber operas, which, based on this sample, have become very popular to produce.

There is a trend toward a fusion or hybrid style of work that includes either electronic elements, avant-garde aspects, or crossover aspects found in over a third of the 63 works. Works like *Dog Days*, *A Woman in Morocco*, *Angel's Bone*, *Backwards from Winter*, *It's a Wonderful Life*, *Family Secrets*, *P r i s m*, *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs*, *The Exterminating Angel*, and *The Hubble Cantata* all require overdubbing or electronic effects. Dialogue occurs in multiple works such as *Anatomy Theatre*,

²⁸ Schwartz, Lloyd. “Matthew Aucoin's 'Crossing' Fails To Reach Its Potential, But Gets An A For Effort.” *WBUR* (Boston, Massachusetts), June 2, 2015, accessed 7/18/21. <https://www.wbur.org/artery/2015/06/02/aucoin-crossing-schwartz-review>.

²⁹Lengel, Kerry. “Review: Arizona Opera Goes to Hollywood in Action-Packed 'Riders of the Purple Sage'.” *The Arizona Republic* (Phoenix, Arizona), February 28, 2017, accessed 7/18/21. <https://www.azcentral.com/story/entertainment/arts/2017/02/27/riders-purple-sage-arizona-opera-review/98482138/>.

Angel's Bone, Better Gods, Blind Injustice, Sane and Sound, and The Book Collector. It has also become frequent practice to introduce instruments not commonly found in traditional orchestrations: *Ouroboros Trilogy* uses a large number of Eastern traditional instruments such as Chinese wooden flute and erhu, as well as electric guitar; *An American Soldier* has prominent use of the didgeridoo; *Better Gods* uses nose flute, Kala'au (percussive sticks), and Ili'ili. Unusual use of traditional instruments also occurs, as in the extended string techniques found in *Makan's Persona*.

The Gambler's Son is post-tonal, but audiences are given ease of access to the music by Dr. Tyler White's use of recurring comprehensible themes amidst an often-dissonant score. Much of the music was written with twelve-tone rows as structure, however, the audience is pulled along by strong compelling melodies created out of the tone rows. The orchestration is traditional by modern standards, but White does use extended techniques as in his evocation of a grasshopper plague. Throughout the opera, White's orchestration gets excellent colors and drama. The score contains no electronic music or significant use of dialogue. *The Gambler's Son* manages to remain a touch exotic through its choice of subject matter, its tonal landscape, and remains broadly accessible to most audiences.

CHAPTER FIVE
SYNOPSIS OF AND MUSICAL THEMES PRESENT IN EACH SCENE
(For a list of major musical themes see Appendix F)

The opera is in two acts with scenes within each act alternating between the 1903 present and the 1870s past (for a full synopsis and program notes see the original program found in Appendix E). The 1903 setting concerns Robert Henri (formerly Robert Cozad) charged with painting a portrait of his father, Richard Lee (formerly John J. Cozad); the 1870s past is the shared memory of father and son. Henri must excavate these memories and come to terms with them in order to successfully capture the essence of his father in the portrait he is trying to paint.

Throughout Tyler White's score his use of thematic material is a hallmark of *The Gambler's Son*. While the music contains many post-tonal elements, the work is made accessible to audiences through ear-catching melodies that anchor the work. Furthermore, the use and development of these themes brings the characters to life on stage. Themes related to the town and the family get reharmonized based on the drama in which they exist. Cozad's many themes start clearly and boldly, and develop, like the character, into many darker colors. Although Tyler White uses serial techniques, this document limits the scope of the discussion only to those musical themes and salient musical features that I believe can be accessed by a general opera going audience.

Organized scene-by-scene, this chapter contains a synopsis of each scene, a breakdown of required singers, and a presentation of the important musical themes

that occur within the scene. When applicable, direct quotations from the work's creators accompany the chapter.

Prelude

The prelude opens with the “Unrest” theme which will occur again at the climax of the drama in the conflict between the opera's central character, John J. Cozad, and his nemesis, Alf Pearson. The composer sets the tone for the work anchoring this theme in the audience's mind right from the very start. The theme is melodically angular, based around the interval of a tritone, and rhythmically syncopated. This opening promises an action-packed story full of adventure (angularity), conflict (dissonance), and a fast pace (rhythmic drive).

Music Example 1.0.1 “Unrest Theme”

The image displays a musical score for the "Unrest Theme" prelude. The score is written for piano and is divided into four systems, each with a treble and bass clef staff. The tempo is marked "Precipitato" with a quarter note equal to 132 beats per minute. The music begins with a forte (*ff*) dynamic. The main melodic line, highlighted by a red box, is characterized by sharp, angular intervals and a syncopated rhythm. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major/D minor), and the time signature is 4/4. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

Act 1, scene 1

New York, 1903. Robert Henri's studio. Richard Lee (once John J. Cozad) is shown into the studio by the Secretary only to find that Robert Henri, his son the noted artist, has yet to arrive. Lee is to have his portrait painted. While waiting, he regrets how distant he feels from his son and muses on the differences between his rough and glorious history and the modern world.

Vocal Forces: Lee (baritone), Secretary (soprano)

This scene opens with the "Lee" theme. This theme features the interval of a major seventh, which makes it sound unresolved and in need of exploration (This theme is actually the start of a tone row).

Music Example 1.1.1 "Lee Theme"

Henri needs to understand his father, Lee, in order to paint a true portrait of the man. Appropriately, the "Lee" theme suggests mystery, tension, and a yearning to resolve. As the mystery of Lee gets explored, his theme (a tone row) is recalled and manipulated time and again, and eventually, like Lee's portrait, completed. The resolution to the octave will come only at the end of the opera when Henri's understanding of his father is complete. For the composer, "the little challenge was

to make it expand to an octave without sounding too simple, too simplistic in its tension, and resolution.”³⁰

A second key theme in Act 1, scene 1 that recurs throughout the opera aligns with the Secretary's text, “To paint a man is to know him”, a paraphrased quote from Henri’s book *The Art Spirit*. With this line we get at the main conflict of the work. The theme has a memorable contour. It is first presented boldly with a *lento* marking for emphasis.

Music Example 1.1.2 “To paint a man is to know him Theme”

The image shows a musical score for a vocal line. The tempo marking is "Poco più lento" with a metronome marking of ♩ = c. 52. The score is in treble clef and 2/4 time. The lyrics are: "You know what he al-ways says: 'to paint a man _____ is to know him!'". A red box highlights the musical phrase corresponding to the lyrics "to paint a man _____ is to know him!". The melody in this phrase is a simple, memorable contour consisting of a half note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note B4, a quarter note A4, and a half note G4.

Another significant musical feature found in Act 1, scene 1 is the employment of a compound meter in the orchestra as Lee reflects on his past. This is intended to create “rocking nostalgia that carries us away.”³¹

³⁰White, Tyler. Interview by author, Lincoln, February 26, 2021, transcript, Appendix C.

³¹ White, Tyler. Interview by author, Lincoln, March 26, 2021, transcript, Appendix C.

Music Example 1.1.3 "Rocking Nostalgia"

Molto moderato ♩ = 60

91

This world of Robert's: it's not mine.

Molto moderato ♩ = 60

91

pp legato

95 *mf*

My world ____ was a world of ho - nor, ____ My world ____ was a world of

The image displays two systems of musical notation. The first system (measures 91-94) features a vocal line in bass clef and a piano accompaniment in grand staff. The tempo is 'Molto moderato' at 60 beats per minute. The lyrics are 'This world of Robert's: it's not mine.' A red box highlights the piano accompaniment from measure 92 to 94. The second system (measures 95-98) continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are 'My world ____ was a world of ho - nor, ____ My world ____ was a world of'. A red box highlights the piano accompaniment from measure 95 to 98. The piano part in both systems consists of a steady eighth-note melody in the right hand and a harmonic accompaniment in the left hand. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 12/8.

Act 1, scene 2

Nebraska, 1873. The Hundredth Meridian, empty prairie except for the marker. Entering on the heels of a cattle stampede, John J. Cozad arrives at the hundredth meridian with plans for a New Washington on the Plains, free of gambling and strife. He reflects on his past, confronts his present, and sets off for the land office with two men on a handcar.

Vocal Forces: Cozad (baritone), Man 1 (tenor), Man 2 (tenor/baritone)

The top of scene Act 1, scene 2 begins with some bird calls in the piccolo and flute, along with a Copland-esque use of strings extremely spaced out to evoke a sense of the vastness of the plains--the tone and breadth of the landscape.

Music Example 1.2.1 “Bird Calls”

Musical score for Piccolo and Flute 1, Example 1.2.1 "Bird Calls". The score is in 4/4 time, marked *Molto moderato* with a tempo of $\text{♩} = 60$. The Piccolo part features a melodic line with triplets and a quintuplet, marked *mp*. The Flute 1 part features a similar melodic line with triplets, also marked *mp*. A red box highlights the first two measures of the Piccolo part.

Music Example 1.2.2 “Vastness of the Plains”

Musical score for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello, Example 1.2.2 "Vastness of the Plains". The score is in 4/4 time. The Violin I part is marked *ppp* and *pp cantabile*. The Violin II part is marked *ppp* and *pp cantabile*. The Viola part is marked *ppp* and *pp cantabile*. The Cello part is marked *ppp* and *pp cantabile*. A red box highlights the first two measures of the Violin I part.

A starkly contrasting cattle stampede is characterized by timpani, additional percussion, and wild activity in the low woodwinds. White uses these conflicting soundscapes to musically paint nature's unpredictable world into which Cozad is stepping.

Cozad's first vocal entrance, "Out of a tight spot again" is set to one of his thematic calling cards. The snap of the syncopated rhythms, the sudden uptick in tempo, and the higher tessitura all serve to give Cozad a more youthful character than Lee (his older self).

Music Example 1.2.3 "Out of a tight spot again Theme"

The image displays a musical score for the theme "Out of a tight spot again". It consists of three systems of music. The first system (measures 45-46) features Cozad's vocal line in the bass clef, starting with a forte dynamic and a tempo marking of *Subito più mosso* (♩ = c. 88). The lyrics "Out of a tight spot a -" are written below the notes. The piano accompaniment is in the grand staff (treble and bass clefs), marked *8va* and includes a triplet of eighth notes. The second system (measures 47-48) continues the vocal line with lyrics "gain! But then I've al-ways been luck-y! That's me! John J. Co-zad,". The piano accompaniment continues with chords and a triplet. The third system (measures 49-50) shows the final part of the vocal line and piano accompaniment. Red boxes highlight the first vocal phrase in the first system and the start of the second system. A yellow highlight is under the word "gain!" in the second system.

The “Lucky Cozad” theme will pervade the entire opera that follows. It is a catchy tune that audiences remember,³² and it suits Cozad perfectly. It is rhythmically sharp, melodically unpredictable, and harmonically bold. In the words of the composer,

“It’s the Parallelism of the harmony, the parallel fifths, the cross relations in it, that make it sound sort of majestic and heroic; however, not straightforward, and slightly crooked.”³³

He is a “gamblin’ man” after all. This aria in which Cozad introduces himself, his dreams, and vision for the future in six strophes, each concluding with a pseudo-refrain of the “Lucky Cozad” theme, is set slightly differently with each iteration.

³²The director, William Shomos, shared the following anecdote: “I invited Raymond Central High School (where my daughter Madeline Shomos was teaching English) to the final dress rehearsal for *The Gambler’s Son*. The 200 or so students first had the opportunity to see the actual Henri painting of his father--the subject of the opera--housed at UNL’s Sheldon Gallery of Art. They then attended the dress rehearsal; it is safe to say that for almost all, if not all, of those students, it was their first live opera. Madeline reported to me that even a few months after the event, students could still be heard, on occasion, busting out the “Lucky Cozad” text and tune.”

³³ Appendix C Interviews with Tyler White, February 26, 2021.

Music Example 1.2.4 "Lucky Cozad Theme"

The image shows a musical score for the "Lucky Cozad Theme". It consists of two systems of music. The top system is for the vocal part, labeled "Cozad" on the left. It features a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody begins with a measure marked "51". The lyrics "Lucky Cozad, lucky John J!" are written below the notes, with "Lucky Cozad," and "lucky John J!" highlighted in yellow. The bottom system is for the piano accompaniment, also starting at measure 51. It features a grand staff with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff, with a key signature of one sharp. The piano part provides a harmonic and rhythmic foundation for the vocal line.

Within the aria, another key theme, the "Town" theme, found throughout the opera appears to the text "Here I will make a shining new city." The theme has a sequential nature to it much like houses in a row. The sequence makes it feel structured and ordered like the town Cozad envisions.

Music Example 1.2.5 “Town Theme”

Cozad

96

John J! Here I will make a

Cozad

99

shin-ing new ci - ty, here I will make a new Wash-ing - ton!

Near the end of the aria, Cozad is confronted by a rattlesnake. Here we find the “Danger” theme in the orchestra. This theme will show up as other threats, both physical and psychological, and will sneak up on Cozad throughout the opera. The theme has an erratic rhythm and a leaping and winding melodic contour.

Music Example 1.2.6 "Danger Theme"

The image displays a musical score for a scene. It consists of two systems of music. The first system, starting at measure 167, features a vocal line for Cozad and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line has two instances of the word "You!". The piano accompaniment is in 3/4 time and includes a red box highlighting a melodic phrase in the bass clef. The second system, starting at measure 171, continues the piano accompaniment, which changes to 4/4 time. It features a red box highlighting a triplet in the bass clef and another triplet in the treble clef.

The aria ends with a triumphant affirmation of Cozad knowing who he is and his sense of purpose with a final iteration of the "Lucky Cozad" theme. He is immediately comedically undercut by two men on a handcart who cannot decide if he's a doctor or a preacher, two professions that couldn't be further off from who he is and what he does. The scene ends with a looping "Out of a tight spot again" set cheerfully in the woodwinds indicating a sense of hope and levity.

Act 1, scene 3

The Hundredth Meridian, a year or so later. With the beginnings of what will be the town of Cozad. Cozad fends off current settler complaints to greet a new contingent of Cozad settlers, including his own wife, Theresa, his two sons, Johnny and Robert, and his in-laws. Theresa is warned off the project by the station-master, Sanderson, and Cozad himself rejects the approaches of some cowboy gamblers.

Vocal Forces: Settler 1 (tenor), Settler 2 (tenor), Settler 3 (baritone), Cozad (baritone), Traber (tenor), Johnny (tenor), Robert (mezzo-soprano), New Settler 1 (tenor), New Settler 2 (tenor/baritone), Sanderson (baritone), Theresa (soprano), Cowboy 1 (tenor), Cowboy 2 (tenor)

With Cozad's town established, the scene opens with the "Town" theme now reharmonized to fit the tone of some disgruntled settlers, and suggesting that all has not turned out as ideally as Cozad had envisioned. When we first heard the theme, it was in C major. Here it appears in A-flat which lets us know the town is not quite the same as it was. The addition of an occasional borrowed minor chord suggests the town is less optimistic than Cozad might have hoped. White mentions that his scoring it for woodwinds was intended to give it a purified, rural Copland-like color.³⁴

Cozad's entrance is marked with his calling card "Lucky Cozad" theme. Here it still sounds quite heroic as if he may yet present a solution to the settler's problems. The orchestra imitates the sounds of the approaching train on which Cozad's family arrives. As they deboard, we are introduced to the "Family" theme. Marked *dolce* and with an even rhythmic quality full of happy major thirds, a placid quality is established, suggesting the family is joyfully reunited.

³⁴ White, Tyler. Interview by author, Lincoln, March 12, 2021, transcript, Appendix C.

Music Example 1.3.1 “Family Theme”

Ancora meno mosso
♩ = c 44

72

mp dolce

The image shows a musical score for piano. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). The tempo is 'Ancora meno mosso' with a quarter note equal to 44 beats. The score starts at measure 72. A red box highlights a section of the music from measure 72 to measure 80. The music consists of chords and melodic lines in both hands, with some notes beamed together.

As Cozad pivots to his public duty, we get the “Public Persona” theme with its dotted orchestration, full of pomp and grandeur, as Cozad makes his proclamation to the new arrivals. White described this music as very strong “19th century popular harmonic language with a flavor of ‘Hail to the Chief.’”³⁵

Music Example 1.3.2 “Public Persona Theme”

The image shows a musical score for piano. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The key signature has two flats (Bb and Eb). The score starts at measure 107. A red box highlights a section of the music from measure 107 to measure 113. The music consists of chords and melodic lines in both hands, with some notes beamed together. The dynamic marking *f* is present.

As Sanderson, the station manager, pulls aside Cozad's wife, Theresa, to warn of potential insurrection in the community, we are introduced to the “Unrest” theme in the orchestra. As the opera proceeds, this theme will eventually expand into its full iteration, but here it is shortened, nipped in the bud by Theresa's refusal to buy into Sanderson's warning.

³⁵ White, Tyler. Interview by author, Lincoln, April 9, 2021, transcript, Appendix C.

Music Example 1.3.3 "Unrest Theme"

Short Version:

Musical score for piano, measures 157-160. The right hand has a melodic line with a red box highlighting measures 158-160. Dynamics include *f* and *fp*.

SANDERSON

161

son

Say, ma'am, may-be you ought to try to talk Mis-ter

Musical score for voice and piano, measures 161-164. The voice part has lyrics: "Say, ma'am, may-be you ought to try to talk Mis-ter". The piano accompaniment has a red box highlighting the first measure of the piano part in measure 161.

Extended version that appears in Act 2, scene 4:

102 *Allegro con brio* ♩ = 144

Cozad

DAMNED li - ar!

Allegro con brio ♩ = 144

105

110

116

(COZAD manages to half trip him;
as PEARSON goes down, he draws a large knife
and stabs down.)

123

sfz *sfz*

A final musical event bearing mention in this scene is the first appearance of a sleazy swing that comes to represent John J. Cozad's clandestine gambling life of faro and poker, which is in conflict with the kind of city he wants to create. When asked what was meant by “Sleazy Swing” the composer replied:

It's just really kind of loose, not really paying much attention to the notated rhythm. You know, I didn't want to notate it as eights and tell them to swing it jazz style... It's both stylistic, how to play the eight and it's an implied tempo shift.³⁶

Music Example 1.3.4 “Sleazy Swing”

The image displays a musical score for a piece titled "Sleazy Swing". The score is written for piano and is divided into two systems. The first system begins at measure 209 and ends at measure 213. The second system begins at measure 214 and ends at measure 218. The music is written in a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The tempo is marked "Sleazy Swing". The score features a complex, syncopated melody in the right hand, characterized by frequent ties and slurs, and a more rhythmic accompaniment in the left hand. The overall style is described as "loose" and "jazz style" in the accompanying text.

³⁶ White, Tyler. Interview by author, Lincoln, April 9, 2021, transcript, Appendix C

Act 1, scene 4

Henri's studio, 1903. The Secretary announces the return of Robert Henri. Father and Son reunite in the studio. Henri makes the first sketches for the portrait, as the two men rather awkwardly reminisce.

Vocal Forces: Secretary (soprano), Lee (baritone), Henri (tenor)

Act 1, scene 4 opens with a variant of the “Lee” theme. It has been transposed up a major third and gives the effect of an echo of scene one and re-orientates the audience temporally back to 1903, with Lee alone in Henri's studio.

Music Example 1.4.1 “Lee Theme”

Molto moderato ♩ = 60

p *f* *ppp* *p* *f*

But a connection to Lee's 1873 self (John J. Cozad) is made with the appearance of the “Danger” theme indicating Lee’s current apprehension. He is uneasy about how the portrait will go, how reuniting with his son will go, and he wonders if all of this was a mistake. In the words of the composer Lee is

...sort of suspicious of the whole thing. He wants to do right by his son and his wife, but he's not really crazy about the idea. And he's uncomfortable with the mood of introspection. So that's one reason that there was none of the Cozad music initially associated with Lee because that's not where his character is coming from initially.³⁷

³⁷ Appendix C Interviews with Tyler White, April 23, 2021.

Therefore, it is especially interesting that the first theme of Cozad's past world that we hear in Lee's current world is this "Danger" theme.

Music Example 1.4.2 "Danger Theme"

The image displays a musical score for the "Danger Theme". At the top, it is marked "Molto moderato" with a tempo of 60 beats per minute. The score is in 4/4 time and consists of three parts: piano accompaniment, a vocal line for the Soprano (S), and a vocal line for the Tenor (T). The piano part begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic, followed by a forte (*f*) section, and ends with a pianissimo (*ppp*) section. A red box highlights a specific chord in the piano part. The vocal lines include the lyrics "SECRETARY" and "Mis-ter Lee, Mis-ter". A red box highlights a specific phrase in the Tenor line.

When Henri does enter, the "Family" theme is sounded, suggesting that those same positive feelings of being reunited with his family debarking the train in 1873 still resonate for Lee in New York decades later. We hear the same diatonic major thirds and know that they are happy to see one another.

Music Example 1.4.3 “Family Theme”

(HENRI enters. LEE extends his hand.)

S
Hen - ri has just re - turned.

p dolce

The conversation between the two devolves when they realize much of what they share is trauma (such as a devastating grasshopper plague). The conversation gives way to simultaneous inner monologues in which quotes from *The Art Spirit* regarding memory are employed. As the two men express their doubts about the project the orchestra drops out entirely. The a cappella section that follows is an exposed and very striking passage in the opera. According to the composer, “for the ultimate in intensity and directness, sometimes you need just the vocal color.”³⁸

³⁸ White, Tyler. Interview by author, Lincoln, April 9, 2021, transcript, Appendix C.

Music Example 1.4.4 “How much do I really know him?”

123

T 8 This sketch is no good, no good at all! How much do I e-ven

B if The - re - sa is dis-pleased, or I am? How much

123

125

T 8 know this man, my fa - ther? How much do I real - ly know him? *slower again*

B do I e - ven know this man, my son, ny son? How much do I real - ly know him?

125

optional doubling of voices

The scene ends with a clever line with Henri asking Lee to keep his chin up, and a very suspended harmonic ending.

Music Example 1.4.5 “Suspended Ending”

180

Act 1, scene 5

Cozad, now grown substantially, sometime later. Robert brings his mother a picture, but a cloud on the western horizon turns out to be a coming grasshopper plague. The town makes what preparations they can, expecting complete devastation, while Cozad leaves town on “pressing business.” A telegram from Cozad announces relief goods and a make-work project for the citizens. The citizens sing a chorus of unrest.

Vocal Forces: Robert (mezzo-soprano), Theresa (soprano), Traber (tenor), Pearson (baritone), Chorus of Citizens (SATB), Johnny (tenor), Cozad (baritone), Sanderson (baritone)

The top of the scene’s percussive opening transports us back to the rough and tumble bustle of the now grown town of Cozad. Amidst all of that backdrop there is a spritely variant of the “Family” theme in the cellos, bass, and the bassoon, indicating the children, and then again, twice as slow, a more elegant version in the strings and vibraphone indicating their mother.

Music Example 1.5.1a “Family Theme, children”

The image displays two systems of musical notation for piano accompaniment. The first system begins at measure 11, and the second system begins at measure 14. Both systems feature a complex, rhythmic accompaniment in the right hand (treble clef) and a more melodic line in the left hand (bass clef). A red box highlights a specific melodic phrase in the bass clef staff of both systems, which is identified as the 'Family Theme, children'. The first system includes a dynamic marking of *ff* (fortissimo) below the bass clef staff.

Music Example 1.5.1b “Family Theme, mother”

The image displays two musical staves. The upper staff is a piano accompaniment starting at measure 37, marked *f*. A red box highlights a complex chord structure in measures 38-40, which includes a triplet of notes. The lower staff is a vocal line for 'ROBERT' starting at measure 41, marked *colla voce*. The lyrics are 'Look at the knight I drew, Mo - ther!'. A red box highlights a piano accompaniment section in measures 41-43, marked *p*.

A tone cluster that the composer refers to as a “tension chord”³⁹ appears as the cloud of grasshoppers is spotted.

³⁹ White, Tyler. Interview by author, Lincoln, March 12, 2021, transcript, Appendix C.

Music Example 1.5.2 "Tension Chord"

Moderato inquieto ♩ = 100
ROBERT (*looking at the sky off SR*)

49 rat-tle - snakes in old Eng - land, though! What is that cloud down

Moderato inquieto ♩ = 100 *p*

When Cozad enters to investigate, his "Lucky Cozad" theme is set with augmented triads indicating the protagonist's soured luck. A theme on the text "my hat, my cane" makes its first appearance. This theme becomes a musical catchphrase for the character's jaunts out of town.

Music Example 1.5.3 “Lucky Cozad and *My Hat My Cane* Themes”.

The image displays two systems of musical notation. The first system, starting at measure 74, features a grand staff with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The upper staff begins with a *ppp* dynamic marking. The lower staff contains a bass line with a key signature of one flat and a time signature of 8/8. A red box highlights a section of the lower staff in measures 75-76, where the dynamic changes to *mf*. The second system, starting at measure 77, is labeled 'COZAD' and includes a vocal line in the upper staff and a grand staff in the lower staff. The vocal line contains the lyrics 'The - re - sa, my hat, my cane!'. A red box highlights the vocal line in measures 77-78, and another red box highlights the grand staff in measures 77-78.

His exit is followed by the “Family” theme full of augmented triads, indicating fracture in the family happiness.

Music Example 1.5.4 “Family Theme”

83
Cozad
an - y - thing left by the morn - ing.

83
mf *espress.*

mf *espress.*

The sinking feeling of doubt being passed throughout the town is shown in a brief chorus that contains dissonant chromatic descending lines in canon as the composer says, “more dread than panic”⁴⁰ fills the citizens. The plague music that follows does a phenomenal job of painting a picture of the cacophonous swarm of insects that builds and overtakes the town. White’s use of orchestration here really shines, and the result is an interlude that has drama, virtuosity, and grabs an audience. White calls for some extended techniques such as using the rim of the snare drum and key clicks from the woodwinds to produce insect-like noises. Cross rhythms are used to give the appearance of cacophony. Maracas are used to emulate the sound of hind legs against wings.

⁴⁰ White, Tyler. Interview by author, Lincoln, April 16, 2021, transcript, Appendix C.

Music Example 1.5.5 “Grasshopper Plague”

Poco più mosso ♩ = c. 72

The image displays two staves of musical notation. The top staff is for woodwinds, including Oboe (Ob.), Bb Clarinet (Cl.), Bb Clarinet 2 (Cl. 2), and Bassoon (Bsn.). Each instrument part features a series of 'x' marks on the staff, indicating 'random key clicks in rhythm'. The dynamics are marked as *f possibile*. The bottom staff is for percussion, including Xylophone, Vibraslap, Maracas, and Snare Drum. The Snare Drum part is specifically marked 'on the rim' and features a rhythmic pattern of vertical strokes.

The arrival of Cozad’s telegram promising rescue for the community comes with the “Lucky Cozad” theme in solo strings. Theresa’s “Well” cadenza-like moment expresses her approval.⁴¹

⁴¹ The director of the opera in the premiere had an additional interpretation of this cadenza: “In my estimation, it is a moment where Theresa can’t really rationalize a response to the telegram, to the situation, or to her husband. Hence an inarticulate “well” and a cadenza that reflects her intuition about almost everything in her life: high hopes that descend melancholically into unfulfilled disappointment and instability of the future. Why else would the cadenza be shaped this way (a plummeting downward contour) with the harmonic colorings it has? (The prominent unstable, unresolved Eb and F 7th relationship that concludes the cadenza.)”

Music Example 1.5.6 “Well Cadenza”

The image shows a musical score for a piece titled "Well Cadenza". It consists of two staves. The top staff is for a voice part labeled "Theresa" and the bottom staff is for piano accompaniment. The music begins at measure 155. The lyrics under the voice staff are "John J. Co-zad. , Well!". A red rectangular box highlights a specific section of the voice line, which contains a melodic phrase with three triplet markings. The piano accompaniment features chords and a bass line that supports the vocal melody.

The townsfolk respond with the hymn-tune *Rock of Ages* set to protest lyrics about the current state of their poverty. The composer mentions that this incident is derived from real events, “as a matter of historical record. That setting of new text to *Rock of Ages* was in fact sung by the settlers.”⁴² White has reharmonized the hymn to slip into the minor mode approximately halfway through to show the settlers’ frustration.

⁴² White, Tyler. Interview by author, Lincoln, April 16, 2021, transcript, Appendix C.

Music Example 1.5.7 "We do not live we only stay"

159

Theresa

SANDERSON
(dubious)

Sanderson

Well, may-be.

SA

Chorus

TB

We do not live, we on-ly stay, we are too poor to get a-

We do not live, we on-ly stay, we are too poor to get a-

159

The musical score is for a choral piece. It features five staves: Theresa (Soprano), Sanderson (Tenor), SA (Soprano Alto), Chorus (SATB), and TB (Tenor Bass). Theresa and Sanderson have short vocal lines. The Chorus and TB parts have lyrics: "We do not live, we on-ly stay, we are too poor to get a-". The piano accompaniment is shown at the bottom, starting at measure 159. The score is in a key with one flat (B-flat) and a common time signature.

(they sorrowfully disperse, leaving THERESA and SANDERSON alone)

164

SA way..... We do not live, we on - ly stay, we are too

TB way..... We do not live, we on - ly stay, we are too

164

mf *pp*

168 SANDERSON

All this coun-try's as bare as a

SA poor to get a - way.

TB poor to get a - way.

168

mf *p*

The scene closes with Theresa asking for faith in her husband, followed by a variant of the “Lucky Cozad” theme reharmonized in minor chords that suggests faith in Cozad is running quite short.

Music Example 1.5.8 "Lucky Cozad Theme"

178 *accel.*

Theresa

zad!

178 *f* *fp* *accel.*

The image shows a musical score for a piece titled "Lucky Cozad Theme". It consists of three staves. The top staff is for a vocal part labeled "Theresa" and is in 4/4 time. It begins at measure 178 with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a tempo marking of "accel.". The vocal line contains a few notes and rests, with the word "zad!" written below the first measure. The middle and bottom staves are for piano accompaniment. The middle staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef, both in 4/4 time. The piano part begins at measure 178 with a dynamic marking of *f* (forte). A red rectangular box highlights measures 178 through 182. In measure 182, the dynamic changes to *fp* (pianissimo). The piano part features complex chordal textures with many beamed notes and rests. There are two *accel.* markings above the piano part. The piece concludes with two triplet markings (indicated by a '3' over a group of notes) in the final two measures.

Act 1, scene 6

Cozad, a few days later. Robert hands his mother another painting as Cozad returns to town. Cozad has returned to trumpet his proposal for a bridge across the Platte; the citizenry is dubious.

Vocal Forces: Robert (mezzo-soprano), Theresa (soprano), Cozad (baritone), Pearson (baritone)

The percussive nature of the orchestra at the top of this scene suggests how unsettled and high strung the citizens of the town have become. As Robert approaches his mother, Theresa, with his latest sketch we get the "Family" theme in the basses, cellos, and bassoons. However, the theme is more obscured now by some of the other town scoring above it. The strings are sawing away and the brass is playing a counter melody.

Music Example 1.6.1 “Family Theme”

The image displays two staves of musical notation. The top staff begins at measure 193 and features a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It contains a series of eighth-note chords and a melodic line. The bottom staff begins at measure 196 and features a bass clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb). It contains a melodic line with a red box highlighting a specific phrase. Dynamic markings include *f* and *ff*.

When Cozad pitches his proposal for a bridge, his “Public Persona” theme recurs, but now set down a step in Bb, suggesting some shine has come off that persona.

Music Example 1.6.2 “Public Persona Theme”

Moderato (♩ = c. 88)

212 THERESA

Theresa

Yes, dear, but not just now....

COZAD *f*

Cozad

Fel - low

Moderato (♩ = c. 88)

212

f *legato, poco pomposo*

*

The image displays a musical score for a scene. At the top, it is marked 'Moderato (♩ = c. 88)'. The first system shows two vocal staves: Theresa (treble clef) and Cozad (bass clef). Theresa's line begins at measure 212 with the lyrics 'Yes, dear, but not just now....'. Cozad's line is mostly silent until measure 215, where he says 'COZAD' and 'Fel - low'. The piano accompaniment is shown below the vocal staves. It starts at measure 212 and features a red box around measures 215-218. This boxed section is marked with a forte 'f' dynamic and the instruction 'legato, poco pomposo'. An asterisk is placed below the piano part at the end of the boxed section.

His speech closes with the “Danger” theme, first heard when Cozad encountered a rattlesnake. The theme’s association is transferred to Alf Pearson, who challenges Cozad. Pearson, a real threat to Cozad’s standing in town, is scarier to Cozad than any venomous viper. Regarding this use of the “Danger” theme the composer said that Cozad is “less afraid of the guys in a card game card game coming out right, than he is slander... That’s the real danger.”⁴³

⁴³ White, Tyler. Interview by author, Lincoln, April 16, 2021, transcript, Appendix C.

Music Example 1.6.3 "Danger Theme"

Citizen/
Pearson

239 *f*

poor to get a - way!

239

244 *p*

The image shows a musical score for a piece titled "Danger Theme" by Citizen/Pearson. The score is divided into two systems. The first system, starting at measure 239, features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins with the lyrics "poor to get a - way!". The piano accompaniment is marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic. A red rectangular box highlights a specific passage in the piano accompaniment, starting at measure 239 and ending at measure 243. This passage includes a triplet of eighth notes in measure 241. The second system, starting at measure 244, shows the piano accompaniment continuing with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The score is written in a key signature of one flat (B-flat major or D minor) and a common time signature.

Act 1, scene 7

Cozad, one month later. The first pay-day has arrived; Cozad dumps a huge pile of greenbacks and gold into a wheelbarrow as the men line up. When Alf Pearson yells his anger at Cozad as a “Copperhead showoff,” Cozad considers violence, but retreats, leaving the payments to Traber, his brother-in-law. As Cozad fumes about ingratitude, the citizens vent their anxieties.

Vocal Forces: Sanderson (baritone), Traber (tenor), Cozad (baritone), Pearson (baritone), Theresa (soprano), Chorus (SATB), Disgruntled Citizens (TB)

The “Unrest” theme opens this scene as if to let the audience know that the conflict they had anticipated in the Prelude has arrived. The theme is rhythmically complex with syncopations, many dotted rhythms, and triplets. It begins with a very unstable tritone, and approaches it with accents, sixteenth notes, and a punch in the lower registers of the orchestra that make it seem less like a question to resolve and more like a challenge. When that challenge is met and it resolves, it becomes a falling melody not entirely unlike the “Town” theme in contour, but harmonically and rhythmically much more wild--a town out of control.

Music Example 1.7.1 “Unrest Theme”

The image shows a musical score for a piece titled "Unrest Theme" by Chopin, marked "Precipitato" with a tempo of 132. The score is in 4/4 time and consists of four systems of piano and bass staves. Red boxes highlight specific melodic and harmonic passages in the right hand across all systems. The first system (measures 1-4) shows a complex melodic line with many accidentals. The second system (measures 5-8) features a triplet of eighth notes in the first measure. The third system (measures 9-12) continues the melodic development. The fourth system (measures 13-16) shows further melodic and harmonic complexity. The bass line is mostly accompanimental, with some chords and moving lines.

Cozad’s entrance is marked by the “Lucky Cozad” theme, this time with an interesting mixture of minor and major chords, perhaps suggesting Cozad’s less flattering self that gambles (minor) contiguous with his charitable nature (major) that uses his winnings to help keep his town alive. White’s choice of this dark/light contrast intensifies, at this moment, Cozad’s multifaceted character. White has again effectively used musical thematic material and harmony to establish drama and character.

Music Example 1.7.2 “Lucky Cozad Theme”

35
8
eve - ry - one.

(COZAD enters from the saloon door with a large leather bag in h
He silently dumps its contents into the wheelbarrow,
a large overwhelming mound of silver and gold coins and greenba
The crowd reacts with some dismay, then the men start to line up
from the table to stage right.

35
3
in tempo
fp
fp

We get another wonderful “tension chord” just before Pearson’s line “the goddamned copperhead showoff”. This is followed by the falling portion of the “Unrest” theme” (musically related to the “Town” theme) as Cozad nearly starts a public brawl with Pearson, foreshadowing an even greater conflict between the men yet to come. White's choice to use this segment of the "Unrest" theme highlights the instability of the town at this moment.

Music Example 1.7.3 “Unrest Theme”

69
in tempo
ff
dim.
ff
dim.
Ped.
dim.

Propelling the scene into a large ensemble, the “Lucky Cozad” theme, now set to augmented triads played by the muted brass, perfectly encapsulates the stifled rage Cozad feels.

Music Example 1.7.4 “Lucky Cozad Theme”

The image shows a musical score for a piano piece. The score is written on two staves, treble and bass clef. The tempo is marked 'Adagio' with a quarter note equal to 60 (♩ = 60). The dynamics include 'ritard.' (ritardando) and 'p' (piano). A red rectangular box highlights a section of the score, specifically the right hand part, which features a complex texture of overlapping chords and melodic lines. The score begins at measure 77.

In the ensuing large ensemble, each character (or character group) has independent concerns that overlap and come together into a dramatic conflation of a large Verdi-esque ensemble. The composer cited that he was inspired by the council scene from *Simon Boccanegra* when layering the thick textures.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ White, Tyler. Interview by author, Lincoln, April 16, 2021, transcript, Appendix C.

Music Example 1.7.5 “Large Ensemble Texture”

The musical score is divided into two systems. The first system (measures 96-100) features vocal parts and piano accompaniment. The vocal parts include Theresa, Traber, Cozad, Disgruntled Citizens, SA, Chorus, and TB. Theresa's line begins with the lyrics "we will have to go, I fear this will". Traber's line continues with "twen - ty - eight days, twen - ty - one dol-lars." Cozad's line has "They would have starved with - out me, with - out". Disgruntled Citizens' line includes "thinks, he thinks he's a king!" followed by the instruction "WORRIED CITIZENS". The SA, Chorus, and TB parts are mostly silent, with the Chorus and TB parts having the instruction "What WORRIED CITIZENS" and "What" respectively. The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the right hand and a triplet pattern in the left hand. The second system (measures 101-104) shows the piano accompaniment continuing with the same triplet pattern in the left hand and chords in the right hand.

The scene closes out with the “Unrest” theme played in a slow tempo passed around the woodwinds through different registers giving it an eerie quality. This represents the slowly building resentment being passed throughout the town.

Music Example 1.7.6 "Unrest Theme"

Measures 137-138 of the "Unrest Theme" in 4/4 time. The score is written for piano with three staves: Treble Clef, Bass Clef, and a separate Bass staff. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and one flat (Bb). The Treble staff contains chords and melodic fragments. The Bass staff features a melodic line with a red box highlighting measures 137 and 138. The separate Bass staff contains a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth-note triplets, with a red box highlighting the first two measures.

Measures 139-140 of the "Unrest Theme" in 4/4 time. The score continues with three staves: Treble Clef, Bass Clef, and a separate Bass staff. The Treble staff contains chords and melodic fragments. The Bass staff features a melodic line with a red box highlighting measures 139 and 140. The separate Bass staff contains a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth-note triplets, with a red box highlighting the first two measures.

Act 1, scene 8

Henri's studio. A few weeks after Lee first appeared in Scene One. The secretary announces that “pressing business” keeps Lee from coming for his sitting. Henri agonizes over his difficulties with the portrait and the elusiveness of his memories.

Vocal Forces: Secretary (soprano), Henri (tenor)

Act 1, scene 8 thematically begins with a variant of the “To paint a man is to know him” tune, played by a solo clarinet as Henri looks out the window awaiting his father. The tune is set over dissonant harmony, unlike its earlier iteration.

According to White,

when it's in a dissonant context, obviously that represents something like a crisis of creativity because that's what this scene is fundamentally all about.⁴⁵

Henri does not yet know his father well enough to paint him. This subtext clearly emerges in this dissonant setting

⁴⁵ White, Tyler. Interview by author, Lincoln, April 23, 2021, transcript, Appendix C.

Music Example 1.8.1 “*To paint a man is to know him Theme*”

Adagio ♩ = 56

The musical score is in 4/4 time and Adagio (♩ = 56). It features a piano accompaniment with a melodic line in the right hand and a harmonic accompaniment in the left hand. The score is divided into two systems. The first system shows the piano part with a melodic line in the right hand and a harmonic accompaniment in the left hand. A red box highlights a melodic phrase in the right hand starting at measure 3. The second system starts at measure 5, with a red box highlighting a melodic phrase in the right hand. Dynamics include *p*, *fp*, *mp*, and *espress.*

Announcing the father's need to attend to "pressing business", the Secretary quotes Cozad's catchphrase. According to the composer, although Lee's identity has changed, "he's still using the same lines."⁴⁶ The Secretary's quote is followed by a variant of the "Lucky Cozad" theme in the orchestra. When Cozad sings "pressing business" it is to a truncated version of the "Lucky Cozad" theme, and hearing "pressing business" again likely triggers memories in Henri.

⁴⁶ White, Tyler. Interview by author, Lincoln, April 23, 2021, transcript, Appendix C.

Music Example 1.8.2 “Lucky Cozad Theme”

20
 ___ has had to go to New Jer - sey on press - ing busi - ness He
 20
 mp

Here the composer really starts to musically connect Lee and Cozad together. The “Lee” theme soon follows, implying that this connection is occurring to Henri as well, and thus may be leading to some greater understanding of the man he’s attempting to paint.

Music Example 1.8.3 “Lee Theme”

23
 says he wil con - tact you ___ to ar - range the next sit - ting.
 23
 p

But, as soon as the Secretary exits the “Danger” theme emerges from the orchestra, now applied to Henri’s fear that this portrait may not be a success. He fears that his father may be too complex a portrait to paint, or that he is concerned that his father won’t attend regularly as he failed to attend his session today. He may fear his father

doesn't want to truly know him and be known by him. Henri's subtextual music for his fear is the same as his father's subtextual music for his fear. In this moment the "Danger" theme somehow affirms a certain shared musical DNA. Or more simply said: "Like father, like son."

Music Example 1.8.4 "Danger Theme"

The image shows a musical score for a scene. The top staff is for the vocal line, labeled 'HENRI'. The lyrics are 'Thank you.' and '(turns back to the window as she departs, then suddenly turns back to the shrouded painting)'. The bottom staff is for the piano accompaniment, starting at measure 25. A red box highlights a specific passage in the piano part, which begins with a *mf* dynamic and a *leg.* marking. This passage includes a triplet of eighth notes and ends with a *ritard.* marking. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#).

What follows is a beautiful aria where Henri explores his doubts about his ability to see his father as he really is. It begins with a restatement of the theme "To paint a man is to know him."

Music Example 1.8.5 “To paint a man is to know him Theme”

The image displays a musical score for a vocal and piano piece. It is divided into two systems, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment.

System 1 (Measures 34-37):

- Vocal Line:** Starts at measure 34 with a whole note G4. The lyrics are "Just not right, just not right." The melody continues through measures 35 and 36. In measure 37, the lyrics are "To paint a", and this section is highlighted with a red box.
- Piano Accompaniment:** Features a complex texture with multiple chords and moving lines. Dynamics include *fp* (fortissimo piano) in measure 34, *pp* (pianissimo) in measure 35, and *mp* (mezzo-piano) in measure 37.

System 2 (Measures 38-41):

- Vocal Line:** Starts at measure 38 with a half note G4. The lyrics are "man _____ is to know him." This section is highlighted with a red box. The melody continues through measures 39 and 40. In measure 41, the lyrics are "And yet, _____ my own fa - ther:".
- Piano Accompaniment:** Continues with a similar complex texture. A *fp* dynamic is marked in measure 40.

As Henri attempts to deal with his inability to understand his father, he keeps coming back to two main ideas. The first is “The planes of the face, the heart of the man”, which repeats four times throughout the aria. Henri is unable to get at his father’s heart in this portrait.

Music Example 1.8.6 “The planes of the face the heart of the man”

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system (measures 44-47) features a vocal line with the lyrics: "The planes of the face, the heart of the man, the planes of the face,". The piano accompaniment is marked *f* (forte) and includes a dynamic change to *subito p* (subito piano) at measure 46. The tempo is indicated as *Larghetto espansivo* with a metronome marking of ♩ = c. 53. The second system (measures 48-51) continues the vocal line with the lyrics: "the heart of the man...". The piano accompaniment is marked *pp* (pianissimo) and includes a dynamic change to *p* (piano) at measure 50. The tempo remains *Larghetto espansivo* with a metronome marking of ♩ = c. 53. The score is written in 3/4 time and includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

The other phrase Henri returns to is “overall the sunset glow”, which becomes a mantra of unity and hope that carries him out of the despair of his fears.

Music Example 1.8.7 "Over all the sunset glow"

The image displays a musical score for three systems, each featuring a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The first system (measures 133-135) is in a key with one flat (B-flat major or D minor) and 8/8 time. The vocal line begins with the lyrics "all the sun - set glow." The piano accompaniment consists of a right hand with a flowing sixteenth-note pattern and a left hand with a more melodic line. The second system (measures 136-137) changes to a key with two flats (B-flat major or D minor) and continues the vocal line with the lyrics "O - ver". The piano accompaniment maintains its rhythmic texture. The third system (measures 138-140) changes to a key with two sharps (D major or F# minor) and concludes the vocal line with the lyrics "all the sun - set glow." The piano accompaniment features a more active right hand with sixteenth-note runs and a steady left hand.

The aria ends with Henri recommitting to remembering his past more fully so he can really get to the truth. The aria and the act end unresolved containing the Lee seventh dissonance.

Music Example 1.8.8 "Unresolved ending"

The image shows a musical score for a piano piece, specifically Music Example 1.8.8 titled "Unresolved ending". The score is written for piano and consists of five measures. The first measure is marked with the number 174. The music is in a minor key, indicated by the key signature. The first four measures are marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The fifth measure is marked with a *ced.* (crescendo) marking. The score features a complex texture with multiple voices in both the treble and bass staves. A large slur covers the top of the treble staff across all five measures, with a fermata over the final chord. The bass staff contains a melodic line with a fermata over the final note. The piece ends with a *ced.* marking and a *8va* (octave) marking, suggesting a final flourish or a transition to a higher register.

Act 2, scene 1

Cozad, some time later and even more prosperous than before. Robert again shows his mother a drawing, but they are interrupted by a stranger, King O'Dell, who is looking for his wife, Kitty. Cozad appears, confronting O'Dell, who accuses him of adultery with Kitty and of causing her death by suicide; O'Dell presents what seem to be an incriminating packet of letters and demands \$25,000. Cozad calls his bluff, giving the packet to Theresa, who finds that it contains nothing but torn newspaper. O'Dell retreats.

Vocal Forces: Robert (mezzo-soprano), Theresa (soprano), O'Dell (baritone), Cozad (Baritone)

Act two begins with intense strings and a violent entrance by the rest of the orchestra shortly after, then rejoined by bustling strings that put us squarely back in the busy town of Cozad. The “Family” theme at the *più moderato* seems to suggest some strain on the Cozads as the once cheery major colors have given way to more foreboding tints of minor qualities.

Music Example 2.1.1 “Family Theme”

The image shows a musical score for a piano piece. The tempo is marked "Piu moderato" with a metronome marking of ♩ = c.100. The score is in 7/8 time and begins at measure 42. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The score is written for piano with a treble and bass clef. The treble clef part features a melodic line with several chords and notes, including a prominent B-flat. The bass clef part provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and a melodic line. Two red boxes highlight specific sections of the treble clef part: the first box covers measures 43-45, and the second box covers measures 46-48. Dynamics markings include *fp* (fortissimo piano) and *mp* (mezzo-piano).

Similarly, when flutes and oboe play the “Town” theme directly afterwards we have moved fairly far from the diatonic major in which it was first presented.

Music Example 2.1.2 “Town Theme”

The image shows a musical score for a piano piece. The score is written in a grand staff with a treble clef on the top staff and a bass clef on the bottom staff. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The piece begins with a piano (*p*) and cantabile marking. A red rectangular box highlights a section of the music in the upper right, which consists of a series of chords in the right hand, primarily half-diminished chords, moving in a descending sequence. The bass line consists of a simple, rhythmic accompaniment of quarter notes.

The “Sleazy Swing” from 1.3 returns, now transferred to a former associate of Cozad’s, King O’Dell, who has returned to town to extort money from him. When O’Dell calls out Cozad, we hear the “Lee” theme pop out of the texture, suggesting that Henri might be remembering this incident in a new way. When Cozad enters to confront O’Dell, the “Lucky Cozad” theme is constructed with stacked half-diminished chords, demonstrating the tension Cozad feels confronting a man he knows to be armed and very dangerous. Half-diminished chords are very unstable and Cozad likely is not sure how this encounter will go.

Music Example 2.1.3 “Lee Theme and *Lucky Cozad* Theme”

91

Cozad

O'Dell

John J Co-zad!

91

p *fp* *mf*

Detailed description: This musical score is for Music Example 2.1.3. It consists of three staves. The top staff is for the character Cozad, the middle for O'Dell, and the bottom for piano accompaniment. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The piano part begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic. A triplet of eighth notes is highlighted in a red box, followed by a fortissimo piano (*fp*) section. Another triplet of eighth notes is highlighted in a red box, marked mezzo-forte (*mf*). The lyrics "John J Co-zad!" are written below the O'Dell staff.

The triplets that follow are a snippet of the “Unrest” theme about which the composer said, “it felt like it had some of that flair from old westerns and 60’s spy music”⁴⁷ that really adds to the tension and twitchy nature of the scene.

Music Example 2.1.4 “Unrest Triplets”

102

Cozad

O'Dell

but now I've got you, — so

102

ff

Lee

Detailed description: This musical score is for Music Example 2.1.4. It consists of three staves. The top staff is for the character Cozad, the middle for O'Dell, and the bottom for piano accompaniment. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The piano part begins with a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic. A triplet of eighth notes is highlighted in a red box. The lyrics "but now I've got you, — so" are written below the O'Dell staff. The name "Lee" is written below the piano staff.

⁴⁷ White, Tyler. Interview by author, Lincoln, April 23, 2021, transcript, Appendix C.

The orchestra follows each of O'Dell's accusations with the "Lee" theme as if to say that each of these is giving Henri more understanding of who his father really might have been.

Music Example 2.1.5 "Lee Theme"

The image shows a musical score for three parts: Cozad, O'Dell, and piano accompaniment. The score is in 4/4 time and begins at measure 102. Cozad's part is in the bass clef and consists of whole notes. O'Dell's part is also in the bass clef and includes lyrics: "but now I've got you, so trot Kit-ty out!". The piano accompaniment is in treble and bass clefs, starting with a forte (ff) dynamic and a triplet of eighth notes. A red box highlights a specific musical phrase in the piano accompaniment's treble clef part, which occurs during the "out!" lyric. The score includes various musical notations such as dynamics (ff, f), articulation (>), and phrasing slurs.

Each of Cozad's rebuffs is followed by the snippet of the "Danger" theme as if each one might be what leads to this ending in a gunfight rather than just a grievance. Perhaps it is a twitch from O'Dell that might be a gun draw. It can also be the fear of what O'Dell will say next. The damage O'Dell could deal to his reputation could be dire.

O'Dell finally launches into his story about Kitty in a *Valse Triste* musical setting. The composer said he wrote this in part as a reference to the Sibelius *Valse*

Triste suggesting “a dance that the two of them were doing.”⁴⁸ And though O’Dell was attempting to put on a show for a crowd, his is a “kind of a stumbling Waltz” and a “pathetic... dance.”⁴⁹ O’Dell’s rhythm stumbles, he stutters, his phrases are choppy, and the dance is quite short.

Music Example 2.1.6 “Valse Triste”

The musical score for "Valse triste" is presented in two systems. The first system, starting at measure 124, features a piano accompaniment in 3/4 time with a tempo of 76. The piano part consists of a treble and bass staff with chords and a melodic line. The second system, starting at measure 130, includes vocal lines for Theresa, Cozad, and O'Dell. Theresa and Cozad have rests, while O'Dell has a vocal line with lyrics: "Here they are and they show why well, here they are, Uh, I". The piano accompaniment continues in the second system.

Indeed, O’Dell is outmatched by Cozad in his bluff, and Cozad calls it, diffusing the situation and saving face. However, the damage is done, and a

⁴⁸ White, Tyler. Interview by author, Lincoln, April 23, 2021, transcript, Appendix C.

⁴⁹ White, Tyler. Interview by author, Lincoln, April 23, 2021, transcript, Appendix C.

recurrence of the “Lee” major seventh indicates not only Henri's uncovering of one of his father's mysteries, but also suggests a revelation about Cozad experienced by Theresa and Julia Gatewood in how they view Cozad. Here the composer has used a singular theme for multiple purposes, giving it value, efficiency, and richness.

Music Example 2.1.7 “Lee Seventh”

The image displays a musical score for a scene. At the top, the name "Cozad" is written above a single bass clef staff. The piano accompaniment consists of two staves, a treble and a bass clef. The score begins with a measure number "199" above the piano part. The piano part features a complex texture with many notes, including a prominent major seventh interval. A dynamic marking "pp" is present. The score concludes with a double bar line and the instruction "segue Scene 2 as one". A red rectangular box highlights the final notes of the piano part, which include a major seventh interval.

Act 2, scene 2

Cozad, The same, later that day. Julia Gatewood verbally snipes at Cozad. Theresa defends her husband and remembers her wedding day; she thinks of her husband and long married life with both loyalty and pain. Cozad departs on pressing business.

Vocal Forces: Julia (mezzo-soprano), Theresa (soprano), Cozad (baritone)

The "Danger" theme is the main theme of note in the opening of this scene as Theresa defends Cozad from Julia's attack on his reputation. As Julia leaves the stage like the snake in Act 1, scene 1, we hear the same music. (Not the first or last time a mother-in-law is compared to a venomous serpent!)

Music Example 2.2.1 "Danger Theme"

The image shows a musical score for a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in the upper staff, starting with the lyrics "— be - lieve it now!". The piano accompaniment is in the lower staves. A red box highlights a specific section of the piano accompaniment in the bass clef, which features a melodic line with triplets and a dynamic marking of *ff* (fortissimo). The score includes various musical notations such as clefs, time signatures, and dynamic markings.

Once she is alone, this scene is largely an aria giving voice to Theresa's view of her marriage. The O'Dell scene clearly serves as a catalyst for her reflection, and according to the composer, "the fact that O'Dell has set in her mind a waltz turns into this fantasy... turns into Beulah Land."⁵⁰ Indeed the aria references Beulah Land, an old gospel tune, as she envisions her husband off on his business, waltzing with

⁵⁰ White, Tyler. Interview by author, Lincoln, April 23, 2021, transcript, Appendix C.

other women. The background of a gospel hymn as she envisions her husband potentially having an affair encompasses a lot of her inner conflict. Beulah Land in the song refers to Israel, but it is also important here that Beulah comes from the Hebrew *בְּעוּלָה* meaning married woman.

Music Example 2.2.2 “Beulah Land Waltz”

G

I've reached the land of corn and wine, And
 My Sav - ior comes and walks with me, And
 A sweet per - fume up - on the breeze Is
 The zeph - yrs seem to float to me Sweet

3 D7 G

all its rich - es free - ly mine; Here shines un - dimmed one
 sweet com - mu - ion here have we; He gen - tly leads me
 born from ev - er - ver - nal trees, And flow'rs that nev - er -
 sounds of heav - en's mel - o - dy, As an - gels with the

6 D7 G

bliss - ful day, For all my night has passed a - way. O
 by His hand For this is heav - en's bor - der - land.
 fad - ing grow Where streams of life for - ev - er flow;
 white - robed throng Join in the sweet re - demp - tion song.

Più lento (gentle waltz) ♩ = c. 72 (in 6)

quasi chitarra *pp*

p

The aria, filled with meter changes and compound meters, never settles into a groove, instead floating along maintaining an eerie quality. The orchestration heightens this, scored primarily with strings, harp, and occasional woodwinds. The composer's stated intent was to create an effect that was “off kilter in a way that makes it seem ethereal and otherworldly.”⁵¹ This texture makes the references to Beulah Land stand out further by contrast to the ethereal and otherworldly nature of the aria.

Cozad's entrance to a brassy “Lucky Cozad” theme was intended by the composer as “a real gut punch”⁵² as Cozad requests that Theresa hand him his hat and cane with that recurring theme.

⁵¹ White, Laura. Interview by author, Lincoln, June 1, 2021, transcript, Appendix B.

⁵² White, Tyler. Interview by author, Lincoln, April 23, 2021, transcript, Appendix C.

Music Example 2.2.3 “Lucky Cozad, My can my hat, and Danger Themes”

Piú mosso $\text{♩} = c. 66$ (COZAD enters from the Cozad house onto the porch carrying a satchel and dressed for travel.)

120

COZAD

The-re - sa, my cane, my

123

hat!

And.

*

The scene returns to the floating shifting meter and light orchestration as Theresa is left to wonder in the composer's words, “where she's going to land.”⁵³ The scene ends with the “Lee” seventh recalling the quality of the opening of the “Lee” theme. The ending implies that this memory becomes a factor in how Henri begins to come to terms with the complexity of his father.

⁵³ White, Tyler. Interview by author, Lincoln, April 23, 2021, transcript, Appendix C.

Theresa's aria has a high tessitura and an upper extension that are both noteworthy. The high and light dynamic markings in the tessitura contribute to the floating quality of the aria. The upper extension to E6 pulls her to the extremes of the soprano range and both gives the aria an otherworldly quality and an extreme feeling of heightened emotion at the climax of the aria. Extremes in the vocal range yield extremes in the drama, and the composer developed the extreme range as he got to know the singer for whom the role was written. It was written with one soprano's extremes in mind, "Given what Laney felt comfortable doing with the upper register that had a strong impact on what I felt I could do with Teresa's character."⁵⁴

Theresa's tessitura and upper extension are of note as well in that she only explores them in two places of the role: the aria and the trio in Act 2, scene 8. Both of those events are private occurrences and are rare moments where we see her express how she feels. Cozad refers to his wife as "a diamond" and "a jewel" which the composer says means "in a life full of chaos, and all of the other stuff goes through her. She is so solid, and such a solid part of his life."⁵⁵ This is part of Theresa's public life versus her private life. In public she must appear reserved and stalwart. However, in private she's a greatly conflicted woman, full of profound emotion, the depth of which make her outward appearance that much more impressive. Similarly, when she does fly up to her upper extension in these

⁵⁴ White, Tyler. Interview by author, Lincoln, March 12, 2021, transcript, Appendix C.

⁵⁵ White, Tyler. Interview by author, Lincoln, March 19, 2021, transcript, Appendix C.

moments of the opera the soprano is sure to wow audiences with the sudden appearance of her range.

Act 2, scene 3

Cozad, months later. Gamblers enter Cozad while Cozad is away and set up a faro table in the stables. Looking on, Robert is pressured by the gamblers into taking \$20 betting money as partial payment of rent to his father. Cozad returns and violently breaks up the faro game. A “deputy” tries to expose Robert for being in possession of forged money and the whole gang tries to have Cozad arrested, but Traber and Sanderson rush in to expose the “deputy” as a fake. While the bad guys scatter, Robert exults that he now knows how to make \$50,000; Cozad, furious, beats his legs with his cane. Cozad retreats to meditate on his need for vigilance; Robert, weeping, determines that he must “grow up very fast.”

Vocal Forces: Dealer (tenor), Pearson (baritone), Robert (mezzo-soprano), Boy (tenor), Lookout (whistle), Cozad (baritone), “Deputy” (tenor), Traber (tenor), Sanderson (baritone)

This scene opens with new material based on a new tone row that we have yet to hear at this point in the opera. Although most of the audience is unlikely to be actively aware of this, or any of the other tone-rows and their manipulations, the composer stated that this was intended to show growth in the character of young Robert.⁵⁶ While audiences may not recognize it as a tone row, they may well recognize it as a new melody.

Music Example 2.3.1 “Robert’s New Row”

Musical score for "Robert's New Row". The score is in 3/4 time, marked Moderato with a tempo of 72. It features a piano (p) and mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic range. The melody is highlighted with a red box. The score includes a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat).

⁵⁶ White, Tyler. Interview by author, Lincoln, April 23, 2021, transcript, Appendix C.

The honky tonk piano that appears early in the scene has a bar room piano feel and, according to the composer, has references to Shostakovich piano concerto #1.⁵⁷

Music Example 2.3.2 “Honky-tonk piano”

The image shows a musical score for a piano piece titled "Honky-tonk piano". The score is in 4/4 time and is marked "Allegramente" with a tempo of 144. The piece is in a key with one flat (B-flat major or D minor). The score is divided into two systems, starting at measure 24 and 29 respectively. The music features a mix of chords and melodic lines, with a "honky-tonk" feel. The notation includes various chord symbols and melodic fragments.

As Robert is identified by the other characters on stage we hear the “Family” theme. Robert is offered free money to gamble, but following his father's rules, he rejects the offer, at which point we hear the "Lucky Cozad" theme reinforce his decision.

When Cozad enters, the orchestra plays a rendering of the previous “Here everything will be clean and new” now so obscured by dissonance many listeners may not recognize it. The composer pointed to “clashing plaining”⁵⁸ obscuring the theme.

⁵⁷ White, Tyler. Interview by author, Lincoln, April 23, 2021, transcript, Appendix C.

⁵⁸ White, Tyler. Interview by author, Lincoln, April 23, 2021, transcript, Appendix C.

Music Example 2.3.3a "Here everything will be clean and new (Act 1, scene 2)"

The image displays a musical score for a character named Cozad, spanning measures 191 to 195. The score is written in 3/4 time and includes a vocal line and piano accompaniment.

Measures 191-194:

- Vocal Line:** The vocal line begins with a rest in measure 191. In measure 192, there is a yellow highlight under the text "J!". In measure 194, the vocal line has a red box around the notes for the words "Here eve-ry". Above this box, the dynamic marking *p* *cresc.* is written.
- Piano Accompaniment:** The piano part starts in measure 191 with a *p* dynamic. It features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.

Measures 195-198:

- Vocal Line:** The vocal line begins in measure 195 with a red box around the notes for the words "thing will be clean and new!". The text continues in measure 196: "A great white house, pranc-ing hor-ses,". A yellow highlight covers the text "A great white house, pranc-ing hor-ses,". The dynamic marking *f* is placed above the vocal line in measure 195.
- Piano Accompaniment:** The piano part continues with a *mp* dynamic. It features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. A triplet of eighth notes is marked with a "3" above it in measure 197.

Music Example 2.3.3b “Here everything will be clean and new Transformed (Act 2, scene 3)”

When Cozad comes upon the table, the “Lucky Cozad” theme plays. Regarding this moment, the composer said, “I set [the “Lucky Cozad” theme] with tritone relationships between minor triads to make it very dark. Tense.”⁵⁹

Music Example 2.3.4 “Lucky Cozad Theme”

The next major thematic element comes after Cozad is arrested and forced to stall for time with a bluff. We hear the “Lee” theme brightly in the woodwinds and

⁵⁹ White, Tyler. Interview by author, Lincoln, April 23, 2021, transcript, Appendix C.

vibraphone. This is a key moment for Robert/Henri. At this moment Robert sees the real “pressing business” his father gets into when he goes away. In looking back and examining the situation and how Cozad handled himself, Henri learns a lot about the man he’s trying to paint. Robert wants to be like his father, and his father beats him for it. The scene ends with a duet that features a large a cappella section where we gain insight into how young Robert feels he must grow up and Cozad must protect his family. This creates a nice parallel with the Act 1, scene 4 duet where a similar effect occurred between the two characters. Although the voices blend and intertwine the characters are dramatically far apart here. The scene ends with the “Lee” theme. This may well imply progress towards father and son understanding one another, but it may also imply that Lee himself may have learned something from this scene.

Act 2, scene 4

Cozad, months later. Traber brings news that the citizens have successfully petitioned a change of name for the town, from Cozad to Gould. Furious, Cozad confronts Pearson, who is painting the new name onto the old sign over the stable. During the ensuing altercation, Pearson tries to stab Cozad; Cozad shoots him in self-defense. The whole family realizes Cozad is in danger of lynching; Cozad plans his departure.

Vocal Forces: Traber (tenor), Cozad (baritone), Pearson (baritone), Theresa (soprano), Robert (mezzo-soprano), Johnny (tenor)

This scene opens with music establishing busy town business and enough dissonance to convey conflict. We hear in the viola, cello, bass clarinet, and bassoon a very quick and agitated version of the “Family” theme as Traber and Cozad reunite for their troubling conversation about the renaming of the town. The treatment of the theme flies by as does their conversation.

Music Example 2.4.1 “Family Theme”

The image displays a musical score for Music Example 2.4.1, titled "Family Theme". The score is written for piano and consists of two systems of music. The first system begins at measure 6 and ends at measure 10. The second system begins at measure 11 and ends at measure 15. The music is in 3/4 time and features a complex, dissonant harmonic language. The first system includes a dynamic marking of *fp* (fortissimo piano) and a tempo marking of *ff* *agitato*. Two red boxes highlight specific passages: one in the first system (measures 8-10) and one in the second system (measures 11-13). The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Throughout this scene chord clusters that Tyler White refers to as “tension chords”⁶⁰ are used not as functional harmony, but rather as emotional dissonance.⁶¹

Music Example 2.4.2 “Tension Chords”

85

Cozad

(He turns and puts a big white slash through the “Z”). This town may not be mine, but I own this pro-per-ty, and I own this

Pearson

This town is now Gould.

85

fp *pp* *ff*

(Pearson pauses, and then throws the sign down so that white paint gets on COZAD in some obvious way and then saunters down the ladder.)

89

Cozad

sign. (The crowd steps back several paces; a fight is coming)

Pearson

Well, take it, then!

89

pp *fp* *p*

⁶⁰ White, Tyler. Interview by author, Lincoln, April 23, 2021, transcript, Appendix C.

⁶¹ White, Tyler. Interview by author, Lincoln, February 26, 2021, transcript, Appendix C.

There is a recurrence of the “Unrest” theme as Cozad appears before the crowd fitting the tension caused by the scene. The theme's tritone component provides the scene with considerable instability. The conflict boils over as Cozad and Pearson fight full-out. Here we finally get the full “Unrest” theme we heard in the Prelude. The angular nature of the theme suits itself well to violence. The dangerous triplets from Act 2, scene 2 make a reappearance. The falling portion of the theme makes for a great end to the entire fight as Pearson, mortally shot by Cozad, drops with the melodic line.

Music Example 2.4.3 “The Shooting of Pearson”

*(COZAD draws a gun and shoots wildly; he hits PEARSON.
All the town seems to gather)*

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system (measures 129-132) features a piano accompaniment with a bass line and two treble staves. The key signature has three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 4/4. Measure 129 starts with a piano (p) dynamic. Measure 130 contains a triplet of eighth notes. Measure 131 features a forte (ff) dynamic and a triplet of eighth notes. Measure 132 ends with a fermata. The second system (measures 133-136) continues the piano accompaniment. Measure 133 starts with a piano (p) dynamic. Measure 134 features a melodic line in the upper treble staff. Measure 135 features a melodic line in the lower treble staff. Measure 136 ends with a fermata. The score concludes with a double bar line and the word 'FINE' written vertically below the staff.

After the fight Theresa and the boys come out to see that everything in their lives is about to change. We hear the once happy "Family" theme now devolved into dismay and uncertainty. The bass outlines a diminished seventh and the harmonies feel very unstable which aligns extremely well with the family unit.

Music Example 2.4.4 "Family Theme"

(TRABER does; the others look at COZAD menacingly; COZAD turns and walks with dignity to his house.)

Cozad

146

Run for a doc - tor. Quick!

146

p

152

pp

p

THERESA (coming out to the porch, accompanied by JULIA GATEWOOD)

Theresa

152

John, oh my dear, what has hap-pened? What... have you done?

As Cozad dictates a telegraph to the sheriff at Plum Creek the "Public Persona" theme is presented, now set in minor to reflect the dire tone of the telegraph. Yet the use of the Public Persona theme suggests Cozad hanging on to his earlier sense of grandeur and self-importance.

Music Example 2.4.5 “Public Persona Theme”

Cozad

176

te-le-gram to the sher-iff at Plum Creek. (Take this down, John-ny.)

176

Cozad

182

I, John J. Co-zad, act-ed in self - de - fense, and will de-

As Cozad and his family retreat to their home we hear a dissonant version of “Lucky Cozad” play. It seems his luck is running out and he has few cards left to play. An ominous version of the “Unrest” theme ends the scene as the town has turned on the Cozads, and poses a real threat to all of their safety.

Music Example 2.4.6 "Lucky Cozad and Unrest Themes"

...(dictating this telegram to JOHNNY, he leads the way into the house;
JULIA, THERESA, ROBERT follow in too.)

193

Cozad

hand my-self o-ver to those af-ter my blood...

193

mp

mp

199

f *p* *mp* *f* *p*

The image shows a musical score for a scene. At the top, there is a line of text: "...(dictating this telegram to JOHNNY, he leads the way into the house; JULIA, THERESA, ROBERT follow in too.)". Below this, the score begins at measure 193. The first staff is for the character Cozad, with the lyrics "hand my-self o-ver to those af-ter my blood...". The second system shows piano accompaniment for measures 193-198. A red box highlights the piano part from measure 195 to 198. The piano part consists of chords in the right hand and bass lines in the left hand. The dynamics are marked as *mp* (mezzo-piano). The third system shows piano accompaniment for measures 199-204. A red box highlights the piano part from measure 199 to 202. The piano part features a melodic line in the right hand and chords in the left hand. The dynamics are marked as *f* (forte) and *p* (piano).

Act 2, scene 5

Cozad, later at night. Cozad leaves under cover of darkness. He says goodbye to his family. Thinking of his luck and new plans for profit in the East.

Vocal Forces: Cozad (baritone), Traber (tenor), Robert (mezzo-soprano), Johnny (tenor)

The scene begins with a warped and very dissonant version of the “Town” theme that shows what has become of Cozad’s once optimistic vision of his “Shining new city.” Here Cozad’s dream of his town is clearly broken, and the Lee Theme appears as counterpoint in the harp and cello. Cozad is fleeing a likely lynch mob, and the dissonant harmonies reflect his nightmare perfectly. As he prepares himself to travel incognito, there’s a nice moment where the musical quote “My hat, my cane” is now used as Cozad divests himself of those same objects; a once hard gesture is now humanized. Directly after Cozad hands off his hat and cane we hear the “Family” theme, this time a little less sour than before, perhaps heartened by the gesture.

Music Example 2.5.1 “My hat my cane and Family Themes”

The image shows a musical score for two characters, Cozad and Traber, with piano accompaniment. The score is divided into two systems. The first system (measures 16-19) features Cozad's vocal line in bass clef, with lyrics "The-re - sa, my hat, my cane." The piano accompaniment is in bass clef, with a red box highlighting a specific chord in measure 18. The second system (measures 20-23) features Traber's vocal line in treble clef with lyrics "We get to the south rail-road" and Cozad's vocal line in bass clef which is silent. The piano accompaniment is in treble clef, with a red box highlighting a specific chord in measure 20. The score includes dynamic markings such as *p espress.* and *mp espress.* and includes performance instructions like "(Theresa brings a black slicker for him to put on; they embrace, with both boys.)" and "(to THERESA)".

What the composer identifies as an “octatonic tetrachord tension chord”⁶² preceding the text “these bad men might stop at nothing” is the kind of dissonance emerging from an otherwise sparse texture that can at once inspire an actor on stage, and can startle audiences in their seats.

⁶² White, Tyler. Interview by author, Lincoln, March 12, 2021, transcript, Appendix C.

Music Example 2.5.2 “Octatonic tetrachord tension chord”

Cozad

The - re - sa, re - mem - ber to sew your jewel - ry in - to your clothes: these

28

fp

The “Family” theme appears again as Cozad leaves his family. The theme itself is presented in sweet sounding prominently major hues, but is underscored with dissonance, evoking the heart wrenching experience of a family separation.

Music Example 2.5.3 “Family Theme”

Cozad

37 (COZAD embraces his sons and then THERESA.)

name.

37 *p espress.*

mp

40 (TRABER and COZAD walk off, COZAD walking tall despite the circumstances, stage left.)

40 *mf*

As Cozad prepares for his exit, we hear the same music from his Act 1, scene 2 entrance aria. The “Out of a tight spot again” music seems particularly apt considering his escape, this time with the leap on “again” augmented half a step to an E natural instead of an Eb. In the words of the composer, “it’s the Cozad we saw at the beginning, but more.”⁶³

Music Example 2.5.4 “Out of a tight spot again Theme augmented”

The image shows a musical score for a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in bass clef, and the piano accompaniment is in treble and bass clefs. The score is divided into two systems. The first system starts at measure 47 and ends at measure 50. The second system starts at measure 51 and ends at measure 54. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature changes from 3/4 to 4/4. The lyrics are: "Out of a tight spot a - gain! We've made a hand-some pro-fit here:". A red box highlights the vocal line from measure 47 to 50, and a yellow box highlights the lyrics "Out of a tight spot a - gain!".

We then get the “Lucky Cozad” theme in a loop of sorts. The whole effect repeats as needed and fades out as John J. Cozad leaves town and becomes Richard H. Lee.

⁶³ White, Tyler. Interview by author, Lincoln, May 14, 2021, transcript, Appendix C.

Music Example 2.5.5 “Lucky Cozad and Out of a tight spot again Themes”

The image displays a musical score for a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The score is divided into three systems, each labeled 'Cozad'.

- System 1 (Measures 58-59):** The vocal line (bass clef) has lyrics: "Luck-y Co - zad! Luck-y John J.!". The piano accompaniment (treble and bass clefs) features a complex, rhythmic pattern. A dynamic marking of *p* is present.
- System 2 (Measures 60-61):** This system is marked as an "optional repeat" in red. The vocal line and piano accompaniment are identical to the first system. A dynamic marking of *pp* is present.
- System 3 (Measures 62-63):** This system is also marked as a "repeat as needed" in red. The tempo is marked "Piú lento" with a quarter note equal to 40 (♩ = 40). The piano accompaniment continues with a complex, rhythmic pattern. A dynamic marking of *pp* is present.

The composer offered some insight into how the effect should work,

It almost feels like it's out of sync in some way with the vocal line, [as if emerging] out of memory. It's the complexity of the character that Henri now understands. These sort of overlaying ideas ("Out of a tight spot again", "Lucky."), [when] thrown into different modes, get sort of all smashed together into one picture. It's not that it's a unified picture...just a complex one, at least on some subconscious or deeper level.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ White, Tyler. Interview by author, Lincoln, May 14, 2021, transcript, Appendix C.

Act 2, scene 6

Henri's studio, a few weeks later after we last saw it. Lee is sitting for his portrait, Henri is painting. Lee apologizes for putting his family through so much; Henri affirms the value of the past in creating art -- "all of the past is our legacy."

Vocal Forces: Henri (tenor), Lee (baritone)

As proof that reliving some of these experiences may have impacted Lee, he apologizes in the opera, after which we get an occurrence of the "Family" theme that has more major modality than we have heard in it since Act one. After Henri accepts the apology, he says that he has been "seeing it all with a new eye" and the "Lee" theme plays, tying it together with the idea of perspective on the mystery of his father. In the words of the composer, it is not just that they need to see something, but "they need to agree on what they see."⁶⁵ Henri sings a glorious aria as he is inspired by their interaction singing out lines from *The Art Spirit*. The aria has something of his mother and his father in it. The aria has mixed meters that shift, and both are frequently supported by compound eighths. Theresa's aria added or subtracted an eighth note from a bar to make it feel off balance whereas Lee's aria uses two against three for metric stability. Henri being a product of the two parents does both.

⁶⁵ White, Tyler. Interview by author, Lincoln, May 14, 2021, transcript, Appendix C.

Music Example 2.6.1 "Theresa and Henri"

83

My mo-ther is here to watch _____ our grow-ing fa-mi-ly tree so

pp

98

piú lento, colla voce *in tempo*

un-less you have _____ to. Ne-ver ___ change the

piú lento, colla voce *in tempo*

8va

f *mf*

mf

101

tone of a co - - - lor un - til you

The composer wants a firmly grounded tempo here and used complex meter to achieve that; "two against three in the aria keep the singer from becoming too

Puccini-esque and keeps the piece moving forward.”⁶⁶ The scene ends with the “Lee” theme. Henri has found new acceptance of his father and his past, and he can now successfully paint a complete and true portrait.

Music Example 2.6.2 “Lee Theme”

183

pp

⁶⁶ White, Tyler. Interview by author, Lincoln, May 14, 2021, transcript, Appendix C.

Act 2, scene 7

Cozad, in the morning, a few weeks after John J.'s departure. Traber brings the news that Pearson has died of his wounds and that Cozad's property has been "attached for damages" to the Pearson estate. Theresa and the boys prepare to leave, safe in the knowledge that Cozad's property has already been converted to cash and gold to be sewn up in Theresa's undershirts. Theresa, Johnny, and Robert say their farewells to Nebraska with its ponies, its skies, and its heartaches.

Vocal Forces: Traber (tenor), Theresa (soprano), Julia (mezzo-soprano), Robert (mezzo-soprano), Johnny (tenor)

The scene opens with first the "Family" theme and then the "Town" theme both in very sad variants. In the composer's words, "we've clearly taken on a very dark color as far as the way, it's been reharmonized."⁶⁷ With the family fractured, things are looking hard. Rapid shifting in and out of keys makes it difficult for a clear tonality to establish itself. There is a great deal of ambiguity, paralleling the Cozads' uncertainty about their future.

⁶⁷ White, Tyler. Interview by author, Lincoln, April 23, 2021, transcript, Appendix C.

Music Example 2.7.1 “Family and Town Themes”

The musical score is presented in two systems. The first system is a piano accompaniment in 4/4 time, marked *p* and *mp espress.*. It features a treble and bass clef. Two red boxes highlight specific passages: one in the middle section and one in the final section. The second system features a vocal line for 'Traber' with lyrics 'It's bad, sis-ter. Pear-son died'. The piano accompaniment continues below, marked *p*. A red box highlights a passage in the piano part corresponding to the first line of the vocal line.

A trio number sung by Theresa and her sons ensues. The sense of yearning that these characters feel is magnified by the employment of two against three polyrhythms, creating structure under them. While in Henri's aria of the previous scene, the composer's stated intention of the two against three scoring was to keep the tempo strict, here his intent was that “the two against three avoids the feel of a barcarole and keeps the tension in the scene.”⁶⁸

⁶⁸ White, Tyler. Interview by author, Lincoln, May 14, 2021, transcript, Appendix C.

Music Example 2.7.2 “Compound meter and two against three”

83
Johnny
love. But I will ne - ver see my Ne bras ka po-nies a -

There is also another use of an exposed a cappella section. Shortly before the building vocal ensemble reaches its climax, the orchestra drops out, and there is what the composer calls “an emotional climax...that creates a great effect.”⁶⁹

⁶⁹ White, Tyler. Interview by author, Lincoln, May 14, 2021, transcript, Appendix C.

Music Example 2.7.3 “A cappella ensemble climatic moment”

The image shows a musical score for a cappella ensemble climatic moment. It consists of three vocal staves and a piano accompaniment. The vocal staves are for Robert, Theresa, and Johnny. The piano accompaniment is for the piano. The score is in G major and 4/4 time. The lyrics are: "We will all be to-ge-ther, see-ing o-ther". The piano accompaniment features a simple harmonic structure with sustained chords.

148

Robert

We will all be to-ge-ther, see-ing o-ther

Theresa

We will all be to-ge-ther, see-ing o-ther

Johnny

We will all be to-ge-ther, see-ing o-ther

148

The orchestra joins the singers for the final cadence. What follows in the postlude is an inversion of the “Town” theme as all of them proceed to leave and thus Theresa and her sons leave the town in the fading past, as if it disappears up into thin air.

Act 2, scene 8

Henri's studio, a few weeks have passed. Lee and his wife, Theresa, enter for the unveiling of the portrait. All three muse on how far they have come from their Nebraska experience and how Henri's art has helped transform the pains of the past into beauty and value. On Theresa's urging, Henri signs the portrait and the family leaves together in harmony.

Vocal Forces: Henri (tenor), Lee (baritone), Theresa (soprano),

We get an homage to the bustle of the town as the Secretary bustles about the studio at the top of the scene. The woodwinds are wildly active, and there is a rhythmic drive of running sixteenth notes.

Music Example 2.8.1 "Secretary bustle"

The musical score for "Secretary bustle" is presented in two systems. The first system (measures 17-20) features a treble clef and a 3/4 time signature. The melody consists of sixteenth-note triplets in both hands, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The second system (measures 21-24) features a bass clef and a 2/4 time signature. The melody continues with sixteenth-note triplets in both hands, with a key signature of two flats (Bb). The score is marked with '3' under the triplet groups.

Once the family enters and the Secretary is shooed away, we hear the "Family" theme from the orchestra now presented again in diatonic D-flat major indicating that many of the old wounds have healed and that they are happy to be together again as a unit.

Music Example 2.8.2 “Family Theme”

68

Twice as slow ♩ = 66 (HÉNRI enters and shoos the SECRETARY away.)

fp

f

We hear the “Lee” theme just after Henri mentions the unveiling hinting that the mystery may have been solved. The theme also serves as a calling card as Lee physically enters the space. As he does Henri quotes the old line “Father, Your hat? Your cane?” and the “Lee” theme sounds, implying that these memories served the portrait in some way, the understanding of all the little quirks that help shape a person into what they are.

Once the portrait is unveiled there is a swell in the orchestra followed by triplets that echo Theresa’s “Well” cadenza in Act one, scene five. Apparently, this portrait is as impressive as her husband's make-work projects back in the day. She clearly approves.

Music Example 2.8.3 “Well Cadenza”

When she says “You dear, you.” There are many ways an actor could interpret the line, but with the effluent orchestral moment prior, the line is very much a positive. When the horns underscore Theresa's approval of the painting with an echo of “To paint a man is to know him” this seems to affirm, at least in his mother's mind, that Henri really has gotten to know his father and painted an accurate rendering.

Music Example 2.8.4 “To paint a man is to know him Theme”

The image displays a musical score for Music Example 2.8.4, titled “To paint a man is to know him Theme”. It consists of three systems of music. The first system (measures 89-92) is a piano accompaniment in G major, marked *p* (piano). A red box highlights the final two measures (91-92), which are marked *legato espress.* (legato, expressive). The second system (measures 93-94) is a vocal line in G major, with the lyrics “I think you look lucky!” written below the notes. The third system (measures 93-96) is a piano accompaniment in G major, marked *mf* (mezzo-forte). A red box highlights the first two measures (93-94) of this system.

Theresa then adds to her husband, “I think you look lucky” with the “Lucky Cozad” theme sounding one final time in the orchestra.

Music Example 2.8.5 “Lucky Cozad Theme”

The image displays a musical score for the "Lucky Cozad Theme". It consists of two systems. The first system shows a vocal line in treble clef with the lyrics "I think you look lucky!". A fermata is placed over the word "think". The second system shows a piano accompaniment in grand staff (treble and bass clefs). Measure 93 is marked with a dynamic of *mf*. A red rectangular box highlights a section of the right-hand part of the piano accompaniment, starting from measure 93 and extending to the end of the system.

The transference of themes shows that the family all really knows each other now. They have a shared language, and through the use of these themes, we as listeners can feel like we understand and are in some way a part of that language.

The three family members commence in a final trio, on a reflective text taken from *The Art Spirit* set to a slow waltz. While the music is serial based, the harmonies are lush and the tessitura is quite virtuosic, leading to a very fulfilling climax.

Finally, as Henri turns to Lee to get his approval telling him, “I needed to see how you felt”, we hear the complete tone row that is the full “Lee” theme. The unresolved mystery of Lee has been solved. The seventh resolves to the octave, and father and son see their past through the same eyes.

Music Example 2.8.7 “Lee Resolution”

The image displays a musical score for 'Lee Resolution' in 3/4 time. It consists of three systems of staves:

- System 1 (Piano):** Measures 207-211. The right hand plays a series of chords, and the left hand has rests. A red box highlights measures 209-211, showing a melodic line in the right hand that begins with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G4, an eighth note A4, a quarter note B4, an eighth note C5, and a quarter note D5.
- System 2 (Vocal):** Measures 212-216. The vocal line is in 3/4 time. The lyrics are: "You have made me_ as I am, my son." A red box highlights measures 214-216, corresponding to the vocal line: "as I am, my son."
- System 3 (Piano):** Measures 217-221. The piano accompaniment features a complex melodic line in the right hand and a more rhythmic line in the left hand. A red box highlights measures 217-221, showing the piano's contribution to the 'Lee' theme.

Labels 'colla voce' are placed above the vocal staff and below the piano staff in the second system.

My son... my be - lov - ed son.

in tempo

Gua-

216

mp

p

Lee then returns to the portrait once more and we get a section of A major over F-sharp minor which the composer means as a reference to Satie's *Socrate* and Stravinsky's ballet *Apollo* as Lee passes into legend.⁷⁰ *Socrate* ends with the philosopher accepting his judgement and accepting death as in some ways Lee does in this passage. *Apollo* ends with his ascent as a god to Mount Parnassus, and this passage is similar for Lee as he transitions to historic icon. As he said in the first scene, Lee has been "waiting to be made part of history," and views this as a sort of end of his story. However, lest such an ending be too sentimentally saccharine, the composer tacks on a quick scene with the Secretary that lightens the mood in which she serves as an additional external positive judge of the work. This ending in the words of the composer is "a reference to Rosenkavalier."⁷¹ It leaves the audience with an ending that's a little happy and a little melancholically nostalgic, but in the end feels complete.

To conclude, *The Gambler's Son* revolves around its use of themes, and the way it uses them is what makes the work both accessible and worth performing.

⁷⁰ White, Tyler. Interview by author, Lincoln, May 14, 2021, transcript, Appendix C.

⁷¹ White, Tyler. Interview by author, Lincoln, May 14, 2021, transcript, Appendix C.

The music is rich with references both to itself and other great works, and while audiences may not always pick up on all of those references, the work is richer for them. Furthermore, the shared language of musical references developed by an audience over the course of a performance of the work allows for many of the most emotional scenes at the end of the drama to hit with particular impact bringing characters to life and dramatic moments to fruition. The use of these themes allows ears to be anchored, as post-tonal elements are introduced, so as not to be overwhelmed. The recurring musical themes are what make the opera work, what make it accessible, and help make it great art.

CHAPTER SIX ROLE BY ROLE ANALYSIS

This chapter provides a role-by-role breakdown of *The Gambler's Son*, describing the vocal demands and challenges of each character in the cast in order of vocal appearance. The breakdown includes the context of the real-life characters the roles represent from the source material, *Son of the Gambler's Man* by Mari Sandoz. This chapter serves to give future performers important information and is meant to provide future directors insights into successful casting. Where arias are listed, information is present about how to excerpt them with insights from the composer.

Role: Robert Henri's Secretary

Scope: Minor

Voice Part: Soubrette, though the role could be recast as an older Secretary refaced as a comic mezzo-soprano.

Range: C4-G#

Tessitura: C4-G#

Arias (when present): N/A

Character Age: This character is wholly an invention of the librettist and has been given no age.

Notable features: According to the librettist, the Secretary is intended to be a "comic device" whose recurring brief entrances and exits throughout the opera provide a structure that "holds it together."⁷²

Background information: None. This person does not exist outside the pages of the score.

Role: Richard H. Lee (John J. Cozad, as an old man)

Scope: Principal

Voice Part: Baritone

Range: A2-F4 (F#4)

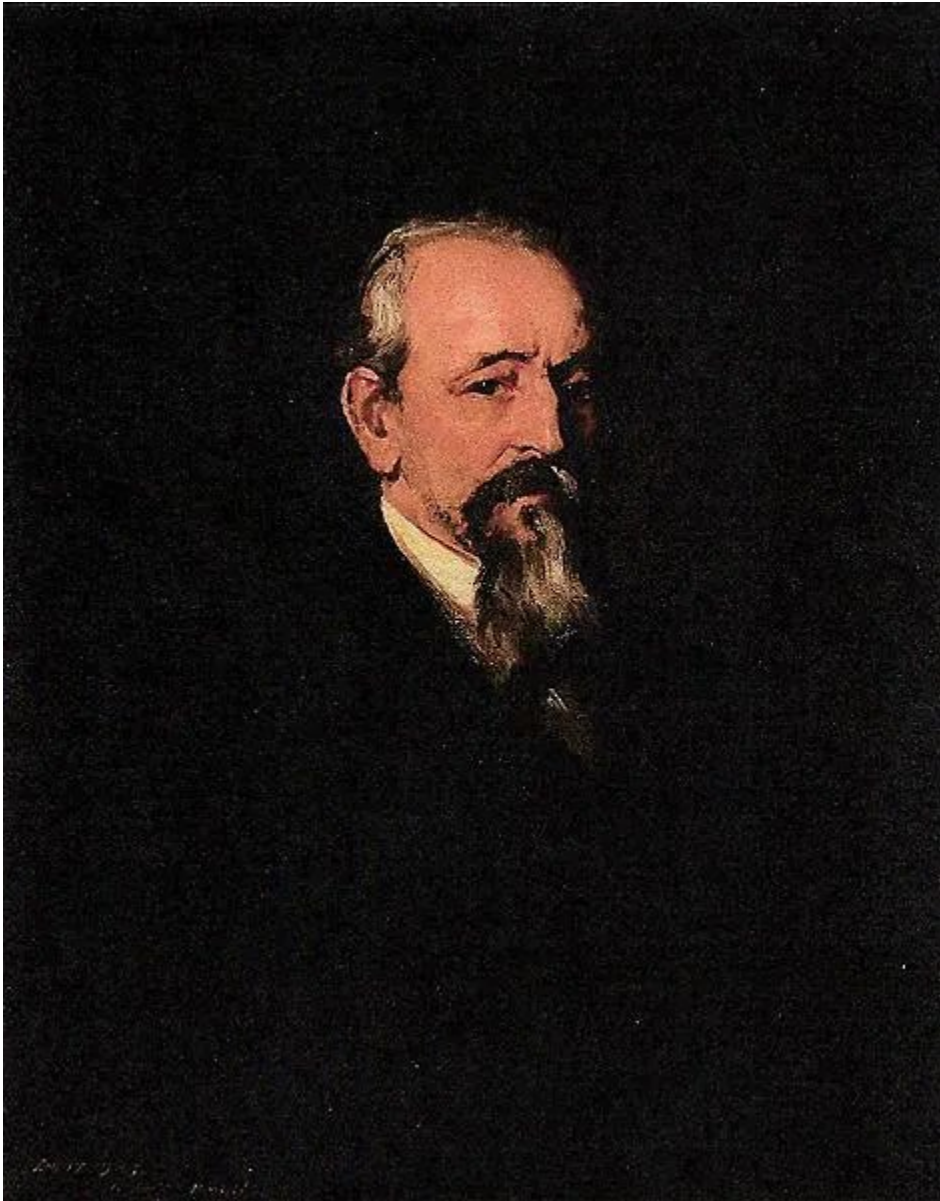
Tessitura: C3-D4

Arias (when present): Act 1, scene 1 "To paint a man is to know him" starting 5 bars before the vocal entrance going to last chord of the scene. Run time is approximately 4:05

Character Age: 72

⁷² White, Laura. Interview by author, Lincoln, June 1, 2021, transcript, Appendix B.

Notable features: The portrait of Lee:



73

Background information: There is a passage in the Sandoz that applies to how Lee approaches his portrait that may inform an actor in the opera: "But the gambler who

⁷³ Dawson, Nancy H., "Robert Henri: a Nebraska Legend" Sheldon Museum of Art Catalogues and Publications, 1999, accessed 7/18/21.
<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1062&context=sheldonpubs>

risked everything a thousand times in his life hesitated now. At last he came, bowed somewhat, and moving slowly, his eyes down as though considering every step. He stopped a little aloof from the son as though to keep himself free from any domination, free to see this in his own way... He began to tremble a little and his eyes to water as though suddenly very old. He shook his head hard, as when he had to shake back a mass of black hair falling forward in the heat of a big play. But it served now too, and in a moment he was steady once more, the impersonal gambler, as he held out his hand to his son"⁷⁴ We see a lot of the older Lee's physicality described here, his mannerisms, speed, and demeanor.

Role: John J. Cozad, a gambler and a real estate developer

Scope: Principal

Voice Part: Cavalier Baritone

Range: B2-F#4 (Ab4)

Tessitura:C3-F4

Arias (when present): Act 1 Scene 2 "Out of a tight spot again" starting with the pickup to the vocal entrance going to the final "Lucky John J.!" with 3 bars of postlude and cadencing at the $\frac{3}{4}$ bar with a potential cadence being a cut to the chord at the *colla voce* that follows.

Character Age: 42

⁷⁴ Sandoz, Mari. *Son of the Gambler's Man*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1976), p. 333.

Notable features: A photograph of Cozad was taken in his 30's. His goatee is mentioned on multiple occasions as is his dark hair. Sandoz describes him as handsome with gaunt cheeks.



Background information: Cozad's wounded hand that he receives in act one comes from an episode in the Sandoz where Cozad scrabbles home in the middle of the night after being thrown from a train by two cowboys.⁷⁶ Sandoz describes Cozad as having a stride that is "proud and "arrogant."⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Bell, Bob, "Son of a Gunfighter" True West Magazine, Cave Creek, 2013, accessed 7/18/21. <https://truwestmagazine.com/article/son-of-a-gunfighter/>

⁷⁶ Sandoz, *Son of the Gambler's Man*, p. 35.

⁷⁷ Sandoz, *Son of the Gambler's Man*, p. 3.

Role: Man One

Scope: Minor

Voice Part: Tenor

Range: F3-G4

Tessitura: F3-G4

Arias (when present): N/A

Character Age: Young to middle aged man

Notable features: Sandoz describes him as working hard

Background information: All Sandoz describes is that the man is pumping hard and in a hurry.⁷⁸

Role: Man Two

Scope: Minor

Voice Part: Tenor

Range: Ab3-Eb3

Tessitura: Ab3-Eb3

Arias (when present): N/A

Character Age: Young to middle aged man

Notable features: Sandoz describes him as working hard

⁷⁸ Sandoz, *Son of the Gambler's Man*, p. 13.

Background information: All Sandoz describes is that the man is pumping hard and in a hurry.⁷⁹

Role: Settler One

Scope: Minor

Voice Part: Tenor

Range: F#3-F#4

Tessitura: F#3-F#4

Arias (when present): N/A

Character Age: Young man between 20-40 years of age

Background information: Sandoz describes the settlers as “plough-gaunted” and refers to their “calloused clasps” as Cozad shakes their hands.⁸⁰

Role: Settler Two

Scope: Minor

Voice Part: Tenor

Range: A3-F4

Tessitura: A3-F4

Arias (when present): N/A

Character Age: Young man between 20-40 years of age

⁷⁹ Sandoz, *Son of the Gambler's Man*, p. 13.

⁸⁰ Sandoz, *Son of the Gambler's Man*, p. 30.

Background information: Sandoz describes the settlers as “plough-gaunted” and refers to their “calloused clasps” as Cozad shakes their hands.⁸¹

Role: Settler Three

Scope: Minor

Voice Part: baritone

Range: C3-G3

Tessitura: C3-G3

Arias (when present): N/A

Character Age: Young man between 20-40 years of age

Background information: Sandoz describes the settlers as “plough-gaunted” and refers to their “calloused clasps” as Cozad shakes their hands.⁸²

Role: Traber Gatewood, Cozad's brother-in-law

Scope: Minor

Voice Part: Tenor

Range: D3-F4

Tessitura: D3-F4

Arias (when present): N/A

Character Age: 21

⁸¹ Sandoz, *Son of the Gambler Man*, p. 30.

⁸² Sandoz, *Son of the Gambler Man*, p. 30.

Notable Features: Sandoz describes Traber as “Solid and square-built.”⁸³

Background information: Sandoz notes that Traber is trained as a dentist who was an “easy laughing man.”⁸⁴ Traber should come off as intelligent, youthful, and, at least at first, jovial.

Role: Johnny Cozad, Cozad’s eldest son

Scope: Secondary

Voice Part: Lyric Tenor

Range: F#3-Ab4

Tessitura: G#3-F#4

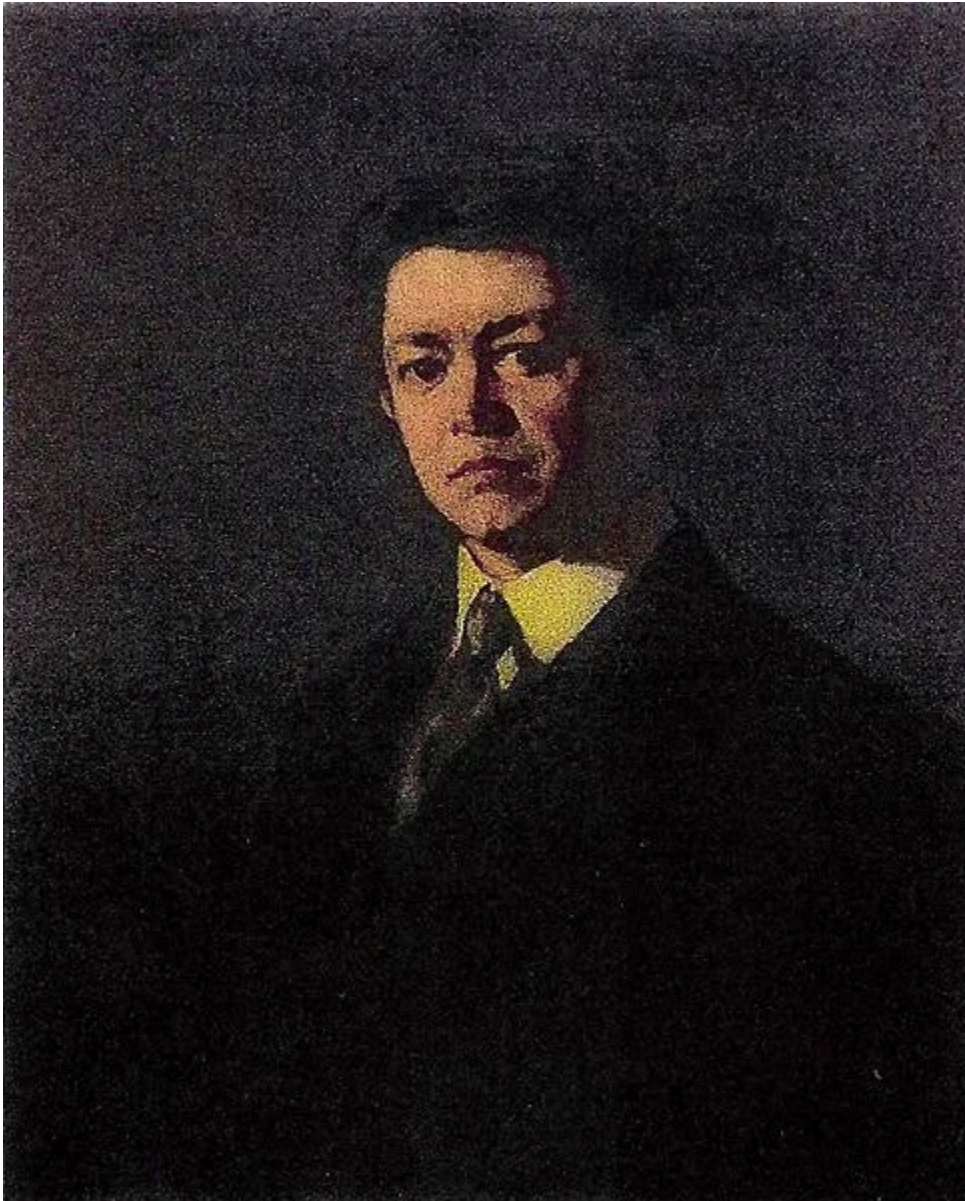
Arias (when present): N/A

Character Age: teenager

⁸³ Sandoz, *Son of the Gambler Man*, p. 38.

⁸⁴ Sandoz, *Son of the Gambler Man*, p. 38.

Notable features: A portrait of Johnny was done (albeit at an age well after 10)



85

Background information: Sandoz describes Johnny as, “Poised and soft spoken like his gentle mother.”⁸⁶ It is also of note that the Sandoz contains a sub plot in which

⁸⁵ Dawson, Nancy H., "Robert Henri: a Nebraska Legend" Sheldon Museum of Art Catalogues and Publications, 1999, accessed 7/18/21.
<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1062&context=sheldonpubs>

⁸⁶ Sandoz, *Son of the Gambler Man*, p. 12.

Johnny is suspected of arson that does not find its way into the opera. Both the composer and librettist were concerned that it would detract from the main story they were trying to tell. However, Johnny does go on to become a great doctor later in life. Johnny should come off as caring and agreeable.

Role: Robert Henry Cozad, Cozad's younger son, Robert Henri as a teenage boy

Scope: Secondary

Voice Part: Pants Role Mezzo-Soprano

Range: D4-Ab5

Tessitura: A4-F5

Arias (when present): N/A

Character Age: teenager

Notable features: Sandoz describes young Robert as resembling his father, "The same thin temples, the dark glossy hair, the short chin, and the same intensity of eye."⁸⁷

Background information: Sandoz refers to Robert as "excitable" and refers to the regular "Skulks that his father never tolerated."⁸⁸ He is a normal, energetic, spirited seven year old.

Role: New Settler One

Scope: Minor

⁸⁷ Sandoz, *Son of the Gambler Man*, p. 14.

⁸⁸ Sandoz, *Son of the Gambler Man*, p. 222.

Voice Part: Tenor

Range: A3-F4

Tessitura: A3-F4

Arias (when present): N/A

Character Age: This character is invented by the librettist and has no age designation

Notable features: N/A

Background information: N/A

Role: New Settler Two

Scope: Minor

Voice Part: baritone

Range: G3-D4

Tessitura: G3-D4

Arias (when present): N/A

Character Age: This character is invented by the librettist and has no age designation

Notable features: N/A

Background information: N/A

Role: Sanderson, the town of Cozad's stationmaster

Scope: Minor

Voice Part: baritone

Range: Eb3-Eb4

Tessitura: Eb3-Eb4

Arias (when present): N/A

Character Age: Not specified by Sandoz, but he seems to be a man of status due to his position, so late 20s to 30s

Notable features: Sandoz mentions his red beard, short stature, and corn cob pipe on multiple occasions.⁸⁹

Background information: As a station agent, Sanderson is up on information and gossip. A side plot left out of the opera is Sanderson is laid off and relocated due to cutbacks in funding at Union Pacific which causes Robert some dismay as he and the boy enjoyed chats.

Role: Theresa Gatewood Cozad, Cozad's wife, mother of Johnny and Robert

Scope: Principal

Voice Part: Coloratura Soprano

Range: E4-D6 (D#6)

Tessitura: A4-B5

Arias (when present): Act 2, scene 2, for concert excerpts start at the andantino *sospeso* through the *più lento*. At which point cut to the *colla voce* "so we said our vows signed the book..." through Cozad's entrance at the *più mosso*. Then cut to the

⁸⁹ Sandoz, *Son of the Gambler's Man*, p. 79.

8/8 bar after the andantino to the end of the aria. Run time 8:00. For audition excerpts begin instead after the first cut at the *andantino sospeso* that follows the colla voce, the singer's first text reads, "My mother is here to watch our growing family tree so far" continue to the bar of Cozad's entrance at the *più mosso* and cut to the 8/8 bar after the andantino where the next vocal line is "and so we took our vows" to finish the aria. Run time is 4:10.

Character Age: 36

Notable features: Here is a portrait of Theresa at age 19



Background information: Theresa Gatewood Cozad was a woman of some status. Sandoz refers to her largely by her actions, which seem to be those of a manager, helper, and enabler of others, “comfort her husband, saying it quietly, softly in her Virginia way.”⁹¹ Only in the opera do we get the type of depth to her character that

⁹⁰ Bell, Bob, "Son of a Gunfighter" True West Magazine, Cave Creek, 2013, accessed 7/18/21. <https://truwestmagazine.com/article/son-of-a-gunfighter/>

⁹¹ Sandoz, *Son of the Gambler Man*, p. 191.

we see in her aria. Cozad's choice to refer to her as a diamond yielded some insights into his view on their relationship, "if she's (Theresa) a jewel, if she's a diamond, that means he's hard. Which he (Cozad), values in all sorts of different ways, her stalwartness, and all of that in a life full of chaos, and all of the other stuff that goes through her, her being so solid, and such a solid part of his life is, you know, important to him. But, it's not the kind of sweeping romance the first time we hear him talk about her. He also wants it to be a good enough town for Teresa. That's one of the measures of how the town's going to be good enough. She's part of the picture but it's not the centerpiece of the picture necessarily. And it's not their family together. It's not their relationship together. That's going to bind the town. It is that she is set within this creation."⁹²

Role: Cowboy One

Scope: Minor

Voice Part: Tenor

Range: A3-G4(A4)

Tessitura: A3-G4(A4)

Arias (when present): N/A

Character Age: late teens to 20's

⁹² White, Tyler. Interview by author, Lincoln, March 19, 2021, transcript, Appendix C.

Notable features: Sandoz mentions the cowboys' guns as a particularly important and prominent feature. Also, his new saddle and new horse, or new to him anyway.⁹³

Background information: Theresa's reaction to these men in absolute horror and fear for Cozad's life implies a real threat from this interaction. They should come off as self-assured and threatening.

Role: Cowboy two

Scope: Minor

Voice Part: Tenor

Range: G#3-D#4(F#4)

Tessitura:G#3-D#4(F#4)

Arias (when present): N/A

Character Age: late teens to 20's

Notable features: Sandoz mentions the cowboy's gun as a particularly important and prominent feature. Also, his new saddle and new horse, or new to him anyway.⁹⁴

Background information: Theresa's reaction to these men in absolute horror and fear for Cozad's life implies a real threat from this interaction. They should come off as self-assured and threatening.

⁹³ Sandoz, *Son of the Gambler's Man*, p. 25.

⁹⁴ Sandoz, *Son of the Gambler's Man*, p. 25.

Role: Robert Henri, a noted painter

Scope: Principal

Voice Part: Lyric Tenor

Range: E3-B4(C5)

Tessitura: G4-A5

Arias (when present): Act 1, scene 8 starting at the *larghetto espansivo* leading into “What were the signs in the air” and through the final “over all the sunset glow” ending at the *colla voce* that follows. Run time 5:10; Act 2 Scene 6 starting 5 bars before vocal entrance, “Never change the course of a line” through the end of the vocal line in the scene and ending three bars after the vocal cutoff. Run time 3:00

Character Age: 37

Notable features: Notable photograph of Henri:



95

Background information: Sandoz has little to offer on a grown Henri other than his love of a cigar and his willingness to scrub a canvas and start anew.⁹⁶ His interest in exploring the truth drives him.

Role: Alfred Pearson, a struggling farmer and rancher

Scope: Secondary

Voice Part: Baritone

Range: C3-E4 (F#4)

Tessitura: C3-Eb4

⁹⁵ 1905 Photo from the Peter A. Juley & Son Collection, Smithsonian American Art Museum.

⁹⁶ Sandoz, *Son of the Gambler's Man*, p. 322.

Arias (when present): N/A

Character Age: 50 at the time of his death

Notable features: Pearson is not described in detail by Sandoz. However, there does seem to be discrepancy between historical records of the man being born in 1832 and being described as “young” by Sandoz. Perhaps he aged well for a pioneer.

Background information: Sandoz describes the physical conflict between Cozad and Pearson in detail in chapter 22 for those looking to recreate a detailed version of their fight.

Role: King O’Dell, an old acquaintance of Cozad’s

Scope: Secondary

Voice Part: Baritone

Range: D#3-Eb4

Tessitura: D#3-Eb4

Arias (when present): N/A

Character Age: Not specified, but just got out of jail after 20 years, so likely over 40.

Notable features: Described as “grayer and older” than last seen. ⁹⁷

Background information: Aside from the offhand comment about his jail time, and his connection to a gambling family of O'Dells, we learn very little about King O’Dell from Sandoz.

⁹⁷ Sandoz, *Son of the Gambler Man*, p. 98.

Role: Julia Gatewood, Theresa's mother

Scope: minor

Voice Part: Mezzo-Soprano

Range: D4-Db5

Tessitura: D4-Db5

Arias (when present): N/A

Character Age: 50's

Notable features: Sandoz makes sure to point out that Julia was Virginia raised. She has a full head of gray hair.

Background information: Described as a nurturer offering coffee, a fine cook, rare to anger, and ran a local store.⁹⁸ Her southern background seems to be part of what defines her as well.

Role: Card Dealer

Scope: minor

Voice Part: Tenor

Range: G3-F#4

Tessitura: G3-F#4

Arias (when present): N/A

Character Age: No age given

⁹⁸ Sandoz, *Son of the Gambler's Man*, p. 174.

Notable features: none

Background information: none

Role: "Deputy"

Scope: minor

Voice Part: Tenor

Range: F3-F#4

Tessitura: F3-F#4

Arias (when present): N/A

Character Age: No age given

Notable features: none

Background information: none

Role: Mrs. R. H. Lee

Scope: Secondary

Voice Part: Coloratura Soprano

Range: E#4-B5(D#6)

Tessitura: G4-B5

Arias (when present): N/A

Character Age: 66

Notable features: a portrait of the older Theresa:



99

Background information: According to Sandoz Theresa maintained her caring, calm nature and sense of humor in her old age.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Dawson, Nancy H., "Robert Henri: a Nebraska Legend" Sheldon Museum of Art Catalogues and Publications, 1999, accessed 7/18/21.
<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1062&context=sheldonpubs>

¹⁰⁰ Sandoz, *Son of the Gambler Man*, p. 328.

CHAPTER SEVEN
PREMIERE PERFORMANCE ADAPTATIONS FROM THE ORIGINAL SCORE,
RECEPTION, AND POTENTIAL FUTURE ADAPTATIONS

This chapter discusses the premiere performances, adaptations made, and potential future adaptations to be considered. The premiere was a success in part because of the many changes made both to the score and the way the director and singers were able to adapt the work to the stage. This chapter will conclude with potential ensemble excerpts for opera scenes or gala concerts (excerptible arias are covered in Chapter 5).

The world premiere performance was given in Cozad, Nebraska, at 7:30 p.m., Thursday, October 17th, at the Cozad High School Auditorium, 1710 Meridian Avenue. There was special value in performing an opera where one of the main plot points is the founding of the town in which it is being performed. However, the only venue available did not have space to allow for the full orchestration. As such, Tyler White wrote a reduction for an eight-piece chamber orchestra that allowed for the venue to be used. The set was cut down and the staging was also adapted to the smaller space.

The reduction does allow for what is essentially a chamber version of the opera to be performed, however, according to the composer the sound was a bit thin comparatively, which he solved by adding the piano vocal reduction to a second piano part. The existence of a chamber reduction does allow for the work to be performed in spaces that lack a substantial orchestra pit or cast some of the heavier roles like Cozad with a lighter cast. Overall, the existence of a chamber reduction

allows for a lot of flexibility in how and where the opera can be produced and will hopefully lead to more productions of the opera that otherwise would not have been possible.

What is lost in the chamber reduction are some of the climatic dynamic highs found in the score, particularly during orchestral interludes such as the fight scene in Act 2, scene 4. White said in interviews that even the full score could be larger and talked about a reorchestration that would add more brass and woodwinds.¹⁰¹ The full orchestrated version was designed with the Kimball Hall orchestra pit in mind.

The opera is orchestrated for:

Flute I (doubling piccolo)
 Flute II/Piccolo
 Oboe
 Clarinet in B-flat I
 Clarinet in B-flat II/Bass Clarinet
 Bassoon

Horn in F I
 Horn in F II
 Trumpet in C I
 Trumpet in C II
 Trombone (with E attachment)

Timpani (4)

Mallet Percussion (1 player):
 Vibraphone, Glockenspiel

Percussion (2 players):
 Bass Drum, Tam-tam, Suspended Cymbal, Crash Cymbals, Snare Drum, Hi-hat, Tubo or Shaker, Steel Bar Chimes, Maracas, Vibraslap

¹⁰¹ White, Tyler. Interview by author, Lincoln, February 26, 2021, transcript, Appendix C.

Harp
Piano

Strings (minimum: 4-4-4-2-2)

There were two additional performances given in Lincoln, Nebraska performed at 7:30 p.m., Friday, November 15th and at 3:00 p.m., Sunday November 17th in Kimball Hall. The Sunday show was recorded, and as of the writing of this document is publicly available on YouTube thanks to the generosity of the composer.¹⁰²

The premiere was featured in the *Journal Star*, covered by News Nebraska, and in the Nebraska Quarterly. The Star refers to *The Gambler's Son* as a work with, "a hint of marital infidelity and violence — all the elements opera really thrives on." and praises the singers and score saying, "The singers enunciate extremely well. There will be supertitles, but I don't think you'll need them. You can understand the words. The drama is quite hard-hitting and very approachable and the music encompasses various styles, from the 19th century to today."¹⁰³

News Nebraska did interviews with audience members in Cozad including quotes such as, "I could feel every emotion. I felt like I was part of the show, even though I was just in the audience," said one audience member." News Nebraska also mentions that "the opera received a standing ovation, one that was greatly deserved.

¹⁰² Act 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qFTBr4BZBxk>

Act 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t-tvbAT1KRI&t=3291s>

¹⁰³ Wolgamott, Kent "The Gamber's Son' debuts Friday" *Journal Star*, November 19, 2019, G12.

The show and its message resonated throughout the audience.”¹⁰⁴ And Nebraska Quarterly refers to the story as “Compelling” and “intensely dramatic” in its review.¹⁰⁵

There were many adaptations made to the work to make it such a success. The first major decision, made by the stage director, William Shomos, was to have all the action that took place in Cozad occur in the mind’s eye of Lee and Henri within Henri's studio. As such, we never leave Henri’s Studio, New York 1903. The walls of the studio become a canvas of sorts, housing projections of the plains, iterations of the town of Cozad, ominous silhouettes, and more. Characters from the past emerge from the walls as if springing to life out of these projected memories and the past plays out in front of them. Composer Tyler White loved the choice, and it allowed for some tighter transitions as well as some interesting acting choices that otherwise would not have been possible. For example, in Act 2, scene 2 where young Robert is beaten by his father, it is possible for the older Henri to watch his younger self acting out this memory and allows the audience to see the impact these memories are making on Henri in real time. Making the frame story a physical frame also allowed for smooth scene shifts by minimizing the amount of scenery that had to be moved on and off.

The director added a false exit for Lee after the Secretary shows him in Act 1, scene 1, before Henri has even arrived. As opposed to reflecting on his son’s work,

¹⁰⁴ Heineman, Sydney “UNL hosts the premiere of the Gambler’s Son, an opera based on Mari Sandoz’s 1960 novel” *Nebraska News Service*, December 13, 2019.

¹⁰⁵ Andersen, Kathe “Gamblin’ Man: Opera based on Mari Sandoz novel debuts in Cozad” *Nebraska Alumni Association* (Lincoln, Nebraska), Winter 2019.

the mere thought of this interaction is causing Lee to have second thoughts. This raises the stakes for both the portrait and the first interaction between Lee and Henri. It does come at the expense of the audience connecting Lee's respect of his son's work until later in the work. It leaves open the question of whether or not Cozad respects his son's work and heightens drama by creating that additional potential conflict.

Any director who takes on this project will have to deal with numerous technical elements including, but not limited to, stage instructions for a cattle stampede. In the premiere it was handled with projections that were stills of the stampede, which Lee reacted to. The orchestra did the work of bringing the stills to life. This worked well as it introduced the idea of the studio becoming Lee's memory. The stills functioned as a transition from the still artwork Lee was seeing on the walls, not moving about, but simply becoming something from his past.

The composer had originally conceptualized the older Lee and his younger self (Cozad) to be performed by the same baritone. Likewise, the old Theresa and the young Theresa were intended to be performed by the same soprano. In the premiere production, William Shomos, the stage director, opted to split up both of those roles with Lee and Cozad played by separate baritones, while younger and older Theresa were played by separate sopranos. This, in fact, matched the splitting of the Young Robert/Henri character, that was intended and composed for two separate singers: a trouser mezzo and a tenor, respectively. Having both Lee and Cozad on stage at the same time allowed the audience to see Lee reliving some of his

glory days. While not entirely a shadow exercise, Lee did echo some of Cozad's blocking as he observed from afar. This gave the audience a very solid connection between the two characters very early on in the opera that otherwise only exists more loosely in the score.

The 100th meridian sign was handled by a projection at the top of the stage. Since no character directly interacts with the sign, this served well. There was no need to bring a sign on and off, and the projection was large and clear.

Another thing any director will have to deal with is the stage direction calling for a rattlesnake to wander on during Cozad's aria. The premiere production used a 16" remote controlled battery powered robotic toy rattlesnake. The snake proved difficult to control, and while it functioned properly in each performance, it never functioned properly in rehearsal. Issues included poor handling, short range on the remote control, and short battery life. On one occasion it ended up in the orchestra pit. It was also difficult to get the snake to read to an audience. Still, the snake functioned in performance, so it remains a viable option.

The next technical element that deserves mention is the handcar that comes on stage at the end of Act 1, scene 2. The premiere had a non-functional handcar fabricated out of wood. The pump on the car was able to be moved by the men, but had no effect on the motion of the cart. A long plank was attached to the bottom to allow the cart to be pushed on and pulled off by stagehands. The cart was reinforced to hold the weight of three people.

The transition to Act 1, scene 3 was handled with projections. The literal descriptions in the libretto were eschewed for a more portraitesque approach to a rendering of the town with the exception of a large “Cozad” sign that is flown in. The sign is pivotal in the conflict with Pearson, but the rest adds to the feeling of being immersed in an artistic rendering of the past.

A directorial choice that was made was to have Cozad follow the cowboys off at the end of Act 1, scene 3 instead of going to his home as the libretto suggests. This implies that while Cozad may talk a good game about keeping gambling out of his town, he only means to do so for others, and not for himself. It highlights the hypocrisy of the character and begs the question that he may be addicted to the practice, as opposed to being a man who truly believes that he’s doing the right thing in keeping the town safe. Cozad remains a hypocrite in either interpretation, but young Robert also sees him go off, and begins to understand some of what his father does privately vs publicly. This helps set up the scene where Robert is so excited to have figured out how to earn \$50,000 in Act 2, scene 3. It’s as if he’s finally been let in on the secret he’s just barely been missing out on this whole time.

The next large technical element to conquer is a grasshopper plague. The premiere production had the chorus on stage, women with potted bouquets of flowers. As the grasshoppers descended, a lighting effect was used to darken the stage somewhat, as the men reacted by swatting at the imaginary bugs, while the women plucked the flowers off their geraniums in an automaton-like fashion. The

scene developed into a melee that eventually collapsed in a writhing mass onto the floor in near darkness.

Several times during scene transitions such as the one between Act 1, scenes 5 and 6 we got to see young Robert sketching his surroundings, and the older Henri working on his sketches of his father as he reflects on those memories. It was at moments like this when physicalizing the frame story really succeeded. One thing that was lost a bit in the projections was the development of the town. This is rather a strong element in the stage directions of libretto, but it was largely neglected in the premiere.

The premiere production also made use of silhouettes on the upstage canvas-like wall. When King O'Dell entered town, instead of roaming about the townsfolk, he painted a larger-than-life image of himself in shadow by casting a large ominous silhouette before entering. The O'Dell scene is another where having Henri on stage proved useful, as during O'Dell's waltz he was able to sing some of it directly to the image of Henri, driving home the lasting damage to Cozad's reputation through generations with this event.

Silhouette was also used in Theresa's aria as a means of representing her imagination. According to the libretto, in her mind's eye, she envisions Cozad dancing with a woman that may or may not be her. In the premiere production she instead saw Cozad dancing with two women in silhouette. This removes a great deal of the ambiguity of the image. If, as the libretto suggests, Cozad is dancing with a woman that looks like Theresa he may be dancing with a younger version of herself,

and the vision could be a memory. Or he could be dancing with another woman and the vision could be a suspicion. With the multiple partner approach taken in the premiere, Theresa is sure Cozad is having affairs, and is justifying that he is a good man despite that fact. Again, because of the physicalization of the frame story, Henri was able to observe her processing all of this up close and unseen..

In order to create the effect of a stable in Act 2, scene 3 the stage's trap door was used as an entrance and exit to simulate a hay loft, and lighting effects created a straw like floor. This transformed the space in a new way, and added to the "coming out of the walls" effect for the characters. It also allowed for a quick transition by creating an additional entrance.

There is a technical event that happens in this scene that was omitted in the original production. The destruction of the faro table by Cozad with an axe was instead substituted by a dramatic flipping of the table and chairs. The splintering of a table would have led to a scene transition into Act 2, scene 4 that would have been even more difficult. Plus, the procurement of at least 3 breakable tables and an axe for the effect proved to be prohibitive. This was continually a point of friendly contention between the librettist, who really was committed to the axing of the table, and the stage director, who was not.

Throughout Cozad's duet with Robert, Robert cleans up the mess of the tossing of the faro scene as a means of atonement. This choice, while not in the libretto, serves both a dramatic purpose, but also helps smooth the transition to the next scene. Robert restores one of Henri's tables on which he had been storing

paints. This not only served to remove stage clutter, but showed the audience that the further we get into the opera, the closer the two worlds seem to come together.

In Act 2, scene 4 there is another moment where the physicalization of the frame story was successful. Cozad reaches a low point when he is told the town's name has been changed from Cozad to Gould. In the premiere production, he raged and then he collapsed into the chair in which Lee had been sitting for Henri's portrait. Henri immediately took note of this brief moment of his father's exposed vulnerability and committed it to canvas. At this moment the world of Cozad seemed to have fully invaded Henri's process and whatever wall there was between the two times no longer existed.

In the conflict with Pearson the premiere production made some alterations for safety and clarity. Instead of throwing the sign down as the libretto suggests, Pearson threw paint directly at Cozad. This removed the chance of injury from a thrown sign and damage to said sign. Even the paint was mimed, so no clothing was harmed. As for the shooting of Pearson, to make the knife draw more clear, it occurred further away from Cozad in the open. Similarly, to make the gun and shooting more clear those also happened at distance rather than in a clinch with Pearson coming at Cozad with the knife at a downward angle as the libretto suggests. No blanks were used. The shots were mimed and sound was provided by the orchestra.

The director had the chorus amass by the Cozad home in a threatening manner to show the threat of a lynch mob at the end of Act 2, scene 4. They slowly

disperse at the top of Act 2, scene 5. It helped keep the tension in the scene and made more apparent the threat to the lives of Cozad and his family.

The final breaking of the frame story wall occurred in the transition between Act 2, scene 7 and scene 8 as young Robert and the older Henri see and acknowledge one another. We see young Robert see the man he will become, and we see the older Henri look back on the boy he was.

Lastly, the chorus was added to the final trio to bolster it and give it more finality. Characters from their lives join, as the characters sing, “We read the signs here in this air” as if to say that it is the totality of their experiences together that gets at their real truth. (Originally Shomos had the chorus appear, mutely. That staging inspired White to write vocal parts for the chorus to sing on an “oo”.)

There are other adaptations that could have been made of course, and many that were often considered. Chief among them is the combination of the roles of Lee and Cozad and Old and Young Theresa to be consolidated into roles for a singular baritone and a singular soprano. In interviews with the composer, he spoke about the possibility of having Lee and Cozad sung by one baritone in his design of the score.¹⁰⁶ While this particular production was ill-suited to such a combination due to the desire to physicalize the frame story, the composer has expressed a wish to see a production where those roles are combined.

¹⁰⁶ White, Tyler. Interview by author, Lincoln, March 26, 2021, transcript, Appendix C.

There are many interludes that include passages that are designed to be repeatable in the event that transitions take longer than expected because of wig and makeup shifts from one period to the next.

If dancers are available, it opens up options for many of the projections to become interesting opportunities for dance. Any events, from the cattle stampede, to the grasshopper plague, to even the rattlesnake could make for an opportunity for dance as opposed to realism.

The rattlesnake could also be solved by projections in the same vein that the cattle appeared. A static snake in portrait could be real to a man who himself is a painting and a memory that has come to life.

The grasshopper plague may call for more than an image, and some sort of animated short could be useful as an option. The event itself described by the Sandoz is quite horrific, and a short that really gets at that horror would accompany the music well. Such a short could also be possible for a cattle stampede as well.

The director mentioned, given more time, a desire to have the paintings scattered around Henri's studio contain the seeds of all projected images used. The idea came up too late in the process to implement. Of course, this might have meant having a painting that included cattle which Henri may have never painted.

If a production opts to physicalize the frame story, the more opportunities that allow the two worlds to overlap better. Cozad in the portrait chair and Cozad by the trap door work well. Henri walking right up to Theresa during her aria and Lee coming right up to Cozad are both effective. As a general rule, when action in one

time is fairly static the other can really explore. There might be an opportunity for such a moment in Act 1, scene 7 during the large ensemble which is static for the town of Cozad. Moments where the two worlds cross over are great, and having Henri really wander into the past could be effective.

These adaptations were part of what made the work such a success in its premiere performance. They also demonstrate that while the work is grounded in historical events, there still exists a great deal of freedom to create within it. That the work had success at its premiere, that it exists in both grand and chamber form, that casting choices can be made to adapt to the type of singers you have, and that many great excerpts exist hopefully serves as encouragement for further exploration of this great piece.

The Gambler's Son has many excerptible ensembles. While arias are covered in Chapter 5, the ensembles of note are as follows:

Act and Scene	Characters (Voice parts)	First Line	Run Time
Act 1, scene 4	Henri and Lee (Tenor/Baritone)	"This sketch is no good"	4:00
Act 2, scene 3	Robert and Cozad (Mezzo/Baritone)	"I didn't mean it"	3:10
Act 2, scene 7	Thresa, Robert, and Johnny (Soprano, Mezzo, Tenor)	"I am not afraid"	3:00
Act 2, scene 8	Theresa, Henri, and Lee (Soprano, Tenor, Baritone)	"What were the signs there in that air?"	2:45

CHAPTER EIGHT CONCLUSION

The composer said in interviews that what he was after was for “the listener to recognize that something is done in a manner that is very simple in playing, but that is nevertheless, fresh, and quite new.”¹⁰⁷ White’s use of catchy themes across his work that is otherwise post-tonal creates a familiarity with the music to which listeners can adapt, but still feels new. *The Gambler’s Son* is based in the true story of the town of Cozad, but the opera balances what is at times an action-packed history with the mystery and discovery of complex characters. It strikes a subtle balance that allows the audience to be drawn in by the characters, hooked by the themes, and pulled into its world. *The Gambler’s Son* stands out from works of its time that seek to find that familiarity with either well-trod topics, well known musical tropes, or recycled stories. White’s opera instead develops familiarly with the audience by his use of themes that make his characters and his score seem both unconventional but immediately identifiable.

Part of what makes this opera feel American in its composition is the film-like approach White takes to his composition. While the music is far from a film score, using much more complex harmonies than are commonly found commonly in films, the opera does have moments that seem designed for the screen. White himself admits as much saying:

¹⁰⁷ White, Tyler. Interview by author and Kao Zhou, Lincoln, March 4, 2020, transcript, Appendix C.

In dealing with these temporal shifts, I imagine them sort of as filmic flashbacks. I even imagine in different parts of arias going in for the close-up; and not just in arias or even scenes, but even just shots there in moments. So that is where some detail of expression needs to be highlighted. I have less than no experience in making movies, but I think that it's so much a part of our culture now. That's just part of how I think. That's at least how Americans think. Modern Americans. You just do your scene work with orchestration. You use different tools than a video editor would, but you're trying to paint a picture. You're trying to tell the story, and this is important: as you're composing, you do have visual elements sort of in your mind's eye. It's not always about a sound.

Opera companies have had to adapt to a post pandemic reality, and even many regional houses have started to make films of their works. White's approach may point to the possibility of a filmed adaptation of the work in its future. However, it is also something for a stage director to be aware of as a challenge for the stage. Careful arrangement of the characters on stage is required to make sure that when White is going from shot to shot in his mind's eye that the theater audience can easily follow the focus of the action.

Compared to other operas of its time, *The Gambler's Son* stands out for its story as well. Unlike many operas of this period which tend to be very message driven, *The Gambler's Son* is character driven. Like all great operas it has a message that is easy to explain, hard to absorb, and easy to forget. Take for example *La Bohème*. In Puccini's great work the message is simple: people die, sometimes too soon, and it is not fair, so you must live your life to the fullest every day like the bohemians. The way the opera gets us to absorb this large truth is not by driving its message, but by telling a character driven story that allows us to open ourselves to the truth of the story; and the reason people cry at the end of Puccini's masterwork

even having seen it before is because it contains a truth that is easy to forget. The message of *The Gambler's Son* is that no matter our trauma, we must seek to understand each other, repent for our mistakes, and absolve one another to find beauty and release from that trauma. Robert is dragged out to a wild land by his father, physically abused, and then abandoned, and yet, he still finds enough beauty in the man to paint a portrait so good it has been called "one of his finest."¹⁰⁸ Cozad takes responsibility for his part in his son's trauma, offers a meaningful apology, and finds peace through absolution. It is an opera about forgiveness at its core and our connection to the characters opens us to that simple truth. It is worth retelling again and again because it is so easy to lose sight of that idea.

Unlike most works of its time, the message plays a secondary role, and the work is largely character driven. We aren't bombarded with it from the start which commonly occurs in much modern opera that contains a political message. *The Gambler's Son* also avoids the growing trend of fusing together styles and presents itself unapologetically as a straight opera, but it does so without following many of the major trends compositionally or in terms of subject matter which makes it different from most operas of its time. It is balanced in a way that feels old and new all at once.

Part of what accomplishes the achievement of balance is the successful collaboration between composer and librettist that led to a strong libretto. One could easily imagine an opera that tried to squeeze in too many details from the

¹⁰⁸ Henshaw, Tom. "Town Finally Traces Long-Lost Founder." *Democrat and Chronicle* (Rochester, New York), May 3, 1957.

Sandoz resulting in a series of action sequences, or an opera that struggled with pacing; but with the composer and the librettist reigning each other in throughout the process the result is a tight show. Take for example Lee's aria, which as discussed in interviews, was initially much longer, but was trimmed for dramatic purposes. As the librettist said, "There was some very pretty stuff on the cutting room floor."¹⁰⁹ However, the drama moves at a clip, and it is in the arias where Tyler White called for "a few more words"¹¹⁰ to really let the characters bloom. The libretto is a marriage of Henri's poetry and Sandoz's ability to capture the setting with her text, and the score mirrors that with memorable melodies and mood setting harmonies.

In the end, it is the ability of the composer to unify the work through themes that make the opera a success. It is a busy, complex story, even with the intelligent cuts the librettist made to the Sandoz, but the music guides the audience through from start to finish. Unlike many post-tonal operas, *The Gambler's Son* contains memorable melodies, and unlike many tuneful operas, it still catches the listener off guard with much that is unanticipated, as White's use of orchestration and unexpected harmonies get audiences to hear familiar themes in new ways.

The work had an impactful premiere. As awareness of White and this opera continues to grow, with any luck *The Gambler's Son* will continue to see success in the future. The dramatic themes present are lasting ones, and the musical themes

¹⁰⁹ White, Laura. Interview by author, Lincoln, June 1, 2021, transcript, Appendix B.

¹¹⁰ White, Tyler. Interview by author and Kao Zhou, Lincoln, March 4, 2020, transcript, Appendix C.

will likely stand the test of time. It is my hope that when this work sees performances in the future it can continue to succeed and grow from both the experience of the premiere performances as well as insight from the work's original creators, as presented in this document. *The Gambler's Son* is aptly a pioneering work for Dr. Tyler White, providing, in many ways, a potential path for other works to follow by threading the needle of familiar, new, and natural.

One critique of the opera could well include the difficulty of mounting a work that has no shock value or star power. The topic is not particularly inflammatory like some modern opera, nor does it contain subject matter in its plot intended to directly challenge an audience. It isn't based on a well-known story that people will come out to see because it is familiar, nor is it written by a composer so well known that it will immediately draw a crowd. However, the fact that the opera was a success despite the lack of these elements might point to its potential longevity. As Tyler Goodrich White gains popularity and renown as a composer it stands to reason that these concerns will diminish. This document also serves to raise awareness of the work and the composer and in part addresses this critique by raising awareness of the composer and the opera's value.

This document should lower the barrier to entry for an opera company looking to launch the next production of *The Gambler's Son*. The context provided shows why this work stands out. Insights from the composer, the librettist, and the premiere will allow the next cast and crew to stand on the shoulders of the original production and approach the work with a great deal of context and depth. Character

insights provided here will allow the next cast to dive even deeper into these characters by starting out with so much useful material both in terms of musical thematic identities and historical background. The insights from interviews may allow the next director to really experiment within the composer's and the librettist's intent. The premiere was a success, so with the information provided here future productions can follow suit, and *The Gambler's Son* can achieve the place it deserves to become a well-known work in modern American opera.

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APPENDICIES

Appendix A: Listing of Operas Premiered from 2014-2019, viewed by the author

Appendix B: Interview Transcript with Laura White

Appendix C: Interview Transcript with Tyler White

Appendix D: Complete Libretto Transcription with Source material Listed for Each Line Sung (direct quotations from source materials are highlighted in red)

Appendix E: Copy of Program from UNL Opera's Production of *The Gambler's Son*

Appendix F: List of Major Musical Themes in Order of Appearance with Examples of the First Occurrence

Appendix G: Images from the Premiere Performances

APPENDIX A
LIST OF VIEWED PUBLICLY AVAILABLE OPERAS PREMIERED FROM 2014-2019 AND
THEIR PREMIERE DATES

A Gathering of Sons (Dwayne Fulton) 2017
 A Marvelous Order (Judd Greenstein) 2016
 A Woman in Morocco (Daron Hagen) 2015
 Alice's Adventures Under Ground (Gerald Barry) 2016
 An American Soldier (Huang Ruo) 2018,
 Anatomy Theater (David Lang) 2017
 Angel's Bone (Du Yun) 2016
 Backwards from Winter (Douglas Knehans) 2018
 Better Gods (Luna Pearl Woolf) 2016,
 Black Water (Jeremy Beck) 2016,
 Blind Injustice (Davenport Richards) 2019,
 Blue (Jeanine Tesori) 2019,
 Breaking the Waves (Missy Mazzoli) 2016,
 Charlie Parker's Yardbird (Daniel Schnyder) 2015,
 Cold Mountain (Jennifer Higdon) 2015,
 Crossing (Matthew Aucoin) 2015,
 Dinner at Eight (William Bolcom) 2017,
 Dog Days (David T. Little) 2015
 Dream of the Red Chamber (Bright Sheng) 2016,
 Ellen West (Ricky Ian Gordon) 2019,
 Everest (Joby Talbot) 2015,
 Family secrets (Daniel Thomas) 2015,
 Fellow Travelers (Gregory Spears) 2016,
 Girls of the Golden West (John Adams) 2017,
 Great Scott (Jake Heggie) 2015,
 It's a Wonderful Life (Jake Heggie) 2016,
 Jane Eyre (Louis Karchin) 2016,
 JFK (David T. Little) 2016,
 Love Hurts (Nicola Moro) 2016,
 Mara: A Chamber Opera on Good and Evil (Sherry Woods) 2016,
 Marnie (Nicholas Muhly) 2017,
 Middlemarch in Spring (Allen Shearer) 2015,
 Morning Star (Ricky Ian Gordon) 2015,
 O Columbia (Gregory Spears), 2015
 Ouroboros Trilogy (Scott Wheeler, Zhou Long, Paola Prestini) 2016,
 Outcast at the gate (Joel Feigin) 2019,
 P r i s m (Ellen Reid) 2018,
 Persona (Keeril Makan) 2015,
 Riders of the Purple Sage (Craig Bohmler) 2017,
 Sane and Sound (Matt Geer) 2019,

Scalia/Ginsburg (Derrick Wang) 2015,
Scarlet Ibis (Stefan Weisman) 2015,
Sister Carrie (Robert Aldridge) 2016,
Star-Cross'd Lovers: The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet (Don Freund) 2018,
Stonewall (Iain Bell) 2019,
Taking Up Serpents (Kamala Sankaram) 2019,
The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs (Mason Bates) 2017,
The Book Collector (Stella Sung) 2016,
The Central Park Five (Anthony Davis) 2019,
The Dictator's Wife (Mohammed Fairouz) 2017,
The Exterminating Angel (Thomas Adès) 2016,
The Fix (Joel Puckett) 2019,
The Hubble Cantata (Paola Prestini) 2016,
The Loser (David Lang) 2019,
The Rose Elf (David Hertzberg) 2018,
The Scarlet Letter (Lori Laitman) 2016,
The Scarlet Professor (Eric Sawyer) 2017,
The Shining (Paul Moravec) 2016,
The Summer King (Daniel Sonenberg) 2017,
The Thirteenth Child (Poul Ruders) 2016,
The Wake World (David Hertzberg) 2017,
Thumbprint (Kamala Sankaram) 2014.

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW WITH LAURA WHITE

Transcript 6/01/2021

Laura: Freitag's triangle... it applies to this opera. It's just an old sort of standby basic literary criticism that plots tend to... you know it's a triangle. They build and build, things come to a climax, and then you have the descending and reaving of action. It's not a complicated idea, and it fits most drama.

Patrick: I did want to include some biographical information on you.

L: OK.

P: I know your CV

L: It's not perfectly updated.

P: I don't know how much of it applies to this work. I know you're a Jane Austen scholar, I know the basics.

L: Well, I know a LOT about narrative and narrative theory and novels, and I taught drama you know. It's not really my specialty. And I've seen a lot of operas so I just sort of know how stories are constructed. And this is a pretty simple one actually.

P: In some ways.

L: I just had to throw so much out.

P: To your bio, were there any life events that in anyway are reflected in the libretto?

L: No. But I certainly have read and taught the Great Gatsby many times, and it's a real close overlay with how the plot works, with the distinction that Great Gatsby is a much greater work that does not have extraneous things in it. But also, that it's told by an unreliable narrator and there's all the complexity that comes in from having Nick Carraway tell you what happened. He's reliable enough, but there are things he doesn't know, and he's biased in being pro Gatsby and anti-Tom and Daisy, but that's appropriate. Whereas Sandoz is just being kind of reportorial, and it's not that good a book because it's too stuffed. Her impulse to be true to the fact which she knew overrode her sense of dramatic development. So, she was willing to have chapter after chapter where it's one thing after another. I didn't even read the whole book by the time I had finished the libretto because I had found what I needed. All I needed were some good scenes, like the wheelbarrow scene, or taking the axe to the faro table. Those are nice dramatic scenes and they also fit in perfectly with the developing arc of Cozad's... the doomedness of it all in spite of his great expectations. So, all I needed was a few touchtone scenes like that and then of course I cut to the disaster of the petition. I just don't need all the other stuff. I did want to leave in the cattle stampede and the grasshopper plague because that would give Ty something interesting to do. And then the thing that really I did, and was really Ty's and my idea together was to make a big thing of the frame story which is very lightly mentioned in the Sandoz.

P: Yes, at the tail end of the book.

L: Yes, at the end of the book we learn there's this portrait, and what happened to him; but it's not how it's made in the opera as a kind of governing retrospective of we remembered this, we remembered that.

P: And in some ways that's the main conflict of the opera. Henri trying to understand his father so he can paint him.

L: and that wasn't really in her book. Not that much.

P: And the forgiveness that you assign both of them at the end...

L: Well, it does make for good theater.

P: But was that pulled from another source or was that invented in some way?

L: It was invented, but you know it stands to reason, doesn't it? They were on good enough terms to want his son to do his portrait. That just implies that they were in rough comedy at any rate.

P: And there are quotes in the Sandoz about how Lee respected Henri's work.

L: And all that, I thought it seemed justified. And then you add in all that language from *The Art Spirit*. Ty had seeded that for me by going through and selecting the passages he felt were meaningful in terms of something that would be good as part of an aria. It was too much of course, but there are some evocative lines in there. Henri's arias, I think they're beautiful because of those lyrics.

P: Almost entirely from *The Art Spirit*.

L: It's all just stitched together like a found poem sort of thing which is fine. But all that too is so positive and so lyrical that it would be horrible to end with "oh never mind dad, you're horrible. let's call it all off!" That just wouldn't have made any sense at all. The minute I made it a frame story it had to have that resolution. Otherwise, why are we doing this? It's hackneyed "We work through the past together. As we remember..." But it works in operas. It worked very neatly. But it's useful.

P: Now it's useful. We have two generations in Millennials...

L: Who don't know anything...

P: And baby boomers who don't know anything about each other anyway.

L: Well, they don't know anything about history.

P: I think this might be some of the point of the narrative here.

L: Well, it is! It's saying our past matters. It may have been rough and embarrassing, and in some ways, we did things wrong. Sort of scandalous in some ways. All through the emphasis in on how the young Henri is learning from it. I think my favorite line is that "I shall have to grow up very fast." which is in the book, but it expresses a lot. And of course, the rolling out of the major sequence that lays out in your hand from the petition, to the sign, to the fight, to the let's get out of dodge, and of course some aria of regret.

P: All very compressed in the opera.

L: And I just made up all the lyrics to those. To the scene of going away. I put in the ponies.

P: Bonnie and Nell after your pets

L: Bonnie is our collie and Nell was our corgi. No Bonnie is the cat! Bianca was the collie, but I didn't think Bianca sounded like a good Nebraska pony. It's too

Frenchified. Afterwards it was all such a letdown. All these events and galas and so much fuss and bother and a week later, you know, nothing. So I went to the humane society and got a kitten. Her name is Charlotte though, that would have made a crummy pony name too. It's too elevated.

P: So when you created the secretary...

L: It's a comic device. It also holds it together.

P: At times she seems to be a pseudo narrator to a scene.

L: Yeah, well she does give us the information that he's off on pressing business in New Jersey. In other words, he's still the same guy basically.

P: He hasn't evolved in some way?

L: In some ways. Presumably, he evolves during the memory because he apologizes. Which he hadn't really thought to do, or thought was necessary before this was co-remembered.

P: And he had to split from town.

L: And that's kind of self-indicting isn't it. He goes off singing "Lucky Cozad" instead of "O my poor wife. My poor children." No regrets at all he's back to the tune. He's got the hat the cane, ready to go. So, we don't feel he's learned that much in the past.

P: When he looks back, he learns. Those conversations between Henri and Lee, that is the other side of that generational coin. In reflecting on what he did he absorbs some of what he's done to his son in trying to raise him the way he did.

L: Particularly when he sees his son's anguish. It's never quite clear, it's sort of a convention. Is he in fact really watching all this being enacted? I suppose you think he sort of is.

P: As some sort of shared memory?

L: Yeah, I think it's supposed to be. But then we see Robert's experience that Cozad didn't know about at various points. And he hadn't been around to see it. He's off singing about how pissed he is at the same time his son is lamenting. He's still insulated in the egotistical dream of his own mastery.

P: I think that's really apparent at the top of the role, he starts off with a more heroic portrayal, an adventurous type, and ends more complex.

L: But he's not broken which is nice. Which is also redemptive. He's presumably still making money in Atlantic City.

P: They sew all the money into Theresa's clothes after selling the property...

L: They sort of scoot out unscathed. Except for the emotional damage, which is of course considerable. But you can't have everything. But if you're someone like Cozad you're not emotionally damaged because you don't quite notice, whereas everybody else is. Badly. He loves his children; he loves his wife.

P: In the way he understands.

L: Once we had the design figured out, I wrote it very quickly.

P: About how long?

L: Well, I got up to the wheelbarrow scene and I just didn't want to do anymore because I hadn't sketched it all out and then I took three months off. So it was about a month and another month. I don't think I spent more than 60 hours on it.

P: Where were you in the Sandoz by the time you had finished?

L: Well, I skipped. So, I got to the axe faro scene and then I skipped to the petition. And of course, the main thing you have to leave out is arson.

P: There's no space for it in the opera?

L: And how would you represent that? "O! I smell something" with crinkly red flames in the background? I knew we had to cut that right away. Ty had written the libretto to *O Pioneers!* And he loves Cather deeply, so he put way too much in. And the first version was way too long. The second version I think he got rid of a good 45 minutes or so. It's also not quite as good an operatic subject because it's hard to cut it down. I was just saying "get rid of Ivar" but he loves Ivar. Ivar has one of the best songs, so I understand it. But this was more naturally operatic. I felt it was just right in my hand. A perfectly good plot that people like because it holds to some deep-laid formulae that hold to the human imagination.

P: Can you talk more about which formulae in particular?

L: The value of imagination. The value of creativity. The value of forgiveness. The value of memory. You know... those are biggies. And the appeal of a real hero who is smitten by arrows. Bloodied but unbowed. That's a very important arc in western culture. The quest of the hero.

P: Is he a bit of an antihero though?

L: He's not perfect.

P: He beats his child on stage.

L: Well, he did lose his temper. And of course, in that culture giving your son four or so big swats was not considered a big deal.

P: But do you think modern audiences might view that differently?

L: A modern audience is shocked. You can't do that. You almost lose the audience's sympathy at that point.

P: He starts as a more traditional heroic figure, but I think he loses some of that throughout the work.

L: Yeah. It's Bill's fault for darkening him early by having him go after the gamblers.

P: Yes, that stage direction isn't in the libretto or the novel.

L: It's not in there.

P: There's very little stage direction in the libretto itself. What made you come to that choice?

L: Thrift. I figured it was sort of obvious. I had an idea of how the stage would be. It was important to me to have the sign of Cozad in the center as a sort of metonymy for Cozad himself. And so when it's violated it makes it easy to be the peak moment of the narrative. You can imagine someone getting up there with a bucket of paint and just painting over it. And it's a symbol of how quickly a town could turn on you. It's brutal. And the paint of that is such an economical way of expressing that. And it's also good theater. Of course, I wanted real paint and a real axe to a table. It could have been pre-broken. Bill thought it might be too much. It's just even more violent the axe and it's a little like Christ driving the ... uh

P: moneychangers from the temple?

L: Yeah, I mean he's in righteous anger. I mean here they are trying to arrest him on trumped up charges. I mean he has every right to. He could have killed someone.

P: There's plenty of hypocrisy there as well of course.

L: Right, he's MR Faro. That's what pressing business is. He's off gambling. I think the audience figures that out pretty quickly, don't you?

P: The piece is titled *The GAMBLER'S Son*.

L: It's never quite stated.

P: He mentions the 50 grand from Omaha and the Gentlemen's clubs at the top.

L: Yeah, I think it's pretty obvious. I think there's hardly anything in the libretto, I think that's why it's partly successful, I think it's not opaque. An ordinary intelligent person can follow it, get caught up in the plot, feel identification and sympathy in the points where we want, and to feel torn where we want them to feel torn, and then it comes to a very satisfactory crisis. I thought I was very lucky to have it because it wasn't difficult to turn into the opera.

P: and you didn't have to do a lot of inventing except for of course the interactions between Lee and Henri and There's aria.

L: I wrote that. It's just a poem I wrote. It's the first thing I wrote. I wrote it before I did anything else. I felt my way into her and felt sorry for her. I knew it should be a ballad or a ballad form at any rate. Which it mostly does with all that repetition. And it's amazing what Ty did with it. I think it's brilliantly set. Of course, if you read just the lyrics you might think it's going to be a really sappy song, but it's not sappy. All the pain is in the music. The music shows you anguish. Even though on the surface it's just, "Well this is my wedding day and that's what happened" there's no anguish in the words, it's all understated. I'm proud of that, those lyrics, and Ty should be very proud of the aria.

P: So, you skipped around in the Sandoz, and this was...

L: I think Ty had just told me the plot.

P: So how did you find your way into the Theresa character?

L: Women don't like being betrayed over and over again. I think it was helpful to know that they were from Virginia, that they were southern. That her family was southern.

P: Are you?

L: Yeah, I'm from Florida and Georgia. Where the codes of honor that Cozad supposedly holds to (You sir are a gentleman he says to the rattlesnake and so on) presumably really matters to him, but he is behaving badly to his wife. Codes were different then, but you were not supposed to cheat on your wife. And he knows it. It's not an open marriage. And when I was invited to the women's club. It's the oldest in Nebraska. And I gave them a talk, but then I played Theresa's aria with piano accompaniment. They had the lyrics in front of them. They were so disturbed by the antifeminist point of the aria which is basically "I'll stick with him no matter what" I said, "Well it's actually pretty feminist because the music is rebelling against the surface adherence to what she's supposed to do. It tells you quite plainly there's something wrong with a code that requires her to just silently take it." and I think they found that a satisfactory answer. She doesn't want a divorce though. That would be unthinkable.

P: And lead to other major problems too.

L: But they married for life, it's just he keeps disappointing her. And she loves him. He's an extraordinary man. And in many ways, he, in some ways, is a good man, and in some ways not. Every time she says it, we know she knows it's not fully true. I wanted that as soon as possible. The other major scene was O'Dell. Ty and were just saying the other week how lucky we were to have you. And we really were, you were perfect, and O'Dell really had the stroll down.

P: Thank you. It's also an interesting scene in that you combined different sections of the Sandoz together to make a single scene.

L: It's also a beautiful visual moment with the suspense and the newspaper. It's a moment where Cozad thinks he's totally triumphed, but it leads into Theresa's aria because she knows that even if he wasn't caught cheating there, he probably had had an affair with Kitty. O'Dell just didn't have proof of it. He's bluffing.

P: You don't make that bluff unless there's a chance it will work.

L: And there are a lot of guns involved. And notice that Cozad doesn't punish him. He just tells him to be gone. And I think that's partly because he doesn't want O'Dell to tell all the things he knows. Presumably, Kitty did hang herself with Cozad's tie.

P: The Sandoz says as much.

L: It does, doesn't it? Theresa's not dumb. It's not love letters, but that doesn't prove the opposite. The absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. And that's what sets off her lament. I just love that we had Cozad coming in the middle with his pressing business. It just makes it.

P: What were the moments where you said, this has to be cut?

L: Almost all the way through I said this has to be shorter. I meant the music had to be shorter because I don't think we ever cut anything out of the libretto. I usually would listen to something and say "That's very lovely but can you cut here, here, and here" and I wanted 20 or 30 measures out. There was some very pretty stuff on the cutting room floor. More elaborations musically, but audiences don't have the patience. They're really into the story hopefully, and if it feels delayed, they're not willing to listen to extended musical treatments of things. I think all in all I helped him get rid of 40 minutes or so which is good!

P: When it came to the Henri and Lee interactions that weren't quotes from *The Art Spirit*

L: I wrote all of them. I just tried to think of writing the scene. It was awkward. That Sandoz tells us. And from that I figured out what would have happened in an art studio with a somewhat distant father. It just sort of made dramatic sense. I was very proud of the little bits like, "You're going to have to keep still father."

P: and "keep your chin up"?

L: Those are all characterological. They contain the double meaning of enhancing character. So, I tried to find things that would be reasonably said but also hit the character at the same time.

P: When did you land on the main conflict being the two men getting to know each other?

L: It was useful. And I also knew it couldn't be otherwise. A strong thrust of narrative sympathy for both characters.

P: The framing et al?

L: You have to have the theme of learning through memory at the beginning and a turn to retrospective to get at the inner narrative somehow. Ty and I were wondering how many times to go back to the frame. I really like the scene, and I invented it, where they go back and Henri says do you remember this, do you remember that.

P: Those events are all drawn from the Sandoz, yes?

L: Yeah, they're in there. I just looked through the book for things, and then it was great to have the father say I don't remember because it fits with the theme and everything's doing double duty. I tried to only include things that had that double meaning. If I couldn't put it in a way that was also elucidating character and showing the dilemmas, I wouldn't put it in.

P: We get more of that when Robert talks about the paintings he's made like rattler tails on the helmet, but his mother is too busy to really respond. They're also in the Sandoz.

L: I had to look for them. Well one of those times is when the locusts are coming in, so he has a lot on her mind.

P: The big ensemble scene some of the editorialized lines that give us insights into the character.

L: Those were easy to write to fit with the themes.

P: Such as "I will make this town a sight of greatness even if I have to do it all by myself"

L: And of course, I've known megalomaniacs!

P: My hat, my cane?

L: That seemed to be an obvious recurring trope. It characterizes him. It's part of his identity. The very fact that he has to sneak out of town not being his full self.

P: Right, he puts on a costume of sorts.

L: Right. So, I thought my hat, my cane, it works.

P: It shows both the gentleman aspects and the violence.

L: Right because he does use the cane to beat people up which I didn't include, but they're there. He beats the guy who runs the stables. I mean there's a lot of incidental violence. And I knew of course I just wanted the ones that made good scenes. And I only wanted three of them.

P: Because theater works in threes?

L: Yeah, and because there's only so much space. Three will tell you everything you need to know. Maybe there's four. There's the wheelbarrow scene, grasshoppers, faro scene, and O'Dell.

P: And the shooting.

L: Well, that's the climax. That doesn't count. Those are all building up to make that scene inevitable. You're right that it's another major scene of violence but it's a culmination of the other scenes that are challenges to his authority. They're all building up to the petition. And of course, I just have Traber say, "That petition passed."

P: As riveting as drafting petitions is... Maybe it's better that you simplified things.

L: There wasn't any mention of it before but when it comes up it seems reasonable. You can see perfectly well just based on what we've. That's another reason it was important to have that retrospective scene. It was a way of sneaking in other things to give you a sense that it was one thing after another.

P: While they're not laid out as tragic events, things go wrong that really impact the townsfolk.

L: And it's just enough for the audience to realize that, besides the things we actually see, that this town was a lot of trouble. It's a very economical way of doing justice to some of all the horrible things these people suffered.

P: So the wheelbarrow scene. You mention notable townsfolk.

L: I just looked for names. Because I wasn't going to develop them. There was no time. I tried to make Pearson the chief malcontent early on. But really it doesn't need that good guy/bad guy framing. They're all nogoodniks. Uncle Traber comes off alright. The goodniks are driven out. Like the starving mother who is almost crushed by the cattle with her baby she's just given birth to. And Sandoz just says in a real understatement, "they left the next day." I bet they did. And that was a continual theme in the book that I didn't bring out at all. But there's enough in the wheelbarrow scene to show it. First there's the song...

P: Beulah land

L: Right, that gave Ty a chance to include some americana. It's a bit funny.

P: And a bit tragic. They turn it into a protest song.

L: Right, and so those ironies. Things have gotten so bad after the grasshoppers. My favorite line is of course "Full of fish" I thought it was just funny. He's giving a sales pitch. It has a PT Barnum quality. And I loved the staging putting you up on a soapbox. Very effective. He's the center of attention. The music changes to this martial hurrah for the heroes, which exactly because it's so obvious is ironized by context.

P: And reharmonized.

L: Right, like it's Beulah land, but off kilter. I'm always trying to get Ty to write more thirds and fifths and less spiky stuff. He'll say, "Eh, not really me." Pretty funny. He's got a style and the music is extremely effective.

L: While Ty wasn't personally moved by Cozad. He was very attached to Henri. It spoke to him as a creative person. He gladly would have extended *The Art Spirit* scenes doubled except I was cruel.

P: Any other things that influenced you when writing?

L: In regard to Theresa's aria, I always thought of that barber song. What was it?

P: Knoxville: Summer of 1915?

L: Yes. I used to sing it for auditions. Summer nights. That same sense of regret under the surface, but so melancholy. It's not a happy song. It's not about the beauty of the night. It's about betrayal. So, the themes are very consonant. Ty's almost gets into an eerie sound. Almost eldritch. It sounds almost like the fairy queen in pain.

P: Why was the choice made to go back to the family after the shooting?

L: This way you get both Cozad and Theresa redeemed. In the final scene everything she says is completely conventional.

P: That was all new text from you.

L: Yes. All I had to remember is what mothers say. What a conventional mother would say. She would be flatter but say oh not me. Or be willing to do it but not actively seek it. So that was easy. But the very fact she's there and they're wealthy and prosperous means they've made their peace in some way. He may still be philandering. But he may be running out of steam at that point.

P: When we go back, we see her practical and something she did before in Ohio.

L: She also has enormous faith in him that he'll be fine. She has no doubt about his capacity to win against the outside forces. From the very beginning we hear that he wants to put Theresa like a diamond set by Tiffany's.

P: Like an object.

L: Yeah, but his goal is to make her kind of queen. It's not JUST self-aggrandizement. And he wants his kids to ride like princes. Those lines always make me cry when he's singing about the ponies. It made me almost cry while writing it.

P: and the names give them extra weight.

L: And now I'm tearing up because of course it's Bonnie and Nell.

P: I'm sorry.

L: Bonnie is just fine. And Charlotte, my opera cat is just 2.

P: Would you mind talking a little bit about your background?

L: I've written some about lyric poetry but most of what I write about are novels. The novels of Jane Austen obviously. But most of my criticism is about the novel and the novel form. It's something when I teach, I focus on how the plot is constructed and how characters are constructed. Given how well this was suited to an opera it was almost like rolling off a log. The frame story was sort of Ty's idea that we agreed on very early on. He also saw that it would be a way to introduce *The Art Spirit* stuff and make Henri a full-blown portion of the work because that whole element isn't really present in the Sandoz. It's because he had read *The Art Spirit* and had been so moved by it. And that was fine by me. It added richness and depth to a work where just the plot alone would not quite be good enough because it ends too incompletely. This had more resonance.

P: There's one brother that we don't see in the final scene.

L: And that's because Sandoz didn't want to delve into whether or not he was guilty of arson or not. It's just economy leaving him out.

P: He turned out to be a doctor, right? Developed a method for breech babies?

L: Right. He was an obstetrician. He ended up being maybe more important to human happiness than Henri was.

P: How did you get approached for this project?

L: Jane Rohman had loved *O Pioneers* and had even then said I'd love you to do an opera about Cozad. I put my foot down and said no more opera. There was a performance, and he was still writing it wasn't fully orchestrated when it was first performed. We had to do trips to triage. He had become a chain smoker. I had to take things off in the night to Kinkos to make copies for the orchestra.

P: A bit like Mozart.

L: 3 months before he had the reduction, but he had to orchestrate it and turn it into parts and the software back then was even harder than it is now, and it was hellish. He quite cigarettes which was good, but I didn't want that again. And he had an opera beard I didn't like. It had been so torturous. I knew that the libretto had not been that successful because of his deep attachment to the material and his willingness to let it expand. Luckily neither of us had any attachment to the Cozad material so we were perfectly fine leaving vast swaths untold.

P: And I think you pulled out an interesting conflict that your frame story tells

L: And I think that gives it a lot of life. I left out 95% of the things that happens. We both felt deep respect for the Henri stuff, but we weren't trying to make a plot out of that. It works fine for an aria.

P: Poetry into song, simple.

L: That's what, "lyric" means right? I think we got lucky with the source material. And Ty added incredible depth with his music. You never got to really sing any of Ty's beautiful music as Cozad.

P: Cozad isn't really a beautiful character. I'm not sure it would be right. He gets impressive music more than pretty.

L: Right. It would be wrong. There are many beautiful moments. But Cozad goes off trumpeting himself. He's already set his face to the future, which is some ways is a very healthy thing to do. But the problem is he's left his devastated family behind. Leaving the rest of the town who aren't worth his troubling about. He's not the kind of man who lingers in regrets. You can't have emotional beauty without sorrow. He's a sort of an aggressive, All out, A type, leader of the world type guy with all the virtues and faults therein. Also, the charm and the will to do. He made a town out of scratch that's very impressive.

P: More than once.

L: Right. It's interesting that when they escape, they go back east. And his "I'll build a town with my own name on it goes away"

P: New Name

L: He can't. He's already changed his name. It's silly to found a town based on a fake name. Not even Cozad would do that.

P: What are the most universal aspects of this story?

L: Well from the beginning all stories are Man against nature, man against society, man against himself. Those are all just sitting there. Nature you get with the stampede, you get with the snake, the grasshoppers, the drought. Particularly in the first half of the opera. And the society becomes quite plain. Everyone is happy in the beginning. It doesn't take long for people to want to bail. He's put in a make-work project to keep everybody alive after the grasshoppers. There's a long section in the book about how he manages to let everyone pay on scrip. He does everything he can to get people through. But they don't appreciate it. They're pissed because they have no crops.

You know Ty was trained in this serial numbers stuff, but he's right in that it's the treatment. You need to shape it to be lyrical and humane. The Libretto gave all the

moods already and so it wasn't hard for him. And to incorporate some traditional stuff too like the folk stuff and popular idioms that are very effective.

APPENDIX C
INTERVIEWS WITH TYLER WHITE

Transcript 3/04/2020

The interviews of Tyler White on the day of 3/04/2020 were joint interviews between Patrick McNally and Kao Zhou, DMA student of orchestral conducting studying with Dr. Tyler White at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln. Kao is the music director of both the Sichuan Normal University Symphony Orchestra and Chengdu Huan Hua Symphony Orchestra. He also served as a violin professor at the Sichuan Conservatory of Music. He obtained his master's degree in violin performance from the School of Music, Brandon University, Canada.

Patrick: March 4th. 2020. Indeed. Okay.

Tyler: Well, please fire away.

Kao: I think the first thing we want to know is about your music lineage. That is, please talk about your mother and father. We know your father was a musicologist.

T: That's more for other people to judge. I think just that they've had a big effect and that's really all I can say. I mean, it's just part of the world I live in, but as you mentioned, I did grow up in a family where music was just part of the atmosphere. There was always classical music at home. Classical music, as well as South American Music, Southwest, and Tangos. Some of my earliest memories actually involve lying in a crib at my grandparents' house hearing after dinner, having been put to bed after dinner, hearing the tangos wafting up from downstairs. But the grown-ups were having, you know, mature time and things, so there's something about American Music like a good night. It feels very natural to me. Anyway, my parents had a very fond story of when I was, I think about two years old, being taken to a children's orchestra concert. And they recall that I was in a little gray, flannel suit, football short pants, and apparently, I ran down to the front of the auditorium and waved my arms in my conducting debut. Anyway, violin lessons when I was, I can't remember, four or five, and studied with various teachers, through my teen years. I did for a while, take some piano lessons, but they didn't take. If they ever had taken... Just say I'm terrible at piano.

K: What age was that about?

T: Seven or eight. And it went on for a couple years, a couple years and petered out. Then in high school I added viola as well. So, let's see. Then growing up, it was always a bit of a challenge managing my musical interests. From about the age of nine or so I was starting to write down what I would make up on my violin, and starting in junior high began my conducting interests. It was always a bit of a challenge, managing the musical interests and balancing them with other interests such as history and architecture, and thinking about an individual career. When it came down to my college choice, it all basically boiled down to whether to go to

North Carolina or to go to Harvard. I opted for North Carolina to the horror of the local Harvard Radcliffe Club. Mainly because I wanted to focus more on musical performance. Although there's, you know, lots of great musical performances around the department, Harvard itself is exclusively academic, and I was not at that time ready to devote myself to scholarship, or history, or theory, or pure composition. So, I opted for Chapel Hill, and was offered a big violin scholarship. And then, after two years of violin, I switched over mainly to viola. And in my second two years at Chapel Hill, I also then really started a composing period. I won a prize or two along the way. I should back up a moment and say that one of my most formative experiences in high school was my senior year. We went to visit Kansas State University, where I was living. I met Robert Shaw. And so, I played viola in the B minor Mass with the symphony and that was a magnificent experience. It was the end of my senior year, I had finished all my classes, and I was basically able to take a week off and just study one of the greatest works of music in the world with one of its greatest conductors, and it was amazing. Shaw took a very kind fatherly interest in me, and in my composing, and my and college decision. And so, once I was at Chapel Hill, once I was composing, he asked to see some of my work. I sent it to him, and to my surprise, he, out of nowhere, gave this young composer a commission. So, as part of a major commissioning project that included commissions from Bernstein, and Rorem, and Philip Glass, so it was... and then unknown me. So, at any rate... So, I was riding high. That was a huge step and also a huge challenge because although I was proud of what I'd done as a composer, I still really hadn't had any systematic training in orchestration. I had never written an artistic piece before, and it took me a while to find my way. Basically, it took me a couple of years to figure out how to think for orchestra and get it down on paper in an effective way. And during that time, I was also facing my decision regarding graduate school.

K: This was your senior year when this commission came, right?

T: Yes, the thing in college. Yeah.

K: Was that the moment you made the decision to become a composer?

T: And at that moment, I really felt I hadn't really written enough to call myself a composer and so, going into graduate school I particularly wanted to enter a musicology program, but at a place at which I could also be taken seriously as a composer.

P: Did your musicologist father have anything to say about that?

T: No, not really. He was just completely supportive. Whatever was going to make me happy. Yeah.

P: So, he was in no way trying to push you toward musicology or away from it?

T: Yeah, or away. You know, you can see that in my senior year I was struggling to make up my mind. And so, he was just, you know, helpful in suggesting potential avenues of inquiry that he knew that I was interested in and things like that. So anyway, I eventually decided on Cornell because that in fact was a place where well, as Cornell said when he founded the institution (and is in fact, the motto of the institution): "I would found an institution where any individual can find instruction in any study." That's Cornell, and so it's always been easy, the malleable nature

program there. In fact, it has no set requirements. You plan your own curriculum. And within different disciplines there are, of course, assumptions about things you need to know and courses you probably ought to take, but there are no formalized requirements. So, that offered the possibility of combining musicology and composition. Initially I started that way and as I was also figuring out how to write for orchestra, ultimately, I found that my priorities were backwards in trying to be a musicologist first and a composer second. I found, and gradually realized now, that the composition was actually more inwardly important to me and that by reordering my priorities, I was able to think more creatively about both. The whole experience was an important lesson for me about graduate education and how the whole business of coming and going through a masters and the doctoral program, really in any discipline, is largely just keeping you thinking; and learning how to ask your own questions and ask questions that are creative and will leave the interesting answers. Not so much dualistic. This is what you need to know. This is the right answer, right? So, by switching the priority, things were fine and the Cornell faculty would feel wonderful about it. They were completely supportive. They just needed me to make up my mind. And I did.

K: So, you found that improving both areas.

T: Exactly. Because you want to be more creative. So, you concentrate more on the compositional side instead of the purely academic. But yes, and it wasn't a question of being creative or not being creative. Because I think as a scholar, you have to be creative. You have to think creatively, and since the creativity inherent in musical composition is in my heart, that's the most important thing. Putting that first then made it possible to think creatively about both composition and scholarship.

P: To go into your influences: would you refer to Shaw and his mentorship in any regard?

T: Yes, very much. He very kindly extended me the invitation to come to his rehearsals, wherever he was whenever I was in town. And I did. Atlanta was my hometown and my grandmother lived there. I was in college so I did flee as often as I could. On at least one occasion, I also attended his rehearsals, but he was on tour now. He also extended me the invitation, you know, to borrow his scores, whenever he didn't need them. And unfortunately, I wasn't able to often. I didn't ever really have the opportunity to do that, but I was greatly touched by and honored by the invitation, and of course they're now all online at Yale. And they are remarkable documents because he was so meticulous to the marking of scores, and every time he would approach a great choral masterpiece again over the course of his career, he would always start fresh, start with a blank score, and start marking the score from the very beginning. Literally every bowing, every articulation, in different colors.

K: That's something you emulate today. Yeah?

T: Well, I mean I found that as I try to develop a system in markings for my own conducting, I get so caught up in the system, that I forget to learn the music. And over here, if you think about "now should this actually be green or is it blue?" And when I am marking this entrance in the violas, but it's also doubled in the English

horns, so how do you make that stand out? Do both? And I find myself getting so caught up in those practical details. I lose sight of the whole musical context. So, I just realized, that's not really the way my mind works. It's about figuring out what's of greatest import.

P: Can you talk about music you find of greater import a little bit. I think that points to what you value as a composer.

T: Well yeah. And I think that in saying that about Shaw's scores, one thing that was so remarkable about Shaw is that he was so detail oriented. He also had such an enormously powerful sense of the musical continuum and the entire musical structure. I remember at the premiere of my first symphony- also on the program was the Beethoven Violin Concerto, and he and the soloist took a remarkably sort of leisurely approach to the beginning and to the concerto, and I remember my father and I went backstage after the concert. I remember clearly something about that and what Shaw said, "it was a little too broad and slow, we should cut about five minutes off tomorrow." Him being able to think of the entire Symphony and how to make everything, maybe five metronome points faster will translate over the span of the 45-minute work. That struck me as remarkable. Still does. But lots of composers talk about him. I think about Carl Nielsen, one of the composers. I imagine Americans who always talked about flow of composition. And when you're really in the flow, it's almost as if you become a kind of a tube through which the music flows.

Achieving that flow, that sense of the barely discernible shape in which the music is going to exist, and then, that turns the act of composition into an element, into a process of discovery or invention of what each moment, each detail is going to be within that larger entity that you don't fully discern yet. So, frequently when I finish a draft of a work, I'll go back and look over it. And now, with computers, listen to it, taking into account all the shortcomings of digital playback. But I'm constantly asking myself, "is this right? Is this what I was really hearing?" I often think that once one has the idea of the larger sense of a work, that process of discovery or invention is almost as much a process of elimination as it is of creation. It's the process of saying what needs to come next. Like asking a sculptor how to make an elephant. You get a rock and take away anything that doesn't look like an elephant.

K: Nielsen. You refer to him as someone you admire.

T: Oh, he died in 1931. His example was actually very important for me. That was one of the focuses of my scholarly interests going into graduate school, and then even in my composition program I maintained a strong interest in researching Nielsen's work. I spent a year in Copenhagen learning Danish to be able to read his letters and look at his manuscripts and so, yeah. So, I spent a year in Copenhagen learning Danish, and also studying composition and going to classes at the University of Copenhagen. So, that was also an important formative year. That was 1986-87. Now, that was actually a wonderful year. There were some wonderful additional travels in Europe. During that year, my advisor, Stucky, was on leave. He was working on a commission from the Philadelphia Orchestra as he moved his family to London, and so, I went over to London over Christmas break and got together with him. We went to a bunch of concerts including the final farewell

concert of (I don't know if people still remember) the Fires of London. That was an important group in particular in the 70s, founded by Peter Maxwell Davies. We attended their farewell concert. It was a terrific visit and there were so many visits. We were also touring the continent and visiting the Shaws at their home in France.

K: You mentioned your teacher, Dr. Stucky, and I'm curious, could you tell us more about that relationship? And Husa?

T: Going into Cornell I had known the music of Husa who, at the time, was the much more famous composer. Stucky was much younger. And so, I really admired his music and was looking forward to studying with him. And I did study with him some early in my career at Cornell. Husa was an interesting teacher, he had to... you had to figure out how to get him to open up. He often would... You bring something in, and he would often just sort of speak in generalities like, "well this is all very playable" and things like this, and you had to be able to draw him out about his own experiences in Paris, and Prague, and other work he had done. And I never developed a very good feel for that. There's one of my colleagues who did, and they got a lot out of it. I greatly enjoyed my sense of time with him because he was such a European gentleman. We would often talk more about conducting than about composition in my lessons, since Husa was also a very fine conductor. So, then I began studying with Steve Stucky my first year in graduate school, and we hit it off right away. I had a bad experience as an undergraduate with one of my teachers. Um, it was... as I was initially struggling to work on the Atlanta commission. And I think out of jealousy or whatever it was, he was very unhelpful. Roger was quite unhelpful and quite down right discouraging. And yes, he certainly was a very fine composer with a lot of ambition that I think was never quite realized. So, at any rate, but as I say he was not at all helpful, and eventually just sort of told me to get lost, and so that was a very hurtful experience. And Steve Stucky, proved a wonderful antidote to that, and he was enormously sympathetic. Certainly, critical you know and would pore in great detail over your scores and suggest changes and strategies that would often relate those changes. And this is something I really loved to watch - what other composers have done from the standard repertoire and something that I carry on into my own teaching as a musicologist and someone with a background in musicology. Yeah, imagine that! Context matters, right? Yeah, I'm teaching composition right here. I mean half the time I'm on my feet pulling down scores and saying, "now you look what Mozart did here."

P: Do you find you do that in your compositional process?

T: I'm not sure. That suggests a little bit, the old story about Mahler, you know, the old, the old mark against Mahler that, you know, he was writing conductor's music that was too reminiscent of his forebears? And there was a story that was still being told in Indiana in the 1950s about a messenger boy being seen walking out of the harmonic library with an armful of scores, and members of the orchestra seeing that and saying, "oh Maestro must be composing!" So no, I don't, I don't think of it that way as recycling other elements. But one of the main ways that I figured out how to orchestrate, and I have a thing for orchestration, was teaching myself how to do it. During my senior year of college and first year of graduate school, whenever I got

something out in a few voices I would then imagine the full orchestral colors - the range of colors of the full ensemble. It would be a question of is there a point of contact in my memory with a score that I know aurally. If so, I would go and look up the score and see how it had been orchestrated. And then, I adapted it to my own ideas, and, of course, for a young composer, the process of emulation is terribly important. I mean, something that rightly has always been a traditional part of composition instruction is the emulation of masters. Of course, in former centuries, for example, when Beethoven was writing his quartet from the Opus 18 series, what did he do? He copied Mozart's. Copied it out by hand. Saw how the textures are handled, the modulations are handled, the whole musical thinking. I'm concerned with something similar, not in terms of, in terms of learning how to compose, but in, in terms of developing a new style that has to do with older styles; and so, I've logged in references to earlier work in my music, and sometimes quotations. What I'm working on right now is a symphony that actually uses references to earlier works, standard repertoire work, but without actually quoting them explicitly. And it sort of reinterprets their ideas in a kind of modern way and uses the thematic substance of these earlier works to achieve something, to achieve something new; and I hope something reasonably fresh that says something about the extent to which, as classical musicians, we're always so entangled with the past.

K: Was there an instructor that taught this? Was this formative experience somehow related to that process, or that construct of the value of emulation of masters--was that part of your training in some way, or was this something you came to on your own?

T: Oh, well, actually, one of the things I'm most indebted to Roger Hannay for was earlier in my undergrad career, we had a history and theory curriculum at Chapel Hill which at the time was really interesting, and it was, I think perfect for me. At the time it was very difficult for a lot of undergrads. But it was just tailor made for me. We started freshman year very intensively: a very intensive theory course and a five-hour theory course getting through advanced chromatic harmony in one year. And then the next two years, it was a four-hour block of history and techniques where you have two hours of basically a history course. The rotation was first classic romantic, then 20th century, then Medieval Renaissance, then Baroque. And so, in each of those four-hour blocks, you have two hours of basically a history lecture, and then two hours of techniques where we're thinking for classical romantic. You learned a lot. You learned basically form techniques and formal analysis related to sonata form and rondo forms, and those kinds of things. So, sort of form and analysis for the standard classic romantic repertoire, but then, in the spring of the sophomore year, they offered a 20th century techniques course in which we had an anthology of 20th century works that ran to 1980. Every week or two they would come in and you would talk about the technique that we're using and the approaches to harmony and rhythm. And then would proceed right there in front of the class to compose something in the style of Debussy or Bartok or Stravinsky, and circa 1920. That was our assignment every couple weeks. Then to go off and write a little piano piece in the style of these composers. It was great and

quite rigorously evaluated about did you really get the feel of what these composers were doing. So, that was a terrific course. And that was one of the things that really started me down the road to become a composer. Actually, imitating other composers, we develop a better sense of when in your own creative work, you might be falling into that trap. This is too much like that. This is too derivative of some other. So, it's actually a great way of indulging in things you might love. Without that license to imitate other composers' other styles, you might not find what you actually really love.

P: Who do you find yourself turning to?

T: Oh, that's a great question. I look for the ways of extending tonal harmony from pitch color. Well, there's always sort of the presiding example of Stravinsky in the background with his notion that, you know, that one always thinks of himself in writing music as inventing. As I've gotten older, I've developed a greater appreciation for Shostakovich and those great composers. To have some from each with some of you. I hope it doesn't feel too derivative because I think in both cases, the other thing is that Shostakovich is a Russian. In the same way, that complaint is critical in America and the sound is so Russian in expression. And, and I think what I hope is that my music still sounds distinctively American even though it has these Central and Eastern European connections. The other great connection would be Bartok. It's definitely American style. Yeah. I greatly admire, particularly what I find in Shostakovich, musical thinking that strikes me as very clear. And there's music I don't always feel that way about. I feel very uncomfortable with Shostakovich when it doesn't seem to be clear, maybe somewhat arbitrary. And I don't quite figure out where he's coming from, but that's one of the many things about it. Although, there's some little reservations, he's a hard composer for me to feel close to. Though he just seems to be, you know, just utterly engaging and charming. And even when he's writing music, I don't necessarily admire as much as I might admire something myself, especially when his orchestral textures get a little thick and a little bit muddy. But then, he'll often turn around and do something, make some orchestral gesture that's utterly, surprising and full and rich. And so, it's a great way of redeeming himself when he goes straight. You have to also appreciate the color that Stravinsky invented to music. Oh absolutely, yeah, you appreciate the fluency and polarity.

P: When it came to composing *The Gambler's Son* how did your training come into play?

T: It came so fast. It was again, it was sort of a question of having a clear idea in each piece. Of the shape of what the theme was going to be or the movement was going to be, and then a sense of the overall color of it. I don't know exactly what I mean by that, but a sort of feel. Yeah, the atmosphere or the inner color of the total pitch content. The music just happened right away.

P: Can you talk about your mother's education and life?

T: She majored in archeology.

P: Did she ever encourage you down that path?

T: No. But, in most valuable other ways I was encouraged: through creative music, her autonomous career, and the family, and you know, partying. Thanks to so many, music was always there in the house. So, there was never any pressure. But it was always just available. Whether extended family members and my memories of grandparents, as a little baby. And so that was also an important influence of massive importance to me.

P: Were Your grandparents involved in music?

T: No music directly, no. But my father's older brother was a pianist and composer who was killed in the Second World War. And he was a very promising composer apparently. So, in terms of extended family, there were no cousins around because both my parents were only surviving children. But the grandparents were always around. I have two sisters. One older, one younger. Yeah, my older sister works for development for the University of Georgia, it happens, and my younger sister runs a stable.

P: Were they trained as musicians at all, growing up?

T: I originally started violin lessons because my older sister started piano lessons. so, I wanted to do music, but my father decided, you know, not to have me start piano because he didn't want music to be something my sister and I did to compete. It didn't really take with either my sisters, so, I was the only one who went into the family business.

K: Did you ever play with your sister: she on piano, you on violin?

T: No, we never did. There are pictures, you know, family Christmas cards, officially at the piano and the violin, but I don't recall we ever actually played duets. But there have been musical members of my family. There was, I think, a great grandmother or a great-great grandmother, who was really a concert quality pianist, and when she opted to get married, her teacher was furious. Never spoke to her again.

K: Yeah, I'm the only one doing music in my family as well.

P: What was your father's field?

T: The music of the 18th century and his research area was particularly the 18th century violin concerto, with a secondary emphasis on Wagner. He and his brother, my uncle, both graduated from Emory in Atlanta. And then, you know, even though they were two years apart in age, they were basically about as close as twins in their relationship. And so, they had both started Music School in France in the late 30s, my uncle on piano and my father on violin. And then after they graduated from Emory, they didn't know how or where to go about getting a musical education. But Emory had a famous glee club director and he suggested Westminster Choir School. They got in. So, they got, to a certain extent, into the New York scene. But, you know, they had a wonderful time, it was required for them to Sing with the Westminster choir under Toscanini. And then after that, then they both went into the Air Force during the war. My dad came back, my uncle didn't.

Dad didn't, yeah, he didn't ever talk too much about his graduate education, but I get the sense that, you know, he tried continuing. He kept playing the violin, and later, viola while he was in graduate school. But after the war, he entered Princeton in

musicology. And then while he was working on his dissertation, he went back to Atlanta and taught there in the Atlanta area, eventually landing back at Emory where his father had been.

P: So, you did follow your father's footsteps in a way, doing the violin and transitioning to viola and composition?

T: Yeah. So, he had been teaching at University of Atlanta. Yeah. And the Scott College and then Emory University in music theory and history. And so actually, this is a point of information and the reason I use my middle name professionally. That was the name of my uncle and my grandfather. They were both known as White and White Junior. So, I'm quite proud of them. My grandfather was actually president of Emory University. And my mother and my mother is Barbara Tyler.

K: Oh, let's see...

T: And so yeah, so when they found out I was on the way they asked my grandfather "would you like the little boy to be named after you?" His wife, the third, and my grandfather said, "no, we tried that. We've done that." It's partly, you know, partly in honor of both my grandfather and my uncle that I use that middle name professionally, and also, because there's you know, there's that first baseman, on the Houston Astros, Tyler White. There were not many kids named Tyler running around when I was young, But, since the 90s, it's become a popular name. And since White's such a common last name... Well, it was really funny given my mother's accent. Due to her background in Brazil, she had trouble pronouncing my name. With a Rio de Janeiro accent it's unrecognizable.

P: Will you talk about the background in Brazil you just brought up?

T: Yeah. Well, my grandparents lived in Brazil for 30 years and my mother was raised there. My grandfather worked in the oil industry. He was an oil executive and eventually became president of Gulf Oil, Brazil in the fifties. And so, my mother had this very privileged upbringing in Rio in high school. She was from Atlanta Beach. She went to the beach every day after school; and it was very beautiful. Even though they were North American capitalists, nevertheless my grandfather went into business because he had to make money. He had an impoverished childhood and young adulthood and so he went into business to make money, but he really wanted to be an academic and never got to do that, but he was an absolutely voracious reader, had a master collection of thousands and thousands of books. And of course, as he made a lot of money. His hobby was then having them all bound in leather and designing bookcases for them all. So, we have these in my sister's house and where my mother lives. They have these just extraordinary rosewood bookcases that are designed to look like Gothic Cathedrals and just marvelous things. But anyways, the point of all this is that my mother and her parents over this time developed a very deep love and appreciation for Brazilian people and Brazilian culture. Really, really passed that down even though I don't speak Portuguese. The one time I visited Brazil, it was absolutely remarkable. I felt as if almost everyone I met was an old friend. So natural to be there. So there have been Brazilian influences in a couple of my pieces, including *A Brand New Summer*. We played it this summer.

K: For the American Music Festival. People loved it.

T: It shows music can be fun.

P: Shaw was a real turning point It seems....

T: I described myself as a protege. I could reminisce about Shaw forever.

K: Can you talk about how your style changed?

T: I was influenced by William Schuman in my early music. I wrote a cello concerto in his memory. I still love his soaring melodies and driving erratic rhythms. A grand symphonic style was present in my music early on. In graduate school I picked up some other influences, particularly Lutosławski, Berio, and Ligeti. I never fully adopted their post-World War II outlook and techniques. I've always loved how they can keep a lot of the technical aspects of their work at arm's length. Not sure exactly why. I just never thought it was quite comfortable, right for me. Actually, my musical style got (over the late 1980s and early 1990s), in fact, thornier, more dissonant. I more fully engaged post war modernism, that probably reached its height and 1992 partially in *Mysterious Barricades*. I have it online. Yeah, and then starting with the William Schuman piece, that begins to get at it. And then around the time I got married in 1994, then there's a real change in the style where the style becomes more tonally centered; and sometimes, as in my one work for band, called *Caldera*, the highly dissonant elements, and the more lyrical tonal elements exist in a very uneasy equilibrium.

K: Were you trying to balance them?

T: Even synthesize the elements using motivic elements that are sometimes interpreted more tonally, and sometimes more atonally.

P: *The Gambler's Son* is based on themes to be sure.

T: This is something I got from a Stucky, which also comes from Elliott Carter. Some too is the idea of using problems, not so much as generators of content, but as repositories of material. And so, I mean a lot of the motives are initially serially derived, and then harmonized, a bunch of different ways. You can have a very beautiful melody in some places and other places not. In the first and the last movement of my symphony, I mean in that opening Fugue, it's, you know, it is based on a 12-tone row. It was actually really fun to throw together, just to make it as important as possible, really.

P: Rhythm. You mentioned Carter, and in *The Gambler's Son*, you have a wonderful soprano aria that shifts rhythmically. Maybe modulates in the Carter sense? It's complex. What were your influences?

T: It's a great question. I'm not sure what the answer is. I think in the case of that aria. I guess my thought process with regards to rhythm was in several steps starting with this sort of gently lilting lullaby-like rhythm, and then adapted to the accentuation of the text. But then, on the other hand, then everything that the whole question of metrical regularity is completely decentralized. Uncertainty, and the sense of the character's legs are being knocked out from under her. So, it floats very long and uniform, but in a constantly shifting, unfindable way.

P: That shakes from time to time.

T: Yeah, exactly. That's the general idea. And in writing it I was thinking I'm glad I don't have to memorize that.

P: That's interesting. So, can we talk a little bit about what sort of considerations you make when it comes to writing something? In your process, you wrote that knowing it was going to be difficult.

T: Yeah. Simple and mannered. Yes, the difficulty is in execution, wildly, difficult in execution.

P: And is that ideally, something you aspire to, or did that just happen with this piece, or was that a choice for this character?

T: I think I try to avoid making things simplistic. I think it's very important, but I am also greatly drawn to simplicity. And so, the question of simplicity is, where I would like the listener to recognize that something is done in a manner that is very simple in playing, but that is nevertheless, fresh, and quite new. This gets back to one of my... if I have an artistic manifesto, it's probably that what I am after is to write music that seems familiar, but that you've never heard before; and you wonder why you never heard it before because it feels so natural. It's a little bit the way I felt when in Brazil, like when I was meeting all these old friends for the first time. And I'd like my music to feel like an old friend that you've never met. Related to *O Pioneers!*, that's also my first initial reaction to reading Willa Cather. It was just the simplicity and the clarity of her literary style. And then the immediate thought, "why doesn't everybody write like this?" damn hard, right? Like those contests for the bad Hemingway writing... Writing like Ernest Hemingway. Oh yeah, very simple. There's also a whole Faulkner contest as well, and every year, you know, sentences and sentences can go on for pages.

P: Connections to Nebraska... You chose to write a piece about historical events in the state. You clearly have quite the connection to this place.

T: It surprised me a little bit. Just as you know, my family moved from Georgia to Kansas when I was 12; and as someone born in the American South having moved into the plains, I felt a great sense of dislocation. It was only in college, when I would come back home to Kansas, that I certainly began loving this landscape. And there are some of the things about Nebraska that remind me of Kansas, but the landscape was one of the winsome things that led me to resettle here years later back in the early 90s. Well, I guess I guess *O Pioneers!* and *The Gambler's Son* are really different projects. They come from different sources. The lyrical impulse behind so much of *O Pioneers!* is a kind of a geographical landscape from the lyrics. Whereas with *The Gambler's Son* things are driven and it sprawls a little bit. This is maybe a little bit akin to the difference in the landscape around Red Cloud compared to the landscape around Cozad that is more prosaic. It's flat river bottom farm country. Whereas the land around Red Cloud is hillier more rangeland. Once you get up onto the divide, it becomes opened out. Up-country farmland, but certainly, if you go to the prairie, you know, they've really restored it. It was pretty agricultural, and pre-range land. It's of nature. It really is. You know the grasses... The grass is red. These red rugged hills. It's wonderful that you can go and experience it as she did. So, as I said *O Pioneers!* is more a geographical lyricism, the lyricism in *The Gambler's Son* is more about human interactions. And that's where we're the libretto makes a huge difference. Where the libretto is of my own crafting for, *O Pioneers!*, I was trying to remain as

true as possible to the wording and to Cather's reflection of the land. Probably even more so to the exact specific simple plot of the novel. And then, Laura's filling out of the human relationships, the family relationships, in the Sandoz novel, now, that was really a great inspiration. It really enabled me to pull the whole piece together, and the very moving and simple way that she was able, through these sorts of ballad-like approaches to different arias, to make those powerful communal emotional connections happen.

P: Do you feel like having a librettist to collaborate with, specifically someone you were so close to, gave you more freedom in some ways?

T: Yeah, I think so. Yeah. I often when writing my own just have to worry so much about whether I wanted to tinker with the libretto more, or if I was getting it right, or anything. With Laura it was just a question of when I'm working, it works well, and I'll work with it. That doesn't necessarily mean I'll follow it blindly. If there are occasional words you want to change it's fine, but there was a time or two when I went back to Laura and said, "I need a few more words here" and "the music just needs a little more here" So, we did go back and forth there. Then there were times when I would take a draft to her and play through it and everything. She said "this feels a little slow" but that's, you know, that's what collaborations are all about.

P: What drew you to opera? You could have just written Symphonies and concert works...

T: That's true. Really could have. I mean, first, it was having the opportunity here at UNL, and having the contacts, having the great working collaborative relationship with Bill Shomos. You know when it comes to the very beginning, the first mention of doing *O Pioneers!*, I can't remember if Bill or I started it. Then I think very shortly thereafter I started thinking about the *O Pioneers!*, that has the most obvious connection. The other thing is, you know, the other part of my graduate education was a deepening appreciation of opera. Cornell in the 80s was, and still is to a large extent, a real hotbed of serious consideration about how opera works; and so, I had good friends who were wonderful budding scholars, and faculty members who were great scholars of Verdi and Donizetti as well as Mozart and well, Wagner. And some of the things I picked up were notions of the way narrative works in operas... What happens when a character says, "let me tell you what happened" and then they tell you a story. There's always some kind of frame around the text of the opera that's usually somehow in the orchestra. There's always some sort of taking you to a different place where the story has been told, and that was an important realization. In analytical work and in classes and analysis, they included classes in operatic analysis. It got me thinking how Sandoz structures work in relation to Mozart ensembles, and how they work hand and glove with the character. All of those things were cooking in my brain. There are things I still think about just naturally when I'm doing anything operatic. It's how the music embodies what's happening on stage, because I always think, you know, the most important action in an opera happens in the pit.

Setting a text to music is, in a very profound way, reading that text and establishing some of the most basic criteria for reading and understanding a text, such as how

fast you hear the words. It's something as basic as that. So, I think if it's in the accompaniment as well as in the melody, as well as in the character of the vocal lines, then the composer's reading, the understanding of the characters and their situations, comes to light. And that reading can happen. Now granted, it doesn't just happen in the pit, it happens all the time in the shape of vocal lines, in the speed of vocal lines, in the register of vocal lines, in the returning to particular pitches within the vocal range of a given role. Those are things I think every really fine opera composer has just instinctively understood-- that those things come across. That's how the drama is conveyed. So, when I say the most important action is happening in the orchestra pit, I'm saying that essentially, it's how one might do a similar action with deeper meaning. It's very, very interesting to write like that.

P: Do you think about that differently in an operatic work than you would when you're writing say a concerto?

T: You know, dramatic context starts in either context, or subtext, or not. The characters who are most deeply engaged, we have either the landscape, or their dramatic situation, or their inner turmoil. In *O Pioneers!*, those characters, the music for those characters most closely resembles the music of Cather's narrative voice. Whereas the characters who are more conventional potentially are simply going through their lives as ordinary members of society. There are often references to the 19th century. It could be you know The Baseball Song, and the French Girl, and Lou and Oscar's lapses into 19th century Parlor song and things like this.

Transcript 2/26/2021

Patrick: Now let's start here: so, when it comes to *The Gambler's Son* versus *O Pioneers!*, can you tell me was there any difference in your process?

Tyler: Well, it varies from one piece to the next. It varies considerably in the case of *The Gambler Son*. Even before things really got underway compositionally once the libretto was finished it moved quickly. Before the libretto was finished, I did a fair amount of pre-compositional work, of sketching down ideas for themes, particularly motivic ideas. For example: the Lucky Cozad theme, it came actually pretty early. I played that for my wife early on and she just loved it. Of course, everybody likes that theme because it really stands out. You know, it's engaging. It's a good hook, but it doesn't sound ordinary. It stands out, right?

P: Yeah, can you talk to me more about what makes it unordinary?

T: I think it's partly the parallelism of the harmony, the parallel fifths, the cross relations in it, that makes it sound sort of majestic and heroic, but not straightforward, slightly crooked at the same time, fantastic.

P: Does that relate to Cozad the character? Was that a conscious choice to make the theme relate to the characterization?

T: Yeah. Yeah.

P: Can you, can you elaborate on exactly what you're using musically to translate to drama?

T: I said there's, there's a crookedness. There's a parallel heroic nature.

P: So, contour of melody and harmony? Did you have the character in mind when you were writing that theme already?

T: Yeah, definitely. It was in mind. It's interesting how sometimes when you have a forming idea of a character, and then an idea that encapsulates that character musically, how then the musical instincts can start to further develop the character concept. The music then goes forward. When you have that, have that right hook for the character, then it makes the character clearer as you go on. To get back to some of the other pre-compositional stuff, I also made a number of different matrices. It is not that I was interested in writing at 12-tone opera, or a 12-tone Western. It's just such a wonderfully horrible idea, and when I thought of it, I thought "gee wouldn't have just a deliciously bad idea"; and then of course I found out about Charles Wuorinen and Brokeback Mountain.

P: Yeah, so you know Brokeback Mountain has some of that. It has elements of a 12-tone western to be sure. So, was that an inspiration?

T: No. No. It was sort of a counter inspiration. It was the idea, first of all, I thought, you know, writing it writing a 12-tone western "what a deliciously horrible idea." When I found out about Brokeback Mountain and heard some of it and it was almost a warning, but it didn't scare me off.

P: Were their compositional inspirations from other operas at all?

T: Some of the obvious ones. I just decided at the end that to do a Rosenkavalier ending.

P: Okay, yeah. Good. Can you point to that in the score which...

T: It's after Cozad and Henri leave. There's all the reconciliation and everything and then it's the final bit. Yeah. So that's... well you wouldn't call it a quote.

P: What would you call that? An homage perhaps?

T: Perhaps. And it was so funny. I mean when I first talked to Bill about this, when he got to it, he immediately got the reference. As they got to the end he was thinking, "why is there so long till the end?" He immediately said when he got to that point, "Oh, that's what's going on here? Oh, okay."

P: Are there other homages that you've consciously put in?

T: Not really. At least I don't know. I don't think so. I mean there is, you know, in John J's, big aria in scene two, I was thinking a little of Sondheim.

P: In what way? That's fantastic!

T: In the piano, writing rhythmically, or at least more rhythmically and not as melodically really, but more in terms of the text. And then of course the opening of that scene with the birds and the prairie, it's kind of like Copeland meets Messiaen. So, Copeland meets Messiaen at Sondheim's house.

P: I love it. Delightful.

T: So, anyway, there were these matrices, but they were they weren't designed with any intention of writing fully 12-tone rhetoric, but really, they were just for composing out of, and to form repositories of motives. Then sort of exploring what the harmonic context of motives might be within a completely chromatic framework.

P: When you're developing these motives into themes... can you go more into your

process for them? They're not simply calling cards I assume.

T: Yeah.

P: That you have a means or process by which you intend to introduce the motive and then develop it, or is the motive a building block for something larger?

T: Well, I mean there's a sense in which motives are always calling cards. It's hard to get away from that, and I didn't particularly try; but I did, in particular with the John J theme, I did constantly try and recontextualize it harmonically because of the different situations that John J finds himself in. That places him in various levels of various stages and situations of moral ambiguity, so that there are some occurrences which are more the heroically set and others, such as when he leaves just before the grasshoppers come, when it's... well when it's recontextualized in all this.

P: It's makes them come alive.

T: Thank you. And it's not just John J's that theme with which that occurs. There are others. I mean, then of course, there's Richard Lee being the internal mystery of Cozad. Lee's theme, that was originally, even from the very beginning in act one scene one, the first time you hear that, that is not quite a tone row.

P: Right. Was that a conscious choice to make it or not? You develop the row over the opera, yes?

T: Well, The last tetrachord of the row. Here, can I please take a look? Is this new opening there? Well, I think in working on the piece, I made it so there is only one place where the full row actually exists, where it occurs complete.

P: And where is that? The last time you hear it, right? Is there a dramatic reason for that?

T: That's meant to imply, at least in my own mind, some kind of resolution of Cozad. It's Lee's inner mystery, but the mystery to himself as well; and he's not just been made a part of history, he's also kind of explained to himself. And therefore, in that last A major to F sharp minor alternation of the harmony, there's this moment where he says, "now I've been made part of history and there's nothing left but to die."

P: I'll just circle that. Okay. The complete row.

T: Yeah. That one. Yeah, here's the complete row.

P: Do you have a description for the Lee theme in the way that it relates to the character of Lee? Just like you said, Cozad has this heroic aspect but also is more complex and crooked than that. Can you talk to me about why the Lee theme sounds like it does?

T: I'm not sure. I may have to think more about it and I'm happy to do so. But the way I, from very early on, in the process, realized it was going to be...

P: Is that this Lee seventh? A leading tone?

T: Outline of the seventh in the theme, yes. It was going to be at the end of the Opera turned into an octave... expanding and resolving to that octave. The little challenge was to make it expand to an octave without sounding too simple, too simplistic in tension, and resolution. And so, that's why here, when it does expand to an octave, it doesn't resolve on to an unadulterated C major sonority, right? So, there's

Something unresolved about his character. I mean, essentially the arc of his life is now complete, but it's also in the context of these other lives that are going on. It's not just his story and it's complex.

P: Fantastic. So, you talked a little bit about these matrices that you developed them early on in the process. Are there any other musical constructs or hidden motives that might be somewhat hidden from the casual audience?

T: I wouldn't call that necessarily a hidden motive or something like that, but rather something that runs under the current that the average viewer is going to pick up.

P: They might leave humming lucky Cozad, but the tone row is less likely to be cognizant in their mind, right?

T: And nor is it really intended to be. As I say, the themes, I hope, will stand out, but the rows and particularly the organization of the row into its constituent tetrachords, and sometimes trichords sort of provide, are only for my own working method, a harmonic context. The other thing that the structure helps with is the collection of three or four motives, but also three or four note chords. And then the fact that each of those three or four note chords is going to be is going to be complementary with the other. When it's successful, it suggests something fresh. A fresh sense of harmonic motion and harmonic juxtapositions particularly, since in this case, a lot of these motives original tetrachords are diatonic. You have in effect complementary diatonic collections that sound. So, they're tonal, but not triadic, and then chromatic in a way in which they don't stay within their own diatonic collections. They move from one to another because of the workings of the row. It's never what I expect. I never, you know, intended anybody to think of any of these rows as the central tune or theme of the opera. That's not what it's about. And again, that's not the way the opera is written anyway. As I always tell my students, when we talk about serial music, that there's this fundamental ambiguity in Schoenberg's thinking, in that he always referred to the row at various times either as the main theme of a serial work, or as the same relation to the serial work as the C major scale would have to a piece in C major. That doesn't mean you're going to hear nothing but scales in peace. It's not a theme. It's just a structure from which thematic content is derived. And Schoenberg never fully sorted that out in his own mind.

P: A piece that comes to my mind regarding that approach is *Wozzeck*. Did you have any relation to that at all in your composition?

T: Oh well, like Berg, I'm fascinated with tonal music. With tonal structures. With triadic or diatonic structures within serial frameworks. And where I part from him is his interest in working with aggregates, and with and with the large, as in the in the *Lyrical Suite*. The 1925 version of his song, *Schliesse mir die Augen beide* - he set that poem twice in his life, once early and once in the mid-20s, and he used the same row from the *Lyrical Suite* which is an all-interval row. It has every interval in the chromatic scale. I'm not as interested in that because I tend to believe that when you have all the intervals together, it tends to make you lose the sense of the colors of the intervals. And it makes it all kind of a gray brown.

P: Speaking of color, would you talk to me about your choices of color and coloring.

The sounds throughout the work, be it natural orchestration or intervallic choices, how do you approach color in your composition?

T: Oh, I think it's very important. I think about it in terms of orchestration of course because orchestrating is so much fun. It's like painting. It's hard to elaborate on because I don't know exactly what I mean. You know, I am drawn toward visual metaphors, but I can't explain them visually. It's like painting but instead of using colors you're using timbres. And not just the timbres of individual instruments, but the timbres of different points in the range of the individual instruments. So, it's absolutely critical in my thinking, when you take a segment of a row, and you're making a chord out of it, and you're making it, you're treating it vertically. That it looks distinctive in the intervallic content, or what you wish to emphasize about it in general, like content that comes out in the placement, both the assignment of the instrument and the assignment of the of the pitch to the range of the individual instrument. And then, of course, the voicing of the chord and the how close, or open the spacings going to be.

P: Can you give me some examples of where those sorts of considerations were made?

T: Well, one obvious one would be in Act one, scene two. It would be the would be the sort of prairie sound. Both in terms of structure and - it doesn't come across really, and this is interesting, this is it doesn't come across in the piano vocal score because in order to be playable, it has to fit under one hand while the other hand is playing all the bird calls, but in the full score, in the full version,

P: I've got a copy.

T: Yeah, this would be... So yeah, we're seeing the very beginning, right? Right. Exactly with the birds and then the and then the wide-open chord. That sense of space. Space and air. Yeah, open air.

P: Do you have other examples of similar choices and how you create?

T: Let me think. I can think of one particularly at the end of the goodbye trio. It's a very different kind. In another place would be in the final scene of act 1, In Henri's scene, the "sunset glow" section where there are a of tapestry of arpeggiations. In a very different way, I think would be this: In the trio, where the accompaniment is largely arpeggiated, but it's always enriched and mellowed.

P: Yes, "I'm not afraid. I will see other towns and we'll never see Nebraska Sky again" right? And please talk about that enrichment. How do you create that?

T: Well, partly just what comes naturally to use arpeggiations in the piano with pedal, but you got an even more rich color, when you use strings, or potentially with subtle woodwind doublings sustaining harmonies, or only doing just particular intervals which sustain, so you achieve the sort of pedal sustaining of the harmony. Well, also having the attacks of the pitches, that's its simplest way. And this color is created to create dramatic effect. It's that combination of both sadness and hope. It seems to me just sort of inherently voluptuous. It's that voluptuous quality, especially at the end of the theme, where the harmony alternates back and forth between two different sonorities.

P: Is this, "we will all be together seeing other Skies" or oh yeah, "I will find my

father.”

T: Yeah, yeah exactly yeah. Just before that break off into the acapella. Yeah, “I will find my husband” Yeah. Alternating between two diatonic collections a tritone apart. Yeah. both of which are sort of articulated as major ninth chords.

P: What does the ninth chord mean to you in that context?

T: Well, I always think of the ninth chord as dominoes. I don't think functionally. I think of them more as projections, or as a major with an added length and added second, so, again, there's no resolution possible, partly because none is really desired. It's just going back and forth between these gorgeous sounds.

P: And you were saying that represents here the voluptuousness of these two conflicting emotions. Each a tritone apart and unresolved because they need no resolution.

T: Yeah, I think so. Yeah. Right.

P: Are there any compositional discoveries you made while working on this project?

T: Well, you know, when one's spouse is writing the libretto, you know, she writes it so that you have to compose a cattle stampede and a locust swarm. And I think you know the main discovery was just sort of that I could do it. Particularly the locust swarm, I was particularly happy with that, and especially since I wanted to write it in a way that in a sense, it sounded more complex than it was.

P And how did you, how did you get that effect?

T: Well, likely by having the players play small collections of motives that were simply repeated, but that constantly overlap and in a random way, so it creates this cacophonous effect, but without having the necessity for everybody to learn fantastically virtuosic and cacophonous stuff is obvious. Producing opera on a university campus, rehearsal time is at a premium; and given all the potential pitfalls and practical limitations of what I was up against in writing that, I was pleased at how well it turned out. The texture you get by using those small motives and creating them worked.

P: It's not really aleatoric by any means but you hear a sense of freedom there.

T: It creates a cacophony that's very impressive.

P: Yeah. so, should this work be adapted, what are the elements you would consider critical to the vitality of the work?

T: I mean, how do you mean adapted?

P: That's a great question. So, when you were initially working on this and collaborating with the director, some changes were made to the setting for example. What makes this work at its core? Other than just the notes on the page, is there something at its core that you think that you were trying to say what this piece? A big question.

T: Mmm. Yeah. Well. You know, I've never really asked myself that question, and what I can say is that the meaning of the work became clearer and clearer for me, even though I still have a hard time articulating what that is, but it became clearer and clearer to me the more I worked on it. I remember the very beginning of the project just reading the Sandoz novel and feeling hopeless. I was just trying to sort through the enormous amounts of detail and how you could make it work on the

stage in any way. Really frankly, you know, to make it work dramatically on the page. So, I have to give enormous credit to my wife for both pruning radically and fleshing other things out because you can't cut your way into something effective on the stage. Something else has to happen, too. So, I think in terms of other adaptations, I mean other things could be done. I conceived this orchestration for the limitations of the Kimball Hall orchestra pit. So, the orchestration could be larger, although I wouldn't want to make it too large, but there could be a full brass section, maybe four horns and a full pair of woodwinds.

P: We had to do an adaptation, that was even more reduced, right? And we got to do a fuller version of when we got back.

T: Yeah. Actually, I found a way to make the reduction work. Although, you know, when I finally heard it, it felt too thin to me, and so I really for when the when the reduced version is performed, I think it should be performed with the piano reduction playing as well. So, then it's a chamber ensemble, but including two pianos.

P: When writing this this work about a historical figure, you were saying that your wife did a wonderful job, pruning the whole thing down. Did you have to make any decisions between the two of you about expressive form versus when to be simple and straightforward. Did you ever have to balance the truth of what was said by the historical character versus how you deal with the dramatic pacing in creating a work like this.

T: Yeah, there were a couple issues in the Sandoz's novel. The flaw with the novel is largely related to the fact that it is so close to the historical record, but it became clear how much this was Sandoz and how much this is what was known to the family, you know? There were knock down drag out fights between Cozad and Teresa. All of that had to be stripped away and replaced with Teresa's aria. I think that was really where Laura really did a brilliant job in creating that. And of course, Cozad's reappearance in the middle of that aria is drama at its best, and, I hope, a shocking moment. And you know, I remember playing through it before rehearsal had started. I had just finished this and I was playing the computer files for a colleague, you know, because when we got to that point he just said, "oh geez."

P: Can you talk about what you did with the aria to create that effect compositionally?

T: Personally, I wanted a floating sound, a grounded, but floating sound. So, that came from having a very small range of harmonic motion, but with inconsistently undulating rhythms. So, there's this constant state of being stuck, but unstable at the same time, though also very lyrical and tender at the same time as well. I mean, I tend to be drawn toward music that expresses or that seems to express many different things at the same time, and so I think that was certainly a clear attempt at that in that aria. This, the shifting of meter is certainly part of that.

P: Will you talk about the theory of expanding the orchestra when the show is to be redone, to create a greater sense of richness or some other desired effect?

T: Yeah, yeah, it would be a greater sense of richness, a greater sense of sonority. I wouldn't want to muddy up the accompaniment or make the accompaniment

heavier, and one of the things I would always try to get to have is that the text come across really clearly. The orchestra, the orchestra voicings, would need to stay out of the singers' way, so I'd want to be careful about that.

P: Well, I think that's all the time I get with you today. Thank you so much Dr. White. This was extremely helpful to get at a lot of really great stuff.

T: Sure. Yeah, I'm happy to do it. Okay. It's fun thinking about it. And yeah, of course I greatly appreciate the attention and the care and love for the piece. Yeah. I mean it's rare that we get to discuss our work in this detail.

Transcript 3/12/2021

P: So, let's talk about the opera, and more of the driving forces behind the composition. Will you talk to me about what spurred the topic?

T: Well, it was entirely Jane Rohman's suggestion. And she suggested that back around 2000 or 2001. She suggested the Sandoz novel as a subject for an opera, and even loaned me a copy of the book. I read it and immediately didn't see how the world I'd be able to turn it into an opera. I thought maybe you could cut it into some kind of one act, but I really didn't see it. So, I just sort of let the matter lie until about 2016. About 15 years later, I was between projects and searching around for something ambitious to do, and I went back to the novel, read it and then again, and still, I thought I thought better of it. I thought it's more promising, although I really didn't see how I was going to make that full sprawling chronicle into a serviceable plot; but then I got Laura involved, and so she saw awesome possibilities. Then I was able to go back to Jane, and we were able to start talking about the commission and putting it together. So, that was where the impetus it came from. It was from Jane, but really it wasn't until Laura basically undoes the work that things get going. You wouldn't pick Sandoz's novel up and say there's a story necessarily, right? I mean, it's a great concentration of events. There's a great story in there. But it doesn't have much linear plot to it. Again, I think it's, in a way, not Sandoz's is fault because she was trying to stay close to her facts. She had such an accumulation of source material that she was trying to stay true to, and she was true to all of it. She really needed to take some liberties in order to make it a really effective novel. She needed to take some liberties that she didn't feel at liberty to take.

P: When you were composing the music, having read the novel in its complete form, were there any elements you tried to incorporate that weren't directly in the libretto? Or did you just base your composition on the word on the page in the libretto.

T: Well, of course, by the time the libretto was finished I already had some sketch material, and I had some ideas about musical transformations that we're going to happen in relation to events and the plot. So, it's actually a little difficult to remember exactly what order things happened. I wasn't keeping a diary during this period, but I guess the answer really is: yes, there were musical events that needed to happen such as the final resolution of the Mystery of Cozad's (Lee) theme could resolve. That final resolution was always going to be there. I have to say, I did like

the line, which comes with almost the last line of the book, but Laura didn't care for that line. She saw it almost as slightly blasphemous because you know it's practically what the Lord God says to Jesus, but it ended up in the work. I mean, I wasn't going to take it out. It was too important musically to let go.

P: Were there other practical elements you were considering when composing this work? Like knowing you're going to have to do it in a space without fly space, that led to compositional choices or libretto choices?

T: Just the size of the orchestra and how I needed them to be. There were going to be all sorts of challenges there. There were going to be all sorts of challenges for this staging in Kimball, but, frankly, I figured I had enough to worry about writing the music. I wasn't going to try and stage it myself in my head.

P: So how much were you thinking visually when composing, versus when was it more of a sound concept that you were after, or something else entirely?

T: I mean there certainly were visual things. I mean, ideally it would be great for the cattle stampede to have projections and to even have the motions of being, you know, under a cattle stampede with just shadows moving over you. And there are all sorts of more complicated projections that could happen. There and in the grasshopper plague. If you're able to fly things in and out, there would be many different possibilities for how you could reflect the growth of the town. And that's what I was imagining visually, and all the while realizing that probably none of that was going to be able to be realized on the Kimball stage.

P: So, you mentioned in creating the grasshopper plague that you were partially considering how to create a cacophonous noise without creating something unplayable, knowing that you were writing for largely university level players. Were there other moments where you had to take that into consideration the level of the musician when you were writing? The level of player that you were going to have varied, so was this opera tailored to that in some other way?

T: I tried not to, I tried to keep the general difficulty level from exceeding a certain bar both for instrumentalists and for singers alike. And although, you know as somebody who sang it, it may not appear to you that that I was that concerned with the difficulty of your role, but it's not that I've never written for the voice before. I knew which roles I would have more accomplished singers on, and could write accordingly. Clearly this wasn't my first vocal foray. So yeah, I wrote with how singers work in mind.

P: When you're writing, what percent of it is that visualization of what's going to be happening on stage. And what percent of it is just trying to bring out the text or subtext. Or is it all of these things simultaneously? Is there a balance there somewhere?

T: Yeah, I think it's all simultaneous. And for me I guess the magical thing happens when you find the right notes, that seem to reflect it all. That because you find the right notes, you just think about the notes and have every other consideration sort of fall into place. And that's wonderful, that's what I find to be a wonderful experience in the creative process.

P: What were the moments where that happened for you specifically with this

piece?

T: Coming upon the Lucky Cozad that theme. Not so much the melody but the harmonic content that I think gives its anchoring depth, and hidden darkness. I think it's the parallelism. Yeah, the parallelism and the cross relations that result from the parallelism.

P: When you were writing, you mentioned you had already come up with thematic material before the libretto was complete, and that was kind of a back-and-forth process in some ways. Did you end up with a list of themes? Did you have a board of themes that you were picking and choosing from or what? What was that process like for you?

T: Um, no. I think I had a collection of themes in my mind. I never had them put them up on a board, but they were just so sort of ready to hand mentally, and I can just pick them out.

P: Can you give me a brief list of what they are in your mind?

T: Well, Cozad and Lee. Those are the two most important ones. Some of the other ones are the theme that Bill associated with Robert, but I originally intended to be more associated with Teresa.

P: Interesting...

T: But it's always associated with the loving family relationship unit. Yes, there's a loving family relationship unit theme.

P: Which you meant for Teresa, but it shows up with Robert and the rest of the family?

T: It shows up every time, Robert comes on stage too, because family, right? So, if it's just a calling card, I can see where that confusion would be, but yeah there's an emotional content.

P: Can you go more into how you structure that theme to bring about that emotional content?

T: Sure here. Well, while I'm looking for this, the other one would be the sort of idealized bustling town theme. I'm sorry I've lost track of what the question was.

P: And so, the Robert and Theresa loving Family Theme how did you structure it to elicit loving family emotions? What part of that theme, as you're saying some of these things lined up when you created them, made sense on multiple levels so that you could just follow the music?

T: It's when you get a combination of the emotional world of musical versus visual. All of these components sort of gelled together in these themes, when it comes to the family theme, well, one thing about that is it is always doubled in major thirds. You know, that was intended to evoke a certain kind of sweetness, but then they but the contour of the melody is based around the falling fifth and rising fourth. And then you're falling fifth, rising fourth, falling thirds.

P: Was there something specific about it? Is it more the harmony for you? The harmonic context of the thirds or is it the shape of the line? Or Rhythm?

T: It's really how those things fit together, and how those things should fit together to give the entire give the entire theme a certain color and a certain emotional feel that that remains distinctive. Even though it's kind of generic diatonic music and

diatonic content, one thing I always find really interesting about working in the neo-tonal language is finding ways of using diatonic material so that it doesn't sound bland and constant. And consequently, when you use more than three or four diatonic pitches at the same time, the tendency is for the total harmonic color to get kind of washed out. So, I find it really interesting to try and find ways of spacing out chords, so they are really distinctive harmonic colors without losing the simplicity of the diatonic language. And when it comes to the idealized town theme, it was all there. That's a heavy and a very complex concept, an idealized town. How do you convey this? Something that has all of those components to it. Their visual components, their emotional components.

P: What about the idealized Town Theme? It struck home for you as a composer when you stumbled upon it?

T: Well, in writing Cozad's, first, big aria it just sort of came out. It's kind of, you know, in the vision from Cozad's heart. It's his vision for what he wants to create, and it's initially associated with Cozad's voice, and with Cozad's relationship with Theresa and his family, and how he wants to locate them in this idealized community he is building. The next time you hear it in the beginning of act 1 scene 3, it's scored for woodwinds which lends the theme sort of a kind of purified Copland-ish sort of color. A rural color. And then ultimately by the end, when you know the dream is basically destroyed, the intervals are quite different.

P: It's got a falling nature to the theme, by the way, right?

T: That it's written to begin with, and that last time, it really does feel like crumbling because the way it's really harmonized, right? And one thing I need to point out is: It is in Act 2, scene 5, in the instrumental introduction to that, that's the place where the dream is really broken. And what's notable there is that it's harmonized all in major thirds instead of in diatonic thirds, so there's this sort of anguished quasi-whole tone quality to it, but it's also placed in counterpoint with the Lee theme in augmentation. So, make of that what you will. Whatever those two themes mean, and the fact that they're being presented simultaneously, in a way where the harmony happens to work occurs there.

P: Instead of me making up a theory why not ask you? I don't want to put words in your mouth if I don't have to. When you were layering those two things together, what exactly is that moment in your language? Are you pulling together the present and the past?

T: Well, I mean it's not necessarily something that the audience is expected to recognize, but what does happen is that everything that's happened to Cozad a result of those contradictions that are so present in Lee's character, and it sort of represents the death of the dream for the town of Cozad. It represents the emergence of his new identity as Lee.

P: Does that relate to Henri's perception of his father, as well?

T: I think it could, I think you can make a case for that, although I wasn't necessarily thinking about it, right? It wasn't necessarily my intention, but it's a lovely thought.

P: So, we talked briefly last week about what's at the core compositionally of this, this 12-tone western.

T: Mmm yes

P: Over the past or past bit of time has anything cropped up, where do you think “This is the thing that makes it necessary for this piece to work. This was my message.”

T: Other than everything? But yeah, I mean, I think, and have to say, the multiplicity of styles and approaches is central to the piece. That it wouldn't work as just a 12-tone western. And to that point, there isn't really any completely serial music event in the show. The fact is that there are different styles associated with different characters, and different styles associated even within the same character. So, I find that there's a difference with this opera from say *Oh Pioneers!*, where when I turned to popular or formerly popular idioms often, that was generally indicated broadly. I don't want to say it was condescension, but something close to that on my part toward the character. They indicated something about a character who lives at a shallower level of existence than the character who sort of lives in the musical style that I was trying to associate with Cather's narrative voice. It's perfectly obvious in reading Cather when she associates with the characters, and when she doesn't. But in the case of *The Gambler Son*, the different styles are much more fluid. I think they happen more organically. I'm not sure I have much more to say about that, it's just that they aren't a single character style. I mean, certainly in the case of Cozad, he inhabits several different worlds simultaneously in several different styles. And, so, He lives in many different worlds. When he walks in, you get all this talk, then there's a gambling scene sort of moment, right? All these different styles exist within one character and therefore they have a sense of unity perhaps, right?

P: Pop styles in a *O Pioneers!*... I don't see much “pop” in *The Gambler's Son*. Or is there anything in *The Gambler's Son* you'd refer to it as a sort of pop style? Or are you referring to pop styles of the period? Not quite anachronisms, but something else, maybe?

T: I mean. Well, well, first of all in *O Pioneers!*...

P: I mean the pop styles, I mean pop styles of circa 1900, right?

T: And sort of. Yeah. Be it Souza or Victor Herbert or there's something like that. but, Yeah, the honky-tonk, gambling music is. Particularly in Act 2, scene 3. It's sort of like proto-Las Vegas.

P: Got it. However, it seems like you were saying organic style shifts occur and that's exactly what happens in that scene. Gambler is part of who we know this character is in this opera.

T: Right, so it doesn't pop out of texture.

P: And I mean, and as much as Cozad has his foot in both high minded and very low sort of worlds, the style shift seems justified, right? Simultaneously it would create conflict within the character, but the right conflict, which leads the audience viewing this character is complex, right?

T: Well, I hope so yeah. Since the main action of this opera is bookended by scenes that take place many years later, I had to make it all as clear as possible.

P: Can you talk about the styles or compositional tools that you use to make that temporal transition part of the musical landscape.

T: Well, I guess a couple of things occur to me. In the beginning of the opera, moving from the first scene into the second scene, the first scene is very much an interior scene. As Lee remembers his former life that world sort of opens up, and this former sunlight dawns. So, there are different kinds of light and dark that alternate over the course of the show. I guess what you find is that in the first act the musical references help set the time. The scenes taking place in 1903 in Henri's studio tend to be troubled in a way that in a way that the Cozad scenes are not because they're because those scenes are more expository and initially, hopeful. So even when very dark things happen, it's a question of the plot moving forward, and then you keep returning to these two characters who are trapped in their individual memories in 1903. In a way over the course of the second act, by sharing and both by examining their own memories, and by sharing their examined memories, they come to a shared understanding of what has happened in their lives, and therefore, they can resolve it and move on and, and most critically Henri can paint. Henri, who always had, you know, an enormously healthy view of artistic creativity. You know, in examining it and coming to understand it, he can then fully paint a psychologically meaningful portrait of his father. So, I sort of feel that there's a certain confluence of frame story and pioneer narrative. They gradually come together, and that's one reason the staging of bringing all the Cozad people back on in the final trio worked so well. It really gave a visual form to what's happening in the music and happening in the libretto about bringing one's memories into the creative life of the present.

P: So as these temporal periods start disparate, one is troubled, the other more open, and they begin to merge throughout. What about when it comes to when you were crafting the score. Did you consciously make that happen?

T: I think a lot of it was probably unconscious, frankly. It's another thing that does happen structurally in the music, which I wasn't thinking, "oh, I'm going to do this in order to accomplish this particular dramatic thing" and it's just happened. I think another example that does the same thing was going into the final scene, I don't want to say serial structures, but a certain sort of post-tonal approach pitch class set to the creation of tonal harmony represents in itself a certain confluence of the interior and exterior worlds. So that's sort of the underpinning thing that links the two, or I think that's something that emerges.

P: what is there a spot where that happens or a moment?

T: This whole melody: "There are certain moments our lives when we when we see more clearly." The harmony there is based on diatonic mutually complementary, diatonic tetrachords which sound ultimately kind of tonal, even though you as you look at them, you realize, "yikes, it's not" and so that's what I was particularly happy to discover in writing that bit of music. To find that particular sort of euphonious way of using post-tonal techniques in a way that sounds still very lyrical and very vocal and unthreatening to the average listener was great.

P: And it creates a sense of dramatic unity as well.

T: As we were saying, when all of these sorts of components can come together, that's when it feels right, right. For example, I'm thinking of the little oboe solo just before Henri starts singing "There are certain moments in our lives" that was a row

that was originally associated with young Robert's creativity.

P: Really?

T: Yeah, I mean at first you first, hear that in the beginning of Act 2, scene 3 of the intro to two three before the before the sleazy gambling music comes in.

P: Are there other rows that carry that kind of meaning?

T: specific to and I'm having trouble remembering where. I'd have to go back to this sketchbook. And not every row has a component like that. Really just a handful that do. Yeah, I mean you know the reason usually in constructing a row: I start with an intervallic or motivic profile for the future for the first few notes, be that the first three or five or four, and then from that I divide up the rest of the row to find rows that will match or complement, in either sense of the word, that is going along with or be an opposite to, the row. So, that's usually the way I go about constructing a row. It really is. Another matter is the matter of the character. I feel so strongly about writing music with character. As a composer nowadays, you can do anything, and that's really intimidating. The business of writing music always reminds me of the old story of the sculptor being asked how you carve a statue of an elephant. You just get a block of stone and then remove everything that doesn't look like an elephant. I'm constantly taking stuff out or just judging one pitch against another, in terms of what's going to be right. If you ask me: how do I know what's right? I will defer, but you do know it when you hear it, you know?

P: So, if it's not just a 12-tone western or are there genres that fit well? I mean there are certain genres that would you say it fits into, or would you refuse such labels?

T: No useful labels for that process. I don't know, maybe that's not even for me to say. I mean, certainly there's an extent to which, particularly in what Laura has done with the libretto, that the Henri story, Robert's, it's also a story about how dreams don't work out, and that they somehow still do. Somehow it does come out okay. So, I don't know exactly what you call that in terms of dramatic genre.

P: I would argue that there are components of this story where, there are two generations, trying to understand each other, right? An intergenerational story.

T: I mean it's definitely it's an intergenerational story. It's a western. I mean the amazing settling of the American West, the European expansion into the West is such an enormous topic. It represents one facet of that, and one that was not entirely successful. It's kind of a family romance. I don't know anymore.

P: Were any of these constructs running through your head when you were picking out the intervallic choice, tones, or colors? Did you want a western sound? You mentioned honky-tonk.

T: I was more after a character. I was at a working at a more granular level in terms of individual characters, and in just how those characters would be projected. Less in terms of setting. I wasn't thinking in generic terms, like this is an epic theme, or this is a at the same time Cozad has certain heroic epic properties.

P: When you said you were creating a western you created this Copeland like space in the orchestration.

T: Yes, and as these characters get to know each other, their things become warped and more complex. Or at least with one of them. Yes, clearly when it comes to Cozad.

The town as well.

P: Were you trying to create that through orchestration, through some other manipulation of the score?

T: Oh, I think so. I think in everything. We're trying to achieve that sort of a presiding preoccupation. The Western setting, I knew right away that you had to create it, and open planes constructs when it comes to the dramatic contents.

P: How did you develop those themes to tell that story?

T: Well, I think the big picture came first. Inventing the material was sort of natural. The individual themes and rows and motives were always judged against how well they fit into the big picture. I hope that's ok. I hope that's not too vague a thing to say. Let's talk a little bit about that later.

P: You said, I as someone who performed this work, probably has thoughts on your writing for the voice. What were your thoughts and considerations when writing for the voice? What do you factor in in your style?

T: Well, it depends a lot on knowing the individual voices.

P: How much were these roles written for those voices?

T: Originally not so much. I mean it was very very helpful to get singers involved early. They had the original draft score in 2018, the original scenes were produced in Cozad, and hearing them, the lines become much more physically tangible in individual voices. Given what Laney felt comfortable doing with the upper register, that had a strong impact on what I felt I could do with Teresa's character. And in your case, your comfort in the upper register, the size of the voice, the stamina it made a big difference. And basically, I wanted to be careful, not to make the tessitura punishing for most roles. And it's something that could easily happen with Cozad's and Henri's roles, just because especially when they're orating or emoting, that's natural grandiloquence. That can translate itself into sitting above the staff in ways that get to be a problem. You know within everybody's range, if you sit up there long enough it kind of gets very uncomfortable.

P: Were there thoughts about pacing? I noticed the different characters are paced very differently from a vocal standpoint for example.

T: Both Henri and Lee, and just in the way that the whole story is constructed, have moments and then big breaks sort of generally speaking in between those moments. Yes, whereas the family structure. Well, the family is certainly on for longer chunks of time.

P: Was that at all part of your process when we're thinking about, how to write for these different individuals or voices in general?

T: I think so. I mean, I did and given the fact that Lee and Henri have more time off they can, when at center stage, be more spectacular. You want to be careful in the case of the character of Lee. It's important for him not to be particularly vibrant or spectacular since he's an older character and, you know, when he goes into the upper register that's a matter of real importance to him. I think with the other characters it was really just a question of not wanting to tire them too much and trying to keep things in a more business-like range except for those places where there are really extraordinary moments that they need to break out of the business-

like middle range. Teresa's aria, for example, and the and the final trios were where things go up, you know, really high. An exception to that would be probably Cozad. At the end where it's not that vocally spectacular, but it's partly because they're so shocked at what just transpired. It has to be emotionally moving, but still kind of washed out at the same time.

P: Let's talk about your use of a cappella. It's stunning. I think that when that happens it's jarring in a really exciting way.

T: When you use a cappella sections and when you write them well, I guess on a simple practical level, I wanted to make sure that the harmonies would be, although not conventional, would be really audible and clear and clearly expressed through voice leading. They needed to be manageable to sing. I tried to be very careful in writing those, so that the singers could easily stay on pitch because there's always a reckoning coming when the orchestra comes back in if you drift off. I don't know how you felt about it.

P: I think they are some of the most exciting moments of your writing, frankly.

T: Well, thank you. I'm happy to hear you say that. Although I'm not a Wagnerian composer, but I believe in this part of Wagner's compositional ideology and that's how much of the drama happens in the orchestra pit. And so, since the orchestral accompaniment, in the colors and motives in the orchestra is constantly driving, what's happening on stage? I look for those moments when the orchestra could then drop out and let the and let the voices just sort of sail. I recognize those as being exciting moments because, of course, there is the question of "gosh we've got to stay on pitch." Everyone thinks like that, like it or not. There's going to be that moment of uncertainty and the way you get around that is just by staying super focused, musically and dramatically. And that extra focus, that happens on the part of the singing actors. Also, then adds to the fact that then they are dramatically naked. I think that's it. They're dramatically naked. Where the orchestra is driving drama under everything that's going on in some ways, when that drops out, we get the closest thing to... I don't know. Opera has this suspension of moments that occurs throughout it. This temporal suspension, but all sorts of suspension, and I think because the orchestra has driven you all the way to that point, has driven these characters all the way to that point, that when drops out everything sort of expands because that driver is no longer underneath. It's not that those things aren't moving. It's like the concept of the aria, where plot stops and everything sort of freezes and expands. You get a real sense of that with a cappella. I don't know. It's not that the whole show comes to a halt, but it's suspenseful in some way. At least that's what I hear.

P: Can you go more into the Wagnerian drive that you use? How the orchestra propels drama in your writing.

T: Okay, well I mean, it partly in the Wagnerian sense of the use of in the manipulation and development of motives. That's certainly there, but in both local and long-range harmonic and tonal planning. That is the sense that harmonically you go somewhere, or don't, or don't know. And well, the moments where you don't go anywhere, those are the cells, important moments of non-motion, before

something else happens to move you elsewhere.

P: But these a cappella moments are not even non-motion. There's nothing, right? What is that to you? If the orchestra is a driver of all of this drama, whether it be suspense or movement forward or momentum, what is it when we have none?

T: Oh, well then. then it is, in fact, it's an intensification of the character. But once having been set up, it's as if now you tell the characters "okay, you're on your own. Sell it." And there's a moment of free fall for almost everyone. You're talking about the musicians queuing and in a different way with their ears and all of that, I think the audience does too. The orchestra drives them to the point and then things go over that ledge.

P: What did you see in your mind's eye when you wrote four minutes of locusts? What was there?

T: So, when we talked a little bit about you have projection concepts, and we talked a little bit about the, the crafting of that cacophonous sound. And when we were in rehearsal, we simply read the Sandoz. You know, that passage where it's all described in horrific detail what that was like. We don't really have a way of understanding it in our modern existence. I was more audiating at that point. Just the haze of clicking and munching sounds and then translating that into this dissonant octatonic tetrachord tension chord pit structures which get fragmented and sprinkled through the strings and then presented more quarterly in the brass just to give some a sense of musical structure. For the whole scene I made a sense of musical shape of rising to ultimately a climax, and then it was just having the cloud move on. I tried not to think too much about what it must have been like because, you know, it lasted four days not four minutes, and that just must have been just unbelievably awful having the sun just blotted out by these billions of insects. I sort of tried to digest the horror of the whole of the whole episode, and then turn aspects of it into particular technical musical elements that could be combined and shaped to form a reasonably coherent, musical interlude. Does that make sense?

P: It does. Okay. This doesn't have to be a right now answer, but is this in Nebraska opera?

T: Yes, but I hope not entirely. Like we were saying, there are things well beyond that like intergenerational conflict and understanding. It's not just a Nebraska opera but is it a Nebraska opera? I think so. I mean I think it certainly is an opera with external appeal to anyone who cares about the frontier history of the state and who cares about Sandoz's work, since Sandoz was a very fine regionalist in the way that Cather is not. She always struck me as being more regional in her appeal. It's the same way where you can find Southern writers who are really fine southern writers, and then you have then you have Faulkner.

P: I guess the real follow-up to that question is, knowing this was a Nebraska opera, what did you do to make this sound like Nebraska?

T: Hmm, well I can't think of anything offhand I specifically did. I think maybe just the fact that by the time I finish this piece, I'd lived here for 25 years, and my style has developed in this place. I've developed and changed in this place in ways that I'm very much aware of. I don't know if anybody else would consider them

particularly of Nebraska, although I have to say, recently in interviewing prospective graduate students one of the graduates students who had looked up *The Gambler's Son* on YouTube and other works of mine and some of Greg Simon's work and Tom Larson's work, he said, "you know, there really is a kind of a Nebraska sound and all your music and it's outside." I don't quite know how to describe that other than to follow the usual just sort of throw everything back on the shoulders of Copland because there are Copland-esque moments in the music. Aaron Copland-esque music in moments in the music of Carl Nielsen a Dane exits too who was writing at the time Copland was a baby.

P: That Nebraska sound, when you're writing for the character of Henri, does it exist in him years later?

T: Oh, that's interesting. I didn't think of putting that in intentionally, but I think it's there. I mean, what I'm thinking was especially about reading *The Art Spirit*, and especially the parts of *The Art Spirit* that Laura and I both put into the into the libretto, it's all open-air idealism. That's such a part of Henri's aesthetic outlook. Though the whole part of Henri's aria at the end of Act one about the sunset glow too, that's something that was really important to get in there just because of the intensity with which it felt right. And then how that intensity translates into the big second act aria about, "Never change the shape of the line until you have to. When you have to, you have to."

P: Yeah, just curious if there were compositional elements that went into that Nebraska sound and how that translates?

T: One thing I can say while the camera is still rolling is that everything I've talked about, what I think about when I write with diatonic sets contributes to that, is this sense of the sense of spacing. Spacing contributes to the quality of air. Light and air and grounding. I mean, I'm more likely, for example, to put base instruments and low sound voiced closely together, and upper instruments voiced far apart, and that has something to do I think with the planes, you've got heaviness down here and up there just there in space and the wind sky. Anyway, thank you very much.

P: oh sure. Sure. You want to meet again next week?

T: I would love to, I would do this every week. If we could do as much as you're willing to, I'd be happy.

P: I would very much appreciate that.

T: Yeah, the more of this, I mean, it's extremely, I mean fun, but also more enormously useful, and flattering a little bit.

Transcript 3/19/2021

Patrick: So, my first question is, are the cuts permanent? That's part of the question. Would you like them to be? I've got one marked in my score at measure 34 we took out three measures and then again at measure 41, We cut right to the entrance.

Tyler: Technically the first beat of measure, 40 we cut. Yeah, I think the cuts basically are out for good. Those are for good. I think so. I think so, I'd have to say yes. Here we get scales into the measure. Well, I guess my measurement numbers

might be wrong now because of those cuts, but into the vocal entrance of Cozad, there's that ascending scale.

P: Is that scale the dramatic intent there? Is that a stage direction of some sort or is that emotional content?

T: That's sort of stage direction, it's sort of a blustery entrance. I'm thinking as far as excerpting or someone to do this, put it in an audition or a book or something like, here makes sense.

P: Is that sort of where you envision it starting, or would you want context before, or what's useful?

T: I think it might start four bars before. And I'm looking at the full score so I can't remember what the piano vocal looks like, how much bird call there is because they're really important. You just need two measures of bird calls. Yeah. So, you get one bar of nothing and then two bars of bird, call followed by chord and the scale and out of the tight spot.

P: So, all of these first few vocal lines of Cozad ascend at the end. They don't sort of land; they've a feeling like they've got a rising energy and they rise in pitch. Are you showing something about his character through that or am I reading too much into it?

T: I guess so, I mean, I wasn't consciously doing that, but I think that's certainly there. I mean, it's such a basic archetype, you know, nothing original about doing that. It's just nothing wrong with the archetypes though, right? We've always moved back and forth between known ideas.

P: Well, specifically, let's talk about the use of a double dot on piano vocal measure 51. Is that intended to give more punch to that line? Or is there some more meaning behind that double dot? We don't see them very often in the rest of the score or even in this theme.

T: Oh yeah, "lucky" yeah, it's really sharp. And is it double dotted anywhere else in the instrumental parts? Or is it only double dotted for the vocals? Because in the piano vocal, I don't have my full score with me.

P: Yeah. It's double-dotted in the brass.

T: Great. Okay, that's all that. I guess maybe that one reason I do it there is to make this first statement of the theme really clear-cut and stand-out.

P: When we get to the allegro, we get a huge shift; can you talk to me about what that shift is meant to represent? And that gliss, it sort of drives us right in. Can you talk to me about the drama meaning here? I'm always after the dramatic concept. What is that in terms of drama for you?

T: Hmm. I've never tried putting it into words, so I'm not sure I'll have any success at doing so now. I always kind of think of those gliss gestures as, in a sense, sort of wiping the sleight clean, and then, because you're in the presentation of the Cozad theme, that theme should ideally convey something of both how Cozad sees himself... his own awareness of himself, but also, because it does have some darker colorings as well, there's also something that he may not be completely aware of as well. Whereas, what's happening in the allegro is much more Cozad's outward face to the world and his description of what he's done in the world. Therefore, the

sleight that sort of wiped clean is in order to get into the presentation of what he's done. I don't know if that makes sense.

P: It does make a lot of sense, I think. It's Cozad's, understanding of himself, but also a childlike Henri's view of his father, in some way perhaps?

T: I hadn't really thought of that yet. No, I think of it more as a presentation of how he presents himself to the world.

P: So, this staccato gesture you've got under it all, what are you after with that effect? And it's sort of syncopated. We've got this jaunty thing.

T: Welcome to be completely frank, this was written at an early point in drafting the opera, and I wasn't quite sure yet exactly which direction things would go stylistically. This was opening up the possibility of a more Broadway sort of orientation in his external style. The way he presents to the world is a little bit Broadway, but it's very surface level. I don't know maybe that's not fair to Broadway, but that's yeah, it's sort of bops along, you know? It's a "come follow me," sort of. Again, the syncopations sort of lend up a pop tinge to the thing, at least in my ear. When it comes to the setting of this aria it's almost entirely syllabically set. There are a million good reasons for it. I mean one was just that there's a lot of text to get through, and I mean that was the basic reason for just plowing through text. There's no time for melismas. In some ways it's a very expository riff. It is a very exposition heavy, and it's not very self-reflective. Even the quasi-reflective bits like "hard times in South America." Even there the text keeps rolling along and keeps bustling.

P: Just as the character does, because he himself seemed to have a lot of trouble staying still, right?

T: Well, in fact Lee says so. Yeah, the syllabic setting just seems to go very much in line with that aspect of the character in my reading.

P: But also, there's a ton of exposition to get through too, right?

T: Yeah, I think it's basically that too. The fact that there's this idea that when you use less syllabic settings it has to do with introspection in the word, and this setting shows his unwillingness to do that. One of his great flaws, I would add. The next section the tempo is faster, and if there's anything of any importance behind the subtle difference, it's just that it's more a reference rather than an introduction, so it's not trying to imprint itself on the hearers.

P: That all changes pretty significantly and when we get the 100th Meridian. Is this the sort of "open planes sound" you had in mind when you were talking about it before?

T: Yeah, just a momentary reference to it. Yeah, again we get this very broadly spaced orchestration.

P: And here's a question. Do you have... In my piano vocal I have my 100th Meridian capitalized.

T: Yes, yes. And is that? It's set up on an E flat, so you're going to get that sort of accent there, I think.

P: Yes, with the agogic accents as well. Is that to really drive home that point? Is that where we're going?

W: I think so. It's the notion of the 100th Meridian being somehow, you know, just terribly important to him and to this identity. And the question of being in the center and in the center of his life. And so, it's not just I own it, it's also the 100th Meridian of me. It's core to how he views himself.

P: At 89 we get the shift again. We had a shift back at 80, the brief Copland excursion. Now we're at "the hundredth Meridian of my own lucky life." In my 89 it sort of launches us back into this sort of boppy, or maybe not boppy, but we get back to this this Broadway sort of feel.

T: Well, I'm not sure if it does right there. I mean here it goes back by a lucky Cozad into where the first "beautiful new city" occurs. So, the "beautiful new city" is that thematically.

P: Can you talk to me about the beautiful new city, on a hill idea? And how do you ascribe that? What do you do with that compositionally?

T: Well, as we talked to last time, it becomes a really essential theme of the whole show, both its sort of lyrical aspiring aspects and it's also in its descending nature; and it's written for its harmonic instability which ultimately leads it to a very dark place harmonically. It sort of feels like the harmonic instability makes the city here actually fairly solid; but it certainly collapses because it is shaky, so it collapses as we progress. After he mentions the deed to 40,000 acres, we get a little shift of some sort in these three bars.

P: What's that? Is that a transition? Emotionally for Cozad or is that a Relishing?

T: Yeah. It's just a relishing of the possibilities. Okay. Yeah, he takes a beat, sort of to think about, "What could be right?" And come up with it "here everything will be clean and new." Once we get to the first setting of Theresa, we've got the sort of descending theme proper.

P: Is there something you did about the setting of Cozad's exterior vision of how he views his marriage? I think there's something to that.

T: You know, it's because Cozad's into Teresa, but they don't have an outwardly demonstrative relationship at all. And yet he does call her my jewel and all of this sort of rather exalted lovely stuff, so I think there is definitely an aspect of Cozad's outward view of his marriage.

P: Yeah, that's interesting. You mentioned that he calls her his jewel here. He refers to her as a diamond, right?

T: She is. It's not the kind of sweeping romantic line that you might expect from a deep love.

P: Interesting. A possession?

T: In some ways, she's up on a pedestal, but she's an object rather than a relationship to the man... And of course, you know, if she's a jewel, if she's a diamond, that means she's hard. Right, she's hard. Which she is, I'm sure. He values that in all sorts of different ways, her stalwartness is valuable in a life full of chaos, and all of the other stuff that goes through her, her being so solid; and she is such a solid part of his life, you know, she's important to him. Her constancy. But yeah, it's first time we hear him talk about her. It's not a sort of sweeping romance.

P: Again, we're still sort of syllabically set. We're still...

T: She's part of the picture, it's part of the picture, but you know, he wants to make this town first of all, but he also wants it to be good enough a town for Teresa. That's one of the measures of how the town's going to be good enough. You're right. She's part of the picture but it's not the centerpiece of the picture necessarily. And it's not about their family together, it's not their relationship together that's going to bind the town. It is that she is set within this creation. That he's going to make the town independently of her and place her in it. Now we get back to what is certainly Broadway-bop when he's talking about his boys growing up right of aspirational picture painting.

P: He's talking about the boys riding like princes and the cattle driving rogues. Is that the sort of bop feeling here a horse riding visual?

T: Visual. Yeah, I think so. Oh yeah. And here we restate for, I've always been lucky for, I've always been lucky.

P: is that for emphasis? It shifts up the second time. Rhythmically it's the same. Is the intent to bring out a different word or it is the intent to simply restate with greater emphasis, to drive into the theme? Why the repeat?

T: Oh, I can think of a couple of different things, which I'm not sure, I believe in. It could have something to do with his acknowledgment in some part of his mind that his battle with the cattle barons is going to be very difficult, maybe harder than he understands, and that he has to talk himself into his luck. He's convincing himself that he's always been lucky. I mean, because I mean, clearly with South America and Cozaddale in Ohio and everything he's not always been the luckiest.

P: There's fundamentally a lie there. His first big statement is a lie.

T: Yeah, right. I mean to say he's always been lucky is an odd statement. Lucky at cards too, but that's maybe not even a matter of luck. As a matter of being able to count the cards and being exceptionally intellectually quick at it. There's no evidence that he was cheating, but he was he was probably just you know, as these poker prodigies sometimes get to be incredibly good at counting cards and keeping mental track of where every card is. So, even that's a matter of skill, not luck. And he probably knew the mechanics of the game, and what the odds were on every hand of faro. That's sort of knowledge, as the west was expanding - I can't imagine everyone knew the odds of what the draw was going to be. It's a lot less luck and more skill. However, he says, he views himself as lucky.

P: We moved from this sort of angular syncopated thing to sort of triplet sway. What emotional stuff are you after with that? Just the emotional content of Cozad thinking back?

T: Yeah. That I wouldn't read too much into it. I mean I don't come back to this idea particularly because it doesn't come back in the story. This is sort of the only time we even touch on what came before, right? The only other time would be Teresa in one five or one seven, one seven. This thing here "it will be like Ohio." That's the only other reference. I think. Jump to it. Look. That doesn't mirror this musically. "Always at faro and poker on the rails..." The fact that at that point the vocal line is doubled in the instruments... And when I wrote that, I didn't know why when I orchestrated it that way. I recognized it was probably of some significance, although

I didn't stop to think about what it might be.

P: looking back, do you have, do you have thoughts on what it might be?

T: I think it's building toward a climax, sort of a more of a moment of awareness of a more aware self. The more self-awareness might be the doubling. And building toward "I've lived by my wits" which in some ways is the opposite of Lucky Cozad, right? It's almost like he's onto something as the orchestra unifies behind him, and in a way as he sort of unifies his thoughts. It's really looking to him. And it has to do with his real sense of purpose too.

P: This concept he's raising, he's not just living by his wits and dying by his cane fighting with his pistol. There's a greater good too, right?

T: That unifies his purpose, which is also reflected then in the woodwinds answer to "by my cane and pistol" with the reference to the city theme. It's the idea that this shining city is not just for him. Again, there's a moral purpose behind it, which is, you know, a part of the story of how we justified the expansion west. There was this Manifest Destiny of moral something thrust behind the whole thing. We arrived at this realization: how he's lived his life and why. We get to repeat "and I've always been lucky. Yes, I've always been lucky." But it's over a timpani roll and it's all been sort of destabilized. We sort of see that, it's not really a question of luck, and that there are skills and intensity and personal violence involved in all these things, as well as high moral ambitions. But that said, it's sort of come to an impasse to some extent which is then broken by the arrival of the rattlesnake. So, in that sense the snake is what lets him off the hook as he actually has to have to prepare to defend his life, and in some ways, it sums up the character really well. He's never able to do the self-reflection.

P: He never gets to the solutions that would really lead to meaningful personal growth and solve a lot of these problems because he's always confronted with life-or-death situations, right? Sometimes of his own, making, to be fair, right? But always there's a grasshopper plague. Like always he's living at a time where, he doesn't have the leisure to make some of these jumps, right?

T: Well, I think that's right. That encompasses the west and that expansion and westward. Oh, is this a snake? He refers to the snake as "you." This is not the first rattlesnake he's seen. No, no, I think, you know, he's called him "you" because it's just one of you fellas. Especially the way he dismisses the snake as a gentleman. It's clearly a case of his putting the snake in the category of the various kinds of varmints that you have to deal with it in the west, including humans. This event is to show he deals with the snake as you would deal with a cowboy, and that goes for any potentially dangerous person. He disarms it much in a way that you deal with a man, and the reptile departs, having sort of declared "I see you mean no harm, I'll withdraw."

P: Except sometimes. The snake bites you, right? Sometimes you end up in a fight.

T: Yeah, this time he spotted it in time, but right.

P: And we get thematic material. The danger theme. How do you want singers to handle sprechstimme in your scores?

T: There's a connection, but it's there. When I use sprechstimme, as I do a few times

in this piece, there are many versions of stress available in the line. A composer could just write it down and get a lot of different results... I'm always hesitant to do so. Sometimes I'm tempted just to leave the notation out of it and just have the words and just say spoken, but then again, I'm a little too wedded to the rhythm. So why don't I just put rhythms? When I only indicate rhythm then that almost implies a monotone in my mind, and I don't want to do that. And so, I just try "but you are a gentleman." And you know, take that as best you can. It's not really a stretched image, it's just a spoken voice with some element of contour of pitch content with rhythm indicated, with some modest element of pitch contour.

P: Oh, and we almost have a Chekhov's gun moment where he brings out the gun. Is that intended as such?

T: I think it is really a part of who he is. Really, just that's how he just normally reacts when faced with mortal danger. Violence generally.

P: Except when he is presented with the snake, he doesn't resort to it, just the threat.

T: He doesn't. He presents himself as enough of a threat that they both agree and neither one should fight, right? Which is different from the actual shooting.

P: So, we launched back into aspirations shortly after our snake diversion.

T: See this sort of floating area? The thing with the sharp 11 C minor, all those C major, all these chords that occur after the snake is that it feels floaty. It's sort of after that moment of crisis has passed, he takes a moment and sort of looks around. Yeah, and he's lost his train of thought from the previous thing, right? I've led to some sort of self-realization and progress forward and he has made, but now it's gone.

P: Is he searching for that again? Or is he looking for something else?

T: Mmm. I don't know. I think after what he faces, he does eventually come back upon his train of thought. That's what he gets the next Lucky Cozad. He remembers the bit about being lucky, but he seems to have lost the conflict within. That lucky issue that existed within the tremolo of the timpani roll, So, it's like you've woken up from a dream. You can remember part of it, but it doesn't make sense in the same way that it did in the moment.

P: Well, he's also just disproven some of it. He is lucky to have seen the snake, so maybe he is a little lucky after all. The contradiction still exists, but he's found a nugget of truth in it, so he feels he can carry on with his plans.

T: And then he sort of comes back on "ah yes the town" right here, "everything will be clean and new," right? And lost is that inner conflict. The aspiration sort of takes him over again.

P: this is a funny little question, the capital a new capital for Nebraska? You've broken up the word "capital" which is not something that I see very frequently and the rest of the opera. What's the intent there?

T: Just really just spit the word out. Yeah, to go after text there because this is such a bold statement.

P: So, once we've arrived at the "Jewel of the Platte," we get something different in the subjects and the orchestration underneath us. Not that sort of boppy thing, but something more romantic, perhaps? How would you describe what you're building

here?

T: Well, hmm. I guess it comes from self-awareness, he does clearly realize what he's doing, and what he intends for his town is very much at odds with the way things are. He's, in a sense, harnessing his anger at the way things are in order to build up his gambling prohibition. You hear it in the increase rhythmic motion in the strings, you know, right after "Jewel of the Platte." The harmony doesn't get particularly distant, at least not until "I tell you..." but there is sort of a kind of gathering of forces as he's harnessing his anger. The strings sort of drive that. And then we arrive at this dissonance to show how far he's revved himself up. He's putting on the hat of that sort of the stern mosaic lawgiver. It's precisely the thing about him, that arrogance, that drives other people up the wall. And it dovetails into this segment with the piccolo solo.

P: "Out of a tight spot again."

T: Right. It doesn't come to a gigantic full stop at the end. It sort of keeps going. I mean you know, coming after the statement of "no gambling will be tolerated" you know that's immediately answered by the "clean and new" idea, which is then answered by "for I've always been lucky" again. None of which actually relates to each other very well.

P: You say they don't relate to each other very well. In what way?

T: Well, I mean you know, you don't need that kind of luck unless you're a gambler. And he gambles with a lot of things. So, his perception of himself as being uniquely lucky is a bit odd. There's the conflict that the ideal purity he's seeking is disconnected from anything else or place that he's that he's been. But then, he's able to brush that all aside, and give his most heroic and triumphant statement. All these things may conflict with each other in some way.

P: They all exactly add up to him though, right? And most of him lives in those conflicts, the hypocrisies? It's not that, we're looking to resolve. Conflict might be good here.

T: Right. And I think even then, where we get the sort of heroic return of the boppy music, that's, that's an important moment. That's the moment of coming full circle, and part of him coming full spiral reaching a higher point, at the same point on the spiral. The thing is, you get the sense about his story is that nothing ever stands still. Nothing ever stops. You know, he has this sort of triumphant sense of his own personality, which is immediately then undercut by the lack of solitude by having the two guys on the hand car. They think he's either a doctor or a preacher.

P: Yeah. Two things that couldn't be further from what he is.

T: And it's his inability to stop, it's his whole thing. He reaffirms himself, and in this desire to keep that aspirational nature, to keep moving, to keep expanding right here. But even when he comes to someplace to realize "this is who I am." Well, the events, keep slipping by him. He's never really able to stop. I don't know if it's not that he doesn't want to stop but he's never allowed to. It's all very light in tone and after a scene that is fairly involved in the production area. It's followed by this... I don't know, maybe if it's not a comedic, certainly light scene.

P: I would argue extremely prototypical American. I have another little question

about your final score going to Willow Island or going to the land office. What do you land on?

T: I mean, really could be either one, I think I guess the land office. I think that's because you have to know that there was a land office on Willow Island otherwise. I mean Willow Island isn't much of anything anymore. It's just a little marker on the Union Pacific Line. It's not even really a town. It predates Cozad and Lexington, the North Platte, and all those places. It's the oldest railroad related spot in the area. Just without knowing that it does it sounds a little odd. Even if you're from that area you may have never heard it. I really like the reference, but you have to know that for it to make any sense.

P: Well, just without knowing that it does, it sounds a little "world building-y." Even if you're from that area and you may have never heard it, it's a little exotic in some way, right?

T: There's a case word either way. I was thinking about it. It reminds me a little bit of that spot in the beginning of the council chamber scene from *Simon Boccanegra* when they're presenting the council with the letter. You're just supposed to just get that who they referred to was the blonde. But yeah, this is never, explained, right? You just supposed to get it and if not, no big deal? That's my Willow Island.

Transcript 3/26/2021

Patrick: Okay, it'll be a short one today, but I want to sort of limit the time off. We talked a good chunk about Cozad's aria last time, which was great. Since we have a little less time, let's talk about the shorter aria that comes a little bit before that, Lee's aria. Let's start with the sort of bigger question that I've got about these two characters that you've cast as two separate baritones. How come? Was that choice made because you wanted a different tone color in the older Lee or was it a logistical choice somehow? Can you talk about the considerations that went into that?

Tyler: Well, I mean, I originally thought it would be great if the same monster baritone like you could be both and do the whole thing. It's just then there was the problem of getting from Act 1, scene 3 into scene 4. Making that change would have been hard with our resources. And let's see... Where was the... It was Act 2, scene 5 into scene 6 maybe. And then the other one that was really the only thing that was the only really tough one. Yeah. And so that sort of became the reason because Lee needs to be on stage at the beginning of scene four. And it's hard to get off too early as Cozad. It would have been confusing if it wasn't somehow established as a different character and in some sense a different person.

P: So, when you were writing for these two characters, what did you do to make them both sound different. Did you write to make them sound distinct? Or did you write to make them sound similar? And when did you do each, and why?

T: They need to be similar, although Lee's part lies just a little bit lower, so I tried to avoid the kinds of heroic high notes that the Cozad has in the case of Lee. Cozad has a fair amount of that, and as to why, I think it just seems kind of obvious that Lee is 25 years older and presumably has slowed down some. And of course, we see him at

the beginning. So, the sort of vain glory of the younger Cozad is largely faded. The orchestration under Lee is much sparser. It doesn't quite have the same activity under it. It shows age, contemplation, those sorts of things, and less bustle.

P: And it also seems to me that if you've got Lee in a lower tessitura you'd want sparse orchestration were the same singer to be performing the role so they'd be heard.

T: Well yeah. You want more parts if he was cast as a bass-baritone, or if somewhere in the back of your head you were thinking of these as potentially the same higher baritone, you'd want it sparse like this. If you're going to sit lower in the overall range you want a thinner orchestra, right? That makes a lot of sense.

P: "To paint a man is to know him" is thematic material. I guess we'll just call it what it is. It brings out specific words with the sort of harmonic shifts and leaps. Will you talk more about what struck a chord with you? That we hear it a couple times back-to-back, and it pops out of the texture.

T: One of the things is interesting about that quote is it's not in *The Art Spirit*. At least not that I recall. Is that?

P: Correct. It's an adaptation of a Henri quote, not a word for word one.

T: It suggests that the painting is a vehicle toward knowledge. But, in fact, the experience that Henri has to go through is to make knowledge a vehicle for painting. He can't paint until he has the knowledge of and the deeper familiarity with his father. Henri's outlook, when he was painting someone that he wasn't related to, was to put them at ease and know them. Although interestingly, he never did finish that portrait of his mother. It's almost as if he intuited something about the sitter and that intuition becomes kind of a stand-in for the knowledge he gains from his father.

P: Can you talk about the sort of outburst that goes here, that Lee has as he admits that he hardly knows Robert Henri? There's a big swell in the orchestra, and a big shift in dynamic for it. "He is my son, my son." Is that a big moment for Lee?

T: I mean, there's clearly a big emotion for us there. Well, it was in part because it's just a clarification for the audience. To make it very plain that, in fact, these two apparent strangers are in fact closely related, and that has to be made really clear. So, it's presented loudly and forcefully and for basic practical reasons, but I think Lee's also frustrated by the extent to which he doesn't know Robert. And also, he also feels put off to some extent, even put down by the world that Robert lives in. Lee's a very judgmental man.

P I guess my question here is: is this outcry about Lee being so estranged from his son, or a judgment on himself in some way, or is it judgment on Henri?

T: Both.

P: Does he internalize that or externalize it? Oh well, it's an outburst, but it could be viewed as internal if no one else is in the room with him at the time, right? Did you intend one or the other?

T: Yeah, I'm not sure I did. But let me think about it. I'm not sure. And he goes on to certainly externalize this world of Robert's. The world is his, it's not mine. But externalization could be compensation for the internal disorder here. Possibly. Right

after that you've got this this sort of staccato, accented, and aggressive undertone that you've got going on in order to show that frustration.

P: I think I just want to point to this rhythm of "anarchists" which is a quintuplet with five against four that just popped out of me. Is that a little bit of humor on your part or was that exactly what you wanted?

T: Yeah, I mean, it's hyper notated. That's just a favorite rhythm of mine. I use it all over the place.

P: What does that rhythm mean to you?

T: I don't know. It's basically two 16ths and then an 8th, but compressed. Instead of that normal rhythm, it just feels more intense. It's the same gesture, but it feels to be more organic and improvisatory.

P: I'll point to what I see as a similarity to Argento's use of rhythms like that to get it a more speech-like sort of organic approach. I also just find something irreverent about putting the word anarchists in such notation. A joke for me if no one else, and not even intended. So, there is this intense, and is there a sort of speech-like approach here?

T: It's compressed means, he's spitting it out contemptuously. And we really get that from the accents and the harmonies under him as well.

P: Is there a reference that we're going for? And this sort of striking "bump bump bump" occurs. We hear it later in Act 2, perhaps?

T: Robert. When he strikes him, there's the same sort of rhythmic drive.

P: Yeah. And he gets it again when the sign changes. We hear this sort of the struck rhythm. This percussive sort of syncopated dissonant accented staccato figure. But sparse underpinning, right?

T: I don't know if it's meant to be connected or if it's just so much a part of my language. I mean it's the same thing. I wonder about Mozart operas with cadential progressions articulated in eighth notes. It tends to be associated with righteous female anger, or female righteousness or in some way. It happens at a spot I noticed in Magic Flute, I just noticed where it happened that seemed less connected and more Mozart's language. And so, my point is there was not an intent to try to tie those moments together with something here with a theme of his disdain, for the man that he ends up murdering, in his disdain for socialists, anarchists, and the models. Now these are musically similar. Maybe just because I didn't realize doesn't mean it's not there. There's a shift for "and their models," sort of floats up.

P: So maybe not a motive, but a part of your compositional language. Can you talk to me about your reason for setting the next line up with such a floating shift?

T: Well, it's to create a little sense of ambiguity and wondering about the exact status of his relationship with women who are not wives. It's the seed of doubt early on. I mean, originally, in the libretto, it was a nude bust of a woman that he looks at admiringly. That's kind of a hard thing to bring off. You don't want to make it too leering, or anything overtly sexual, but there's a sense that looking at a nude causes him to think. It's a judgment. It's not so much a judgment of his son, but more of just himself. He doesn't spit at the model aspect of this whole thing. So, socialists and anarchists that's very full of venom. He's not even really spitting at artists. He just

doesn't understand them, but there is something he understands about the appreciation for the female form.

P: Right. And of course, the first time in the original production it went a different direction. In the libretto stage direction versus the interpretation, do you have thoughts on your take?

T: I'm not quite sold on the way that Bill blocked it. I like the idea of the nude being something Lee relates to personally. That the first time he notes the nude, it's during that sort of exotic founding canon between the oboe and the bassoon. Yeah, here we go. Right. And yeah, Lee passes by a nude painting of a woman evidently appreciating the site at 61, so it's not a, an outlier sort of a notion of the note.

P: After we've got this cool 12-8 that I've seen you use.

T: But it's not just 12-8. It's not wildly unlike Teresa's aria in that it shifts. That occurs for "my world as a world of honor."

P: Are you setting up other looks back in time? Well, when you use it, and when you use the shifting meter in Teresa aria, it's sort of to float along, but with wild unease. Or Henri's aria later?

T: Lee's not sort of floating along with unease, right? He thinks at least he understands the world he comes from. It's either just sort of an underlying sense of mistiness about the past or, or maybe it could foreshadow death. He doesn't quite understand it for sure. Here's the six-eight and six-eighths and the nine-eight, the twelve-eight to the nine-eight are sort of rocking and nostalgic to me, but the doubles that act against it may suggest that he might not understand it as much as you think he does. "My world was a world of honor." Honor is, is again two against three. Gentleman lines up with the three. So, this sort of rocking nostalgia lines up with that idea of gentleman, but even in his mind this sense of honor being in two, could make sense from a sort of strictness of honored constructs.

P: But also, it could mean that Cozad knows that he has not always acted truly honorably in everyone's eyes, right?

T: Yeah, again I know "this world of Robert's, it's not mine." We've got this swell in the orchestration that occurs under him and then and then a piano that follows it. But there's this transition that goes from him not understanding to "and yet, everybody says that Robert is at the top of his game," and I think there's something done under in the orchestration there to sort of to make that transition. I was actually kind of surprised that that worked out as well as it did because it actually was the result of a cut! But originally this part of the aria was much more verbose before handing it off to Laura. She realized I was never going to get anywhere if I was trying to do the whole thing.

P: That's great to know.

T: I thought it turned out to work really quite well. Yeah, I don't know. There's anything else you want to ask about that? I'm not sure.

P: Yeah, it's a big sort of shift that we get. A very different sort of color I would argue. We get: "For everybody says that Robert is at the top of his game, always in demand." Is that his way of sort of justifying being here? He seems to have difficulty praising his son directly.

T: Right but he's heard praise of his son, and from people he apparently respects. And so, he's willing to accept that. And maybe there's more than I've been thinking here. Maybe there's really something to Robert. Originally before the cuts there was something that's actually closer to the truth. Actually, Lee historically, we know, bankrolled Robert's study in Philadelphia, and in Paris, and originally there were references that that he tried to nurture Robert's talent or something like that. But it just all seemed too wordy and beside the point. So, he's waiting to be made part of history.

P: You give in agogic accent to "history" the second time.

T: Yep, yep. Obviously, to bring out the word that is Cozad's fear of mortality. That is Cozad's unease with his son in some ways, overshadowing him. I think it's a premise. Well, the first one's more "well, here I am." Man, we made part of history. Well yeah. I've been in history. You know the word is an isolated thing. He's thinking "in fact my past is history," both personal history but also History with a capital H. Just as his dreams were going to be dreams of making History, he believes that he's earned that spot. But yeah, looking back and that sort of begins the transition, I would argue into a sort of remembrance. The agogic accent also serves to sort of temporally stretch us. To not enter dreamland, but to enter something that that sort of sets the tone for a transition to something that is not right now. Then I'm trying to get across really clearly and directly that he's shifting into thinking about what he has done. So obviously, the audience needs to come along on that journey.

Therefore, I took out some of the other rhythmic interests just to highlight the text. Yeah, I highlight that particular shift, because in this opera we do those sorts of temporal shifts the whole show, right?

P: This is an opera that takes place in two different time periods and locations, and just talking a little bit about how you made those transitions is really important.

T: The goal was clarity, so that, again, they're as clear as day because that's a tricky thing. I think if you had told me at the beginning, "well, this opera jumps back and forth between two different time periods with two of the characters that have aged up significantly" it's like a mess, it's very difficult. Yeah. And so, I think these moments help.

P: I remember talking about how you mentioned this sounds like way too much for one opera. In some ways, you could have two separate operas. One opera about the painting and another opera that takes place in the Sandoz past. But really, they're part of the same story here.

T: Yeah, yeah. Well, now, I've written two operas that do that.

P: Maybe this is your calling card. I mean is that part of your style and approach, or just the kind of stories you like?

T: *O, Pioneers!* is about that. Cather was working on the Alexander story and she was working on the Marie and Emil story independently. And her Revelation would happen while he was in the Pueblo ruins, New Mexico. Her Revelation was with those two stories belong together as part of one thing. And that's not dissimilar from what happened here.

P: Is there something that draws you to those types of stories? You're two for two.

T: I don't know. I mean, I tend to like complicated stories. The drawers are full with a good many characters. They boil down to probing character studies of just a few of those characters. I think of some of my favorite American novels like *Huck Finn* and *All the King's Men*, and the English novels. They're sprawling novels like the Sandoz that are almost awkwardly constructed. Most of them start with an omniscient narrator, and then and then go to one character's telling of a story in a circumstance that if he actually told it, it would take about seven and a half hours to actually say all that. It works like *War and Peace* to take place over these long scales in time, and we follow in depth a few characters. I don't know what it is about those stories that I do think opera lends itself to. It's good at too complex stories in a lot of ways that dive down on a handful of characters. Because we get so much time to dig into their psyches in a way that very few other art forms allow; and the other thing that, in dealing with these temporal shifts, I imagine them sort of as filmic flashbacks. I even imagine in different parts of arias going in for the close-up; and not just in arias or even scenes, but even just shots there in moments. So that is where some detail of expression needs to be highlighted. I have less than no experience in making movies, but I think that it's so much a part of our culture now. That's just part of how I think. That's at least how Americans think. Modern Americans. You just do your scene work with orchestration. You use different tools than a video editor would, but you're trying to paint a picture. You're trying to tell the story, and this is important: as you're composing, you do have visual elements sort of in your mind's eye. It's not always about a sound. I mean, sometimes the underscoring is there to provide clear emotional thrust for a character, sometimes it's there to provide a grasshopper plague. It has certain visual elements to it that are conveyed through the sound.

P: Here in the orchestra how do you decide when to use one of those choices or the other?

T: Well, sometimes you're writing for emotional subtext, right? And sometimes you're writing to create something that is an oral or a real event occurring on stage that we can see. The grasshopper plague sounds like plunking little grasshoppers in some way that sort of tells a more literal story. It's not that it's devoid of emotion of what's going on for the characters on stage, but sometimes the choice is to bring out an aspect of the visual on stage, and sometimes the choice is to bring out an unseen emotional aspect. I think it's pretty clear when you're making one choice or the other.

P: I can point to a rattlesnake here and I can point to a grasshopper there. I don't know, maybe I'm wrong, maybe some of these things that I'm thinking are emotional gestures like what I was talking about, the swell into Cozad's first line. I also think of the arrival of the train in one three. They have obvious visual aspects, but they also relate to the character's emotions or subtext.

T: Yeah, the train is very certainly literal. I mean that's very literal but it's also happening against the background of the conversation that Cozad doesn't really want to be having now, right? And so that impending arrival, it's sort of reflected in the oncoming train and it sounds like the oncoming train.

P: Sure, "hardly at all, hardly at all." Now, there's a big swell septuplet into "Yet he is

my son. My son.”

T: That's a swell that's happening inside Cozad.

P: Is that a visual you in your mind or should he be crossing there to make that motion? Is that a camera movement in your cinematographic mind?

T: I think that's fine to move, and frankly, found that moment a little stagey in the production. It's, you know, it's not my favorite moment in the show, but this had to be very big and clear. It was just a question of need. It needed to be a pretty big moment because it's sort of the crux of what the show is about. So, we find out everything that happens after this in the show stems from that moment. So, it has to be a big moment and I have to get there somehow.

P: This has been really helpful. Thank you. I would love to chat more about, you know, some of the ensemble stuff when we have more time if we get more time.

T: Sure. Sure. Well, I mean I'm, you know, I've got this time available, and I usually have some on Monday afternoon as well.

Transcript 4/9/2021

Patrick: Okay, so let's start right after Cozad's aria. There's that syncopated rhythm. What is that syncopated for? For the new characters? For Cozad? For the hand car?

Tyler: Oh, it's just for the hand car, and the piccolo solo that's just sort of cruising along.

P: Let's go to scene three. “We're having a little trouble, sir, and wonder what could be done.” I had a question about a fermata. This is after Cozad's aria. I'll pull it up for you. “Well gentleman, I will do what I can, but we must wait till our colony is fully in then we can see about getting that courthouse gang of office.” You put two fermati there. You've got, you've got a fermata over “gang” in the piano vocal here, right?

T: That's just a little stretch on the word gang for emphasis. And the next is really just in case there was going to be actual train steam. Depending on what the effects are for the training coming in, I wanted to allow time to allow that to clear. There's no real musical significance for that. This is a stage direction, essentially, for the scene to clear.

P: The texture shifts, and you get “Teresa, boys, mother and father Gatewood welcome.” That is marked “tenderly.” Is there a *colla voce* implied there? Or is that right in time and more of a color or dynamic shift? And I want to ask again about the fermata that occurs after as well.

T: Yeah, some stretch would be fine. The fermata at right after “welcome” is just to let that “family moment” end. You then assume his public persona again and you get this thematic material. It's sort of so that one is very intimate for the reunion, and then go from private family Cozad out to public Cozad.

P: What follows is clearly a very different texture: sort of dotted rhythms and very much declamatory, nearly militaristic, right?

T: Right, and again, very sort of 19th century popular in harmonic language, right? Very strong *Hail to the Chief* vibes. Now, we start to get in this sort of *Hail to the Chief* music. We had several literal call outs; we hear a lot of what he's talking about

in the score. When he mentions the fish, we get trills.

P: Are those intended to be some sort of text painting or not really, no?

T: Just ornamenting the change of key there. But then we definitely do get a fish theme. Yes, there it is. Yeah. I felt I needed to do something because Laura just loved that line "full of fish." I mean, it's so huckstery. So, it's really the little triadic forces things first. And then, the trills were just natural add-ons, as they fit the context. And then we sort of get a somewhat standard progression as he lists off Traber, Pearson, Claypool. Just plaining basically.

P: We leave the texture that we got before when he gets into the list of people he's welcoming.

T: Yeah. In part I wanted to keep the textures simple and clean there for Cozad and for the town of Cozad. I thought the original audience would probably be listening for names, and proper nouns are just hard for an audience, even if you know a Traber in their neighborhood, right? That's tough for an audience to sort of decode.

P: Let the text sort of come forward. "New Canaan on the planes" is that a theme or some sort of one-time proclamation?

T: Not a theme really, not really. No, I didn't develop that. I wasn't able to... I couldn't say so.

P: What about Johnny? How did you handle the approach to his character?

T: You know, just throughout the entire making of the show the character of Johnny was a bit of a problem. We couldn't really get rid of him, but there's no room in the plot to develop him particularly. So, Laura came up with this device of having him devoted to the ponies. It became his thing instead of what was really his thing, which was potentially burning down buildings. I mean, there is a subplot there, but there's no time to do it justice. Also, it doesn't go anywhere. What actually happened with him after he settled the rest of the family in Atlantic City was there started being mysterious fires around Atlantic City, just as there had been in Nebraska. But eventually they stopped, and he seems to have gotten over it. And then Johnny became this extremely respected and lifesaving surgeon in Philadelphia. And you know, he developed a surgical technique for the delivery of breech babies. I can't remember if I've mentioned that before. So, you know, he becomes Frank Southrn and he became known for Frank Southrn's surgical technique. You know, before the technique, the only way of delivering a breech baby was to break its arms and legs, and that's just barbaric and horrible. However, it was supposedly better than having the baby in the mother die, right? I mean he could have his own opera in a way, but he's not a contributing factor here to what goes on with Cozad and Henri's development. Of course in Sandoz's book Johnny gets more time, but here everything is much more temporally compressed. As the years go by and Johnny grows up, you know, he becomes an accountant because of his time in Denver, and there's that whole other unfolding of his life, which again, there's just no room for on the stage in this particular story. So, Johnny gets the ponies. Yeah, there's something for him to do, and Laura named the ponies after two of our pets. Our Corgi was Nell. We had a collie at the same time, Bianca, but that was not a very suitable name for a western pony, so we named the other pony after the cat, Bonnie.

So, in some ways Johnny's character is there to represent that there was more to the family than just the one son.

P: The relationship between Henri and Cozad is really at the core, and that made Johnny sort of a tangential point, right?

T: Yeah, and it's interesting... Had Johnny not had as much of an interesting life story as he did with all of the different major events, it might have been easier. Had he been dull, it would have simplified things, but he's already a main character in real life in his own story. It would have been very easy to just sort of write Johnny as Johnny truly was, but it seems like you had to make some edits because there's just enough there that it would sort of pull focus. You know, it doesn't contribute to the main story of the thing.

P: This could just be a notation question I have here: So, "Where are the ponies you brought us? Where are the buffalo where the Indians?" are all marked *staccato* in my score. Then when we get to "look at the buffalo, I drew father" I have a different articulation. Is that maybe just a piano vocal score artifact?

T: Well, the orchestral score is even more unclear because the staccatos continue in the bassoon. It should stay staccato. So, we're still after some sort of staccato. Bustling along stage business is the feel.

P: When we shift to this "vat of homegrown pinto beans" that's got a real character to it. Is that more of the huckster or is that a different shade of Cozad that we're hearing?

T: I think it's just more salesman. It's just the huckster explaining something.

P: I don't know. For some reason, I always really love singing that line, I could not tell you why.

T: It's a fun little one, right? It's a suave redirection at the same time. He doesn't realize the degree of foreshadowing going on with the grasshoppers in Colorado. Yeah, there might be problems but we're not there yet. At the same time there are negative things about being out on the Great Plains. There's just enough time, just three and a half beats, to sort of acknowledge that things are taking a turn, and then he's off with the next bit of hucksterism that sort of brings them all back in.

Something about that line just felt right. I don't know.

P: We do get some thematic material shortly after Sanderson finishes up, right? I'm talking about this theme right here. Are they things you ascribe meaning to? Conflict?

T: Oh, that's from the Prelude.

P: And they ultimately are going to be the fight?

T: Yes. And it's sort of *Trouble in River City*. It's the trouble in Cozad sort of thing. And presumably, it would be familiar from the opening of the Prelude, right? It's not the first time we've heard it, but we associate it now with Sanderson in a pretty major way. There's a lot of tension in it and a sense of conflict. It's Sanderson trying to be aware of the tensions and everything. And he's trying to do the right thing and be nice to be good to the family, but it's a fairly clumsy attempt on his part.

P: Right. Oh, and we've got this sort of sleazy swing. Shortly after "well, maybe I did" a marking you come back to later...

T: Um, you didn't mention the buffalo roast.

P: Oh yeah! Let's talk about the buffalo.

T: Well, I mean, I didn't want to cut that out. I mean, it's kind of an interesting point. And, you know, one of the reasons I took this job here in Nebraska is related to it back in 1994. The restaurant that used to be where Misty's is now used to sell buffalo steaks, and they were absolutely delicious. I was on my interviews here, and I went there every dinner over a whole weekend. Every meal that wasn't, you know, with the search committee I went back to The Grand River Restaurant and got buffalo steaks. So, I didn't want to leave that out. Really well-prepared buffalo is really delicious. It helps set the scene. On the other hand, in terms of the plot and the scene and everything, it's a dead end; and so, I made it musically kind of a cul-de-sac. Yeah, it doesn't really go anywhere. It just kind of stagnates going back and forth in what I hope is a reasonably attractive way, and then the scene moves on. The buffalo roast is part of that westward expansion. I mean, I guess everybody knows about shooting vast herds of buffalo from trains and things like that, but you don't hear as much about how necessary bison were for early white settlers, as well as the Native Americans who were here before the cattle ranchers were fully established. That would be your source of beef, and that's part of what sort of facilitated the move west. It was that there were readily available large sources of food that you could build a town on. While it may be a cul-de-sac, it does give us a little bit of world building. It's a little cultural moment in addition to an homage to my reason for coming here. Well, there are other reasons, but that kind of feel like the cherry on top, you know, the buffalo steak on top.

P: As Cozad retells Jim Bridger's story, does he expect the kids to go along with it?

T: He may think it's the first time they've heard Jim Bridger story. Obvious. They've heard it anyway. But there's a bit of stage direction when he tells that story "the boys should hoot with laughter."

P: Is that because they love the story and because they've caught him at a fib of sorts? Cozad's response sort of opens the question of how big his ego is. Does he play that off? Is he upset for being called out by his children? Is he a gambler being called on a bluff? The actor may play up any choice here, obviously. When you were writing, did you have him playing that off as sort of, "oh, you scamps run along" or is that a sort of darker moment foreshadowing the abusive father we see him become in Act two? Because again, we get to the point where he's hitting his son later. Is this foreshadowing of that in some way? Or is this just him who is saying "well, let's get you, boys something to eat" as another huckster moment in the scene in parental form? Or are we seeing the seeds of a man who can't stop doubling down, making things worse by never really admitting fault, and just bribing his way out of a situation?

T: Yeah. Not we're not in serious mode or foreshadowing because the sort of harmonics under it don't really point to something dark or complex, and this early. It's only scene three. I don't know how much we might be tipping our hand a bit much if we go too far down that road.

P: So, we've got a sleazy swing that follows. What's a sleazy swing? What makes it

sleazy?

T: It's just really kind of loose, not really paying much attention to the notated rhythm. You know, I didn't want to notate it as eights and tell them to swing it jazz style. It's not so much I guess, maybe it's not so much sleazy as it is somewhat loose. Yeah, but I like the idea of it having some sort of descriptor in addition. I also thought the players in the orchestra might enjoy that, I think it's fun. It's a really fun tempo marking. So yeah, it's both right? It's both stylistic, how to play the eight and it's an implied tempo shift. Cozad breaks it of course, with "game" and when he snaps to the "gentleman" line, the swing dies away. So, after the sleazy swing are pauses that are sort of akin to an accompanied recit. And of course, this leads you to what swing's associated with, not just with codes of cowboys, but a general laxness. So as soon as Cozad speaks the texture changes, and he refers to them as gentlemen. Hard to swing gentleman. Cozad sings it straight.

P: At least the cowboys sing it in bright harmony. Just really quite charming. It keeps it from getting heavy too soon. When it comes to "no staking reaches that high" I think I experimented with taking other notes in the chord. I've got alternates penciled in.

T: Yeah, depending on the voice the F sharp might seem a little strained. Yours was strong for it, so I think we used F sharp, or maybe even something higher. Regardless of the choice, it should be because it's a full sound in that voice, rather than a strident tone. But not just for the sake of a high note, right? With body and emotion. It's sort of a roar rather than a scream.

P: Let's talk about the secretary. Is she based on a real person?

T: No, she's made up. She's just to facilitate, you know, this, the whole Lee/Henri relationship, which is extrapolated from the final scene of Sandoz's book. It seemed we needed somebody to make the introductions and to and to somehow set up the social context of these scenes. It's a hidden relationship between father and son. So, that's really where she came from. She doesn't really have much in the way of character.

P: Although, you know, she needs to be characterized, right? She ends the show.

T: Yeah. Which I hadn't intended to do initially, but I think there needs to be a considerable amount of dramatic characterization for her. The singing actress must present that role for sure. She's got to take the stage well, and also help with a simple issue: if you were to do this with one baritone going back and forth, she offers a little bit of buffer to make that change; if you're doing it with two different baritones, she offers a very clear distinction of this is the same Lee and Henri and calling them out by name. Without her they wouldn't need to address each other by title. So, she's a useful character in identifying characters as well. On the other hand, she's also just a little bit of whimsy hopefully. In an otherwise fairly complex and dramatic story we don't have a lot of opportunities for levity, and I think she can provide one. So, she's an important character for balance, too. I'd say her value is far beyond the number of notes she has.

P: Are the other thematic elements in the opening of scene four that you want to talk about?

T: Well, of course, the beginning of scene four echoes the beginning of scene one, and part of that is to really establish the scene. Okay, now, we're back to 1903 and we're back to Lee's questions and doubts, and wherever he is in his coming to terms with things. Moving an audience back and forth in time and space is hard, and I wanted to make it as clear as I could. There are then these quasi-recit like sections.

P: Is that intended to give freedom to the singer? They're very well and clearly notated as well. Do you want them *come è scritto* as much as possible, or with more liberty?

T: I really pretty much tried to notate the speech for them. Yes, pretty exact. Yeah. This scene was Laura's way of handling the voluminously episodic nature of Sandoz's book. This scene has so much history happen and it's just one exchange. She wanted to bring together a lot of those elements including them in the opera, but we don't have the time or the structural license to make or to bring out all those little episodes in any detail. So, they're simply referred to as a matter of memory as an efficient way of getting them on the table, and then using them and harnessing them to get at the relationship and the distance between father and son. There are several references to how California is and was, and how their perception of reality, or their perception of how things are versus how things were is sort of brought up here. That each line is something of a look into their different perspectives: "the look of you as a boy" that Henri doesn't remember or identify with. "I found him when I was in California" has this concept of California as a place where Robert found something beautiful, and Cozad found something dangerous. There's this juxtaposition of how for each of them California is one thing but they both have really different views of what it is. I think that's sort of at the core of a lot of their misunderstandings, and the conflict of world views that there are certain things that they look at and see very very differently.

P: I think we see a lot of that today all over today. Is it Henri's journey to understand how his father sees things or is it to get his father to see more?

T: He's not trying to get his father to see things the way that he does on purpose. No. However, he does want his father to keep his chin up. So, he does want to adjust some of what his dad is. At the same time, he wants to see the world through his father's eyes so that he can accurately represent him. I think that's in the scene. There's a lot of what I think about the sort of core conflict is in the piece.

P: What did you do to bring those elements out? They always stuck out to me when I was listening through.

T: Well, I guess, I think I tried to stay out of the way and let them speak for themselves. To your point, we were just talking about how so much of this is sort of sparse, not *colla voce*, not free, notated very precisely, but a lot of times the orchestra drops out and lets the text come forward. Maybe that's why it would start to foreshadow the duet to come.

P: Some of the things that jump out to me the most are those a cappella sections which occasionally get extended in this scene as well.

T: It seems to bring out text as you point to here, and I use it for that throughout.

P: I don't know if maybe I'm thrusting intent upon you, but you do it later with

emotional content too. And some of the extended a cappella scenes are rather dramatic. However, you're an excellent orchestrator. Why do you think you remove all of those elements that you've got at your fingertips? All of these tools at your disposal that a full orchestra provides for emotional subtext for the characters. And in some of the most emotionally driven moments, the orchestra drops out.

T: Yeah, but voices are instruments too, for sure. Sometimes for the ultimate in intensity and directness you need just the vocal color. You just keep things very spare, very pared down. So that's why that happens at moments of great intensity. There are plenty of times where the orchestra provides continuity. There's a lot of similarity working on painting and working on music in the scene. As I was starting to sketch things, I realized that these early sketches are not very good, I've been there. You know, most early sketches are hard, even Beethoven's. If you go back and look at early sketches of almost any great work, they're usually a little too simple, and it's really hard to see how they are going to turn into masterpieces. As in a Schenkerian analysis, all the interesting stuff is in the middle ground. That's where the interesting choices are made.

P: How do you make choices about your material in the middle ground?

T: Shifts and changes in the material at deeper structural levels that will then reveal themselves on the musical surface. That relates back to very simple beginnings, and in and of themselves they're not always particularly interesting. In the same area analysis, the background is not the interesting thing. It's just three, two, one, one, five, one. The fun of composing is often taking these very simple, original sketches, motives that you sketch out, or ideas, adding harmonic progressions, and then and then turning them into something musically more satisfying and larger. Creating a larger musical whole. That's what I find really fun. Something similar happens in the visual arts as you move from earlier sketching into applying pigments and paints and then using your brush technique and everything to affect color, to affect texture, to affect the whole mood of the painting.

P: And we do something similar as vocalists when we take the sketch that is the score and transform it into the realm of living breathing art.

T: Yeah, that's why different vocal performances can do the same work and produce such totally different results. So, this sort of back and forth between the two of them, we get the "fish theme" again, we get some thematic elements back, and when the grasshoppers come up, we get some sort of big emotional moment.

P: An explosion of some sort. Is that for Cozad an internal explosion or is he lashing out at Robert there?

T: Well yes, I thought in this production, that moment was interpreted a little too histrionically. I think it's far enough in the score. It's painful, but far enough in the past. It is a way of saying "I really don't want to think about that" but not explosive musically. With Henri asking the questions about "remember this" and Lee responding "I wasn't there" it's almost the father's shutting down. Henri's trying to understand and his father's shutting him out.

P: How much do they resent each other?

T: They've got along pretty well, just avoiding it. You know, living on their own

courses. It was fine until they tried to find out what's under it.

P: Is there is a small outside chance that this sort of ruins their relationship too?

T: That's got to be somewhere in the back of his mind. He may reside internally because he can't really externalize it or understand it. He hasn't been in psychotherapy. He doesn't know what's under there.

P: He's got this sort of shell, a wall of personal armor, and to dig into who he is and how he feels is not something that men of this period can do, right?

T: That's much later. Back to the a cappella sections, I think there's not just one type. The problem with each individually is some are more harmonically conceived, some melodic, and some both. Considering the question of what they have in common, it resembles the first case. As the feelings of the characters get more agitated, here is the first time really the instruments have completely dropped out in the show, and it's important that I could actually follow both lines clearly. All lines of text at the same time must be clear. When they're in the same text though, it's a different kind of inward intensity rather than the outward "what I do?" It's part of "why are we there? How were we there in the past?" Then it is more homophonic, it becomes a question of "what I'm doing here?" versus "what were we doing there?" This unity of trying to both go back and decode there and here. The stakes are high as well. If it goes badly, it could ruin things. They're both in their own world hoping to make contact with the past, and they're both reaching back for the same thing. You hear that in the music as they begin to unify musically, so we also hope that they get to the point where they can reach emotional understanding too. To see what everyone describes.

P: Can we shift gears and talk more about the family theme? We get it at the top of the next scene.

T: It was originally meant to signify Teresa. But then I started using it to signify, the boys and the relationship between parents and children, and it's also associated with Robert growing up, seeing things, and starting to create. It's kind of that whole family world. Here in the burgeoning boisterous way the boys were playing. It's the family unit which fosters some of the creative moments. We see the theme when the family is reunited.

P: So, it's not quite right to call it a version Theresa's theme. Not quite only Theresa, right?

T: It's no, it's not just her. Although she's part of it, that's a family theme. Come back to it. Yeah, we'll figure it all out because it's sort of like a family. You could call it "the love that holds the family together and the place of each member of the family resides in the family." It's a really long name for you. Yeah. We're going to keep going back to it and keep doing that. Yeah, we'll get it, but yeah. That's important. Oh, and you should mention that all of the lines like, "the knight I drew with rattler tails" these are based on real sketches of some sort, or I believe so.

P: It's interesting, you've made, some very specific stage directions that the sky's off stage right?

T: That's west. That's because say right, it's always that's always going to be west. That's always going to be west. Left is east. That never changes in the opera.

P: I've run into situations. where, some stage directors are going to stick to a score really precisely. I've seen productions of opera where they had a direction that was not being followed, say someone exited left once but the score said exit right. The artistic director said "no, it says exit right in the score! Why are you going off left?" The stage traffic is going to go off left. There's no door on the right to exit through. He says "I don't care! Go off stage right! You're going to find a way!" so the singer almost ended up in this interesting situation making a very awkward exit because sometimes these directions really have to be correct. Sometimes they have real meaning, sometimes not. The meaning here is clear: right is west, stage left is east, and yeah, that's important, and part of the score. I find Midwesterners really value their cardinal directions.

T: Yeah, that's one reason I really wanted the cast to go to Cozad and see that street and across the river into town, and just walk around and get the feel for the layout. I wanted as much of that as possible to be made somehow on the little stage. Yeah. And part of it is this spatial awareness, of where west is, where east is.

P: With "pressing business" it's interesting the way that you've set that line, which occurs several times through the show. It always has the same overall shape. Sometimes slightly different rhythms.

T: Right. And I haven't mentioned it every time, but we get a very clear revoicing of the Cozad theme here. To me, to my ear it sounds significantly more foreboding and sneakier anyway. This is just the whole tone version. It's just all planing in augmented.

P: Can you talk to me about the way you write for Chorus? What their function is?

T: This will have to wait if because I need to go get my vaccine.

P: Great! Go, get your vaccine! That's the most important thing right now I would argue, but yeah, next time I want to I do want to talk a little bit about getting into the chorus if you're available and on board.

T: Yeah, getting into the choral writing will be good. I recall in the performance, we had to simplify some things. But, yeah, we'll talk. We'll talk about the chorus next time.

Transcript 4/16/2021

Patrick: Let's pick up where we left off. We were talking about the chorus and grasshopper plague. You talked to me a little bit about the chorus, but I'd like to talk more. When you and Laura crafted the chorus, were they an amalgamation of historical characters? Or were they an invention out of whole cloth? How did you pick that?

Tyler: Well, the thing that we used in Sandoz's book because of that conversion was *Rock of Ages*, "we do not live, we only stay" we have to really get away. That actually was sung by settlers in Cozad to the tune. That's a matter of the historical record. They either sang it to *Rock of Ages* or to, or to *Beulah Land*. "We do not live. We only say" we are going to get away. And of course, *Rock of Ages*, you know, symbolizes what Cozad wants to be for the town. And of course, the citizenry is not having much

of it, to say the least.

P: So, is that a layered sort of mockery of Cozad?

T: Yes. It starts with a hymn-like presentation, and then the chorus warps and gets very dissonant. Even before that, there's some really great effects to do that. I just want to talk a little bit about the "there won't be anything left by the morning." It has this sort of cascading falling effect. And throughout the whole thing, a lot of it's done in canon.

P: Was there a reason for that choice?

T: It's also basically a hymn and canons are easy to write within an octatonic collection, they sound good, and they also tend to fall in thirds. Those tend to be easier to hear and sing. Unfortunately, they also fall in thirds ending in tritones. The octatonic collections have such a distinctive color, akin to intervallic color, and I just find them interesting. You find the thing can be easier for singers to hear when framed that way. So, it's dissonant, but it's still part of the whole complex of really uniform pitches and uniform intervals. They fit together, well, into a specific gestalt. So, there's a practical reason for it certainly.

P: Which came first the desire for canon or the desire for an octatonic approach?

T: Mmm, I'm sure I remember. I think probably the canon came first.

P: Was that, perhaps, to show that more of the town was getting in on the unrest, as one person states the idea, more and more pile on with that idea?

T: Yeah, Pearson is the first to voice it and then everyone starts voicing it. It's one of these sort of snowball moments where you get this sense that a panic is spreading, but dread more than panic. The whole thing descends. It's dread now, panic after.

P: So, let me get to the plague. There's the phrase, "there's nothing left." This chorus line happens after the plague after the devastation. It's got a somewhat hymnal quality to it in my ear but maybe we're going for something else.

T: This is what, if it's a hymnal in a satanic cult, right? This is extremely dissonant and miserable. Bach was having a really really bad day. Yeah. An existential crisis of faith. Even the part at the end that resolves is just a finality and defeat. And everybody sort of comes to that consensus together. I just needed to present the tune of *Rock of Ages* and in a very identifiable, and traditional 19th century brass band setting, and then then conversely, Theresa reads the telegram against it.

P: Thank you, and it's also worth pointing out that when the telegram comes through, we get the very clear with repetition of the Cozad theme, right?

T: Yes. And so, she does her reading of the telegram, and then we get a real Teresa moment: triplets and coloratura that sort of snaps us out of where we are in terms of tessitura, tone, and harmony. Even in this simple reading of text, we really see a little bit of hurt. She's high and lyrical, but with the possibility of great rhetorical force. Then in this particular little melisma on "well," we hear that she does really love and admire her husband, and that's where those emotions come through. He actually really came through, and we hear that this is really wonderful to her because it shoots up in tessitura from where she's been and really pops out of the texture. That's to show just the level of how pleased she is, how much she loves her husband, and how pleased she is with what he's done.

P: Any significance to the triplets there as opposed to 16th notes?

T: Well, we've had a lot of duplets. So, in this case, it's just more flowing, and it breaks the texture. There's almost a girlishness to it. Yeah, girlishness. It's also very exposed. The hardest part is the change of key between the two phases.

P: And why did you change? Why did you make that choice? What's that shift for Theresa?

T: It was more just musically the right thing to do. That's all the answer anyone ever needs. I think it was musically the right thing to do. By the time Sanderson delivers his line, it felt right to musically have harmonic motion. Similarly with the chorus the second phrase is even darker than the first phrase. I mean it's a little higher, but it's harmonically harsher. You know, it's a much more twisted, the minor key version of *Rock of Ages*.

P: Is that to show the continued growth of their dissolution of the town?

T: Right.

P: And we get a reappearance of the Cozad theme, but here, just right after the end of that scene.

T: But in a sort of twisted, minor foreboding arrangement. That's Cozad under attack. It's also what I would describe as scene shift music.

P: So, there is something at the lower register here too.

T: That's not really that low. But when we get to... Oh, I don't know if you're working out of the same measure numbers... I probably have cuts that you don't or the first versa. Right, that's that theme. Well, I mean, it's related to the family. It's that sort of family thing. Right. The first time we heard this music in its happier content was before the grasshoppers. The whole family is to a certain extent under strain, and so whatever the stage director wants to put on the stage during this during this little orchestral interlude, the music does in sort of indicate not just the family under strain, but a lot of civic bustle and ferment in a discontented fashion. I love thinking of that as the family theme and thank you for joining that idea up. Yeah, that to me is one of the more elusive themes. It's something I never really solved. Part of the reason I think I've grown to love it so much is it's not just that calling card these themes can become. Sometimes it gets associated with characters but it's really an idea and an emotional theme.

P: The passenger pigeons sketch is from Henri sketches. I think it's mentioned in the book because I remember reading about it.

T: It's yeah. It comes up. It's something about this line. I don't know. Always jumped out at me. It shows him as Henri, as a young impressionable, an emotionally sensitive lad, that going through all of this, he hasn't turned off, right? So, at the *moderato*, we get entrance music. And it's the same music as the original speech in Act one, scene three. Again, this is a sort of fanfare. Here's the big speech to the people.

P: A politician again, yeah?

T: Yeah, a politician. Sort of pompous. Yeah, the dots really give it that air of military fanfare, and you have the full score in front of you, that's scored for brass. Yeah, brass. This "Plum Creek" line pokes some fun to try to win the crowd.

P: When you're writing the speech for Cozad, what were you hoping to elicit? You said you wanted it pompous here for example. Were there certain things you did to make it seem either more proclamation-like or more pompous in the way you set it as opposed to casual dialogue we see throughout the score?

T: Well, certainly the presence of the high notes, the high F can pop out. Tessitura plays a role. It's a very rhetorical gesture. Like lifting one finger. I don't know if you've ever seen any of those manuals of rhetorical gestures that were popular in the 19th century, with manuals of different gestures that meant specific things. And, and of course, these hand positions that go back to Roman times, at least, you know, the things that the priest is doing with his hands during the eucharist. Those go back to ancient Roman times, and these are these are musical gestures of a similar sort. It's not quite high note for the sake of singing high notes, but it verges on that. The opera singer is just showing off with a grand gesture. There's an aspect that imposes. We ascend to the top, not for an emotional reason, but for simply an act of theater.

P: Shows the youth of the character as well?

T: Yeah, right. But really, it's these leaps to the F's both give the sense that it's not just to an audience of one person that's right next to him but to all the town. There's somewhat of a shift from when he gets into a discourse with Pearson. It's not just the whole thing coming down, but the whole thing does come down about a step. We're now going to Eb's. He's speaking to one other person but he's doing it in a public way, in a public sense, and as the conversation tips to Traber, and it just becomes a sort of logistical discussion again, the register comes down again and we end up in this sort of middle register by design. And then we get this wonderful reiteration that appears at the end, which closes out the scene, and after he delivers that "we do not live, we only stay."

P: We get the Pearson theme?

T: The conflict theme. It's the rattlesnake. It's the rattlesnake theme maybe. I mean, that was sort of looser in its reference because it's also, you know, danger, right? It also turns up when Teresa's mother bad mouths Cozad.

P: A danger theme.

T: Yeah, it's anything that that Cozad's frankly afraid of. He's right, he's less afraid of, you know, the guys in a card game card game coming out right than he is of being slandered by his mother-in-law or in the political sense right now. That's the real danger. That's scarier. That's as scary to him as a venomous viper coming out of the bushes.

P: So, we get scene seven opening up with the sort of descending theme being done. "Trouble brewing" material. Is that connective tissue or is that to set a new tone?

T: It's more, it's more connective. It's just it's now that we're really getting into the you know, the crux of the opposition. I just felt it was time to reiterate the opening. That opening statement, this is the second of the three times it occurs fully. The third time being in the conflict. So, this is to further fix that in the mind since it was the first thing in the opera, which presumably, you know, makes a strong statement, but it also serves to really fix it in the ear and bring it back in a strong way. It makes

the conflict to come in the scene to come feel more inevitable.

P: A theme of unrest within the town?

T: Yes. Unrest.

P: Do you think in terms of the rule of three to make things and drive things home or is it not really by design?

T: It just often works out that way. Yeah. "The first grand payday for the bridge." Again, we get more of this recit-like color. That's extremely well, notated, and should be sung as written.

P: There's a reappearance of the Cozad theme in seven. Any specific choices on reharmonizing it here?

T: Let's see. Well, this version's all parallel minor triads so it's a slightly darker version.

P: Is that more for the unease of Cozad for the townspeople, or their unease for him?

T: It's more situational. It's not Cozad feeling unliked. No, Cozad thinks he's going to be hailed. But this is more the town's viewpoint of Cozad. Their view of Cozad comes out in the harmonization. It's kind of amazing. He shows up with bags of money to solve the problem, but with no compassion. It's just, yeah, it's interesting.

P: I'd argue it's culturally relevant today. Why is the snare drum really prominent here? What was your intent with it?

T: The snare drums are here partly just to serve as relentless unfolding drive to the scene. As I recall it was Laura's suggestion, and it was a really effective one. It certainly does give the whole thing a relentless feel. It's got a whole lot of march-like drive to it. And there is something systematic about this whole process, line up all around, names, and checking them off a list. It's not quite militaristic, but it's got a certain character, right?

P: And then we do get a real shift of tone. Suddenly it gets quite bright leading into measure 44 or so. We get a "wiping the slate clean gliss" into that Broadway bop from scene two. Where do you, and how do you accomplish the shift?

T: Snare drum driven right into sort of joy that Cozad's experiencing being able to come through on this promise. It pivots from a dreary march into a parade. Yeah, I mean It's meant to indicate that Cozad really is pretty clueless about how about how his actions are going to be perceived by others, and so he is very much in his own world. Here, in terms of what he's expecting in terms of the reaction that he expects to receive, he set's a wildly upbeat tone. We get the foreboding minor Cozad theme followed by this something else. There's this sort of playfulness, and of course the snare drum there too doesn't leave, but joins right in being playful. The same triplets and everything. It's as if this is all just fun and games and which was intended to set up Pearson's piercing outburst with more dramatic contrast.

P: Again, it's when things drop out that we listen in a really different way, and that's like the way you use a cappella sections. Your use of texture by omission that really draws the ear and provides clarity.

T: And then the reappearance of this small line, and then we get into maybe my favorite thing in the opera, which is this humongous Verdi-like ensemble where everybody is sort of broken off into their own world and overlapping.

P: You mentioned the council scene in *Boccanegra*, as inspiration for that. Can you talk a little bit more about how you incorporated aspects of the council scene?

T: Well, nothing, nothing direct. It was just an example. It was really sort of as close as I could get of an example. There's a sense of the various clear vocal lines and clear division of vocal labor. You've got the steady backdrop of a people's chorus against other factions. You have some groups within the townspeople, or opposed to the townspeople, or slightly different from the collage people, and the protagonists. Apparently, Cozad's off in his own world just fulminating and Teresa's soaring over the top in a worried lament. So that would certainly be inspired by Verdi, I'm not sure how beyond the structure. I didn't want to rip off the council chamber scene obviously because well, of course, the harmonic language is too different. It just actually poured out of me without a great deal of thought, and the scene unfolds in two chunks of material, which are largely just transitions in one another.

P: Can you just state exactly where that is?

T: So "what good is the gold now." Yeah. Over there. Therefore, the first one would be here, and then and then the second one, the one that starts on the E Minor triad. That's bar 92 / 3 maybe yeah. Starts on the E Minor triad. Yeah. And then you have that chunk of material, and then you see it comes back. Turning on an F minor Triad. As far 101, I guess. Those transitions were a way of hitting structural points, and also to make it a little easier for the chorus to sing it. It is good to have a formula that they learn how to sing and then you just transpose it. I think it's easier for the audience to get too lest they get lost in the texture. It punctuates those moments to give structure to the listener.

P: Yeah, it's funny how removed Cozad is from all of this even in the notation. For example, "what good is the gold now?" It is the third one after the F minor one. The chorus and everyone else is still singing in flats. And Cozad starts to get notated in sharps. On his "ingrates" heads back to a G-sharp as opposed to back to an A-flat. It's in the chord, but the notation implies he's somewhere else. We're kind of over a d flat in the chorus, but Cozad's in C-sharp because he came from G to G-sharp in the previous measure, not from A-flat. The notation makes sense if you're only looking at Cozad's line. But when he does line up harmonically, he's still not in the same world. His statement is in line with the disgruntled citizens who then go to sharps.

T: I don't know if that's just a funky notation that happened. Yeah, I think it just happens to you. I wouldn't hang too much on it. Now, I can't find any reason for going to G-sharp and C-sharp there. Well, I don't know. It was here in both versions of the score. I don't think I think I'm ready to commit to that notation. I may ultimately change that as it's a lot to look at. This does live in a land where Robert's last night line is also quite mixed. The end of this little chunk is a B-flat and D-sharp.

P: How do you decide when you're going to be using sharps flats?

T: In that case, it just is a little easier than making it a G-flat B-flat, right? Or B-double flat. Then this really dramatic tremolo where everything cuts out. Then we lose the chorus to just hear the conflict that's about to happen between Pearson and Cozad which sets that up really well. Throughout the whole thing that snare drum sort of drives this whole scene, and it's a little trick, but that's sort of what worked.

It was intended to set up tension, and continuity, and to accentuate the sort of dragging trudging quality of where the town is at. Alienated labor. Well, I've got to run. This has to be a short one today.

P: Okay, sure. But I would love to pick up in Act 2 next week if possible.

T: You bet, all right!

Transcript 4/23

Tyler: Well this week I've been spending a lot of time with *O Pioneers!*, cleaning up the score. You know, right after right after *The Gambler's Son*, premiered I went back and set all the spoken dialogue to music in *O Pioneers!*. All of it. So, it's practically a new score now. There were only just a few little chunks of spoken dialogue, but now it's all set. That is, all set to music. It's still recognizably the same piece, but I've been just touching up things here and there, and proofreading, and all that kind of stuff, and making sure the models are in the right places. These things take countless hours. I've just been going over term papers and that's been, well you know.

Patrick: All right. Well, when we last left our brave adventurers, we went through a giant Verdi-like ensemble. Act one, scene eight opens up with this thematic thing "to paint a man is to know him." Whatever the version of it this is, we get it at the top of one eight.

T: Henri's motto. When it's in a dissonant context, obviously that represents something like a crisis of creativity because that's what this scene is fundamentally all about. So, we establish that right at the top. This crisis and how it's happening to him again, and you hear it twice. It implies sort of being stuck on the idea or the theme.

P: I assume that the secretary's use of "pressing business" is in some way emulating Cozad's pressing business, yeah?

T: Yeah, I mean, evidently, she's quoting Lee. It's the quote that we've heard several times. He's no longer the same identity, but he's still using the same lines, right? He's still the same man in so many ways. So, you see all the same lines. And then we get the thematic material. This is right after the line "thank you." a reemergence of that theme there. Yeah, the snake.

P: The danger theme.

T: Yeah. The danger theme, right. Danger and desolation... danger and desolation. It's funny that the snake is the first time we see it, but the snake is a striking enough image that I guess we kind of get it. Oh, also pressing businesses then of course is answered by the only time you get the lucky Cozad at the in relation to Lee to this point.

P: Yeah, I guess that is true.

T: That's the only time even though I associate the two so clearly. The point is that this is still the same man. He's using the same lines. He has the same underpinning material.

P: Is there a reason you didn't use more of Cozad's material in these Lee scenes?

T: Lee enters as a somewhat distinct character thematically, and this is the first

moment we really see them tied together thematically. It seems right. You do get, in the last scene of Act two, some overlap. And once the once the painting is unveiled, yeah, there is an occurrence of the Lucky Cozad theme. It shows up again. But that's way at the end. I'm kind of unifying it more here. And of course, I think Lee and initially in the first act is defined by his by his doubts about the whole project of having a portrait painted. He's sort of suspicious of the whole thing and wants to do right by his son and his wife; but he's not really crazy about the idea. He's uncomfortable with the mood of introspection. It's thrust upon him with the portrait. So that's one reason that there was none of the Cozad music initially associated with Lee because that's not where his character is coming from initially. He gains, by the end, greater perspective on the whole thing for sure. This little "pressing business" is a stubbornness from Lee to not look back and evade the situation. Uncovering a bit of who his father was, Henri starts out with this heroic image of his father, and we sort of see him portrayed as the protagonist to begin the opera. It seems we've seen some of some of Cozad's conflicts and hypocrisies by now, and one of them is this desire to go on pressing business, and that's causing a distancing of his family.

P: And that sort of rings true to Henri at this moment, right? And that's where we get this theme, perhaps?

T: And then we've literally got "to paint a man to know him." It's very lyrical in nature I would argue, but also, it's pretty hot. It is dramatic.

P: What fach of tenor did you want singing the role? Did you want a certain timbre? By setting it in the register you've made some strong choices. It sits high at times.

T: Well, I either knew or at least in a small strong suspicion that Matthew was going to sing it. And so, the timbre of the voice in that register is really distinctive and that's something. I guess I found myself drawn to it.

P: Can you talk to me a little bit about where this text originates?

T: Yeah, most of this text is drawn from lines from *The Art Spirit*.

P: Yeah, I thought I'd read it in there, right?

T: The text of which is all sort of Henri's best insights. Laura and I both were really pleased to be able to find quotes. In terms of using *The Art Spirit*, I went through and just copied out lines I thought were potentially useful, and then forwarded those onto Laura. She assembled the text of the aria. The only thing that is maybe cuttable in this aria is the verse about the tools made by human hands. As that's somewhat tangential to the rest of the aria. He achieves a sort of an impasse. He gets out of it by staring at his brushes and knives because that's the tangible and the thing he understands best, right? The conflict is that I don't understand my father, right? Hopefully, these tools will give me a way to pry open that relationship, and I think that there's value in that. The question: "What were the signs in the air?" is very intangible. How does that relate to the "planes of the face?" How you make the abstract of the nebulous tangible in a person's face so that it reveals their soul, right? So much of his understanding of his father is so warped because he was a child. You know, he wonders if he can go from the outside looking at him and craft down to what's inside. That only happens, of course, if the subject is open, right? So

that's what the "signs in the air" are.

P: As far as vocal approach and timbre, what are you looking for? It's not a very vertical dramatic aria. It doesn't strike hard, but instead works horizontally.

T: It sort of floats along and because he's lost in thought, right? Which to me points to a higher lyric tenor. When we're thinking about casting rather than something extremely dramatic. The threat of attacks on the top goes against what I'm after. That would be very wrong. That would be a very different kind of Henri. Yeah, "they're not made beautiful. They are beautiful." Technically, when he goes up for the high B flats and the high C and everything there, I did try to take him down first so that he can really make the leap into the upper register. It doesn't just sit up there and then you're expected to sing your highest. From what I recall, Matt made it through.

P: In the next scene we go back to Cozad, now more prosperous. Interesting. Yeah, with the stable sign. I think it's all very clear. Is this sort of the bustle of the town at the opening? What was the intent behind where this whole thing opens up?

T: Things are going to turn from foreboding to downright ugly. The score here implies the violence is sort of brewing. Another one of his sketches is presented. That sort of gets brushed off again. O'Dell gets a waltz. And, this sleazy swing returns. and it's sort of 60, spy music. It's got this tension to it that I think we as modern consumers of media immediately identify. It's 60's music. We get the Cozad theme again for four bars here.

P: But again, reharmonized after O'Dell called John out, right? And the whole thing is very suspended as if waiting to see what happens. We don't get the same drive that we have before in the rhythms. It's a bit stretched. Tentative, maybe? Cautious for sure.

T: Well, what do you want to know about it?

P: The triplet figure specifically that follows.

T: As we get that figure throughout this scene, the triplet, it's just a very twitchy theme. Yeah, as if the two men are waiting to draw on each other, right? The other theme is there too. There's the back and forth between the O'Dell itching for revenge with the triplet theme, and then the and then the Lee theme sort of suggesting Cozad's other life. It's not just his transformation into Lee. It's this sort of double life theme almost but there's something more there. It's a mystery theme.

P: And then we get a sort of sad waltz, right?

T: But it's kind of a stumbling waltz at times from O'Dell. Yeah, slightly pathetic. While a waltz, this is kind of a dance that the two of them were doing, for sure. Obviously, both these men who are confronting each other, and they both have memories of the same woman no matter who's telling the truth. Parts are sweet. O'Dell likely had real feelings for Kitty.

P: Yeah. Who is dancing the waltz? It's a sad Waltz, as stated. Is O'Dell still dancing with Kitty, or is he lost by himself and dancing alone, or is he dancing with Cozad?

T: Once Cozad comes back in, he's not waltzing. No. The only one really waltzing is O'Dell. Something I want to say is the waltz continues after O'Dell's completely shot down and humiliated. There's also sort of ironic hollow victory for Cozad. The dance

continues. The dance is a show for the crowd, but he's doing more of the emotional content than you know the steps. Putting on a dance show and dancing for a crowd.

P: All right, so yeah, I just wanted to see if there were associations you had with the waltz form.

T: Yeah, the tension does not resolve. Even after the waltz ends essentially, right? Which launches us into the next scene and so that, you know, you have tension doesn't get resolved. A gunfight is avoided, but the tension has not just been between the two men. The family tension remains. There's some relational aspect to a dance.

P: And yeah, as you were saying, the dance isn't just between the two men there. Waltz is a public ballroom dance. That the dance that goes out is doing public relation damage with Theresa and all the town.

T: Yeah, there's just a reference to the Sibelius *Valse Triste*.

P: Right.

T: Which is a, which is a heartbreaking little piece. But O'Dell doesn't quite dance it, right? And it's never resolved whether it's that O'Dell is really making it up out of whole cloth, or there's some truth in it somewhere, right? And that's the real problem for Cozad, or that's where we get scene two from, right? We've talked a little bit about this already, but that's an aria that is really floating in part because of the irregular rhythm. The whole thing sort of teeters on this edge. It doesn't really settle into a groove of any real sort, and the audience is left sort of wondering where she's going to land. It's heartbreaking.

P: I've got to say, I think it's really great that Theresa gets a moment in this opera, which could just be about the two men. She gets some real depth not even afforded her in the Sandoz. She becomes really lovable and sympathetic in this moment, where we get to see she's a real flesh and blood person.

T: Yes. And of course, this text is text that Laura made up. It's all Laura, but it would be so sad, if she didn't. The fact that Laura chose to give her a voice is really important.

P: So, in this next scene, we do get another waltz. It's worth noting, right? But it's a waltz from her imagination.

T: This is sort of the waltz she heard O'Dell spin out, you know, it's a clearly different waltz. But the fact is that O'Dell has set in her mind to a waltz turns it into this. A fantasy. Then it turns into Beulah Land.

P: Yeah. And then, of course, we get reentry of Cozad with another Cozad theme, right?

T: We do. The entrance is designed to be kind of a gut punch. Out of this thing that's sort of floated along Cozad's theme by contrast is very rhythmic and pointed. And this here, it's presented very dissonantly. I love that he refers to her as a jewel. So frequently as an object, right? And we get back our "pressing business."

P: Yeah, it's a heartbreaking area. If one were to do this for an audition you could make cuts.

T: Right. Would be simple enough. You could, you could cut that part out. Although, you could even, you can even just cut the whole section, right? And just end with the

high E and D sharp. Although I kind of like the last very last bit. I think there's something there too for an audition. You might be able to get away with starting part way through or something. Yeah. This is always the problem with great Soprano arias is figuring out how to make it fit for audition. These wonderful works ask a lot of a panel because they're longer excerpts, right?

P: Yeah. I do hope this aria becomes available and done. I do know that we need more good English American arias. No word from Tom and Madame Mao get us only so far.

T: Yeah. And I know Sopranos are always looking for something to stand out with. This is set in a way that a coloratura soprano can really show off, in addition to technique, to have real dramatic content. So often, those roles are sort of relegated to dolls, right? These sorts of things. There's so much need for it.

P: Is there anything you do to change seasons from summer to autumn in the score?

T: Not consciously, although you could certainly do something in the lighting for the staging. Sure, something thematic. I mean, the other thing though that I did very consciously do is introduce a new source row.

P: Oh, I don't think I knew that! Is there a change that inspired you to do this?

T: Well, I mean it's partly Robert growing up, and it's harder for me to imagine at this point, in the opera... he started with his drawing a knight with rattlesnake tails on its helmet, but these drawings sort of develop into something more substantial. We get out from just a kid who draws, right? Yeah, not sort of childlike stuff, but he's advanced and so we get a new source for that.

P: Yeah, in terms of personal experience too. This encounter with the dealer, this is a growing up moment, right?

T: Yeah, the dealer gets some fun stuff here. This at the *allegramente* sort of drives forward and there's this sort of glitz, and glam of faro, partly in the piano solo that's ripped off directly from the last movement of the Shostakovich first piano concerto. It's a really funny moment where suddenly the bar room piano sort of appears. Why Shostakovich wanted this is that I think it was just a version of ballroom piano.

P: And we get a reappearance of the Cozad theme, when Robert decides, he's not going to take the gift because dad said not to. There's the Family Theme as a bit of a calling card for "say is that one of Cozad's kids?" Can you talk to me a little bit about the structure of what you did to make that effect at the entrance of Cozad?

T: Well, right at that moment is a relationship between minor triads, which is both very dark and very tense. Building up to that, let's see, it's just additional piling up of the "here, everything will be clean and new" theme with clashing and plaining. Yeah, I'd have to sit down and deconstruct it a little more, you know. But I have to take from that that it's you know, "everything will be clean and new." There won't be gambling in my town and yet, here we are. This has all gone wrong. Then we get the percussive savage elements in the orchestra because of the axe.

P: Are those meant to sort of emulate the axe being smashed into the table?

T: Yes, those were originally supposed to be each of the axe blows. Yeah. Ideally that would be great. You can get a prop table that we can smash every night, right? Then we get this very sharp contrast of the harp that comes in. Very delicate. As the whole

moment, sort of freezes, right? And I do love the “jackleg” line. It sets the period very well. It was certainly a reference Laura and I both had to look up.

P: And then with the arrival of the false deputy...

T: In his whole arrival there with all that running clarinet stuff in parallel major seconds, I was particularly thinking of the *Keystone Cops*. He's not believable. He gets picked out right away.

P: It's descriptive “scampering away” music. The score very much tells the story there. It looks like you're putting stage direction in the orchestra. We get the staging very clearly again just like you were using the axe we get the caning strikes. These violent strikes are not quite a motive, but part of your compositional language.

T: Right. Poor Robert. And of course, in real life, it was a whip, not a cane. It was a riding crop. But we wanted to keep things thematically tight, and we established so much of the cane throughout the work it made sense to use it here.

P: Were there any other influences on the way that you wrote this ensemble duet? Is it evoking anything?

T: Not really. Just a real squelcher piece.

P: It's just set very well in the baritone voice.

T: And yes, “squeal” set on that dissonance, it is really nice.

P: And just like you're talking about at the top of the scene, this is a very quick growing up for Robert. Perhaps a parallel to the act one a cappella duet?

T: Maybe a little. After the duet we set the scene with a percussive feel in the lower voices. Right, that tells us that things are really getting bad. This part of the opera is more plot driven than character driven. Yeah, the characters are all set up and now you just let them go. Now the whole thing flies. You pull the sling back and they fire away.

P: Yeah. We get the family theme here. Then more of the striking language after “just deserts.” Then danger theme, mixed with public persona.

T: When we get this sort of tension cord, “You know, you owe me money for the work I did on the bridge.” And then we finally built up this fight we've sort of been edging towards it and then finally the full theme from the Prelude.

P: In designing this, this fight scene, what were you consciously going for? Did you have a fight sort of planned out in your head? Was that based on descriptions in the Sandoz?

T: Not really. I just want it just needed to be basically long enough to get in a few good savage punches and moves and get something for the fight choreographer to do. Then ramping it up with the return to the music from the beginning of the scene, wrapping it up when he actually gets the knife. And then again, ramping up again, we get the theme when the gun is drawn.

P: You had a gunshot at one point marked in the score now, or no?

T: We already did. I still have it in mine for some reason. You might have to turn to the full score for that.

P: And after the fight we get a sort of very sad reoccurrence of the family theme, you know?

T: After the fight, right? So, it's after “take this down, Johnny.” The last time we

heard about Plum Creek, we got the same theme. But now the minor version, right?

P: Yes.

T: And it's also kind of a public proclamation, right? It's a public statement, which is the same idea of what we got before, but this is the very dark version of it. And when we get, we have this in B-flat. We get this of B-flat minor over an E major.

P: I have something polytonal under me, yeah. What I've got in my score is B-flat, minor, followed by E major and then Cozad enters an E minor.

T: We get this polytonal cluster. It's almost like the reality lands one place and he asserts a different one, in E Minor.

P: What were you going after with the crunchiness of that interaction?

T: Really just the desperate straits of the scene. You know, he cannot turn himself in. He can't stay. There's nothing for him to do but flee. And so, he does just that, and we get another appearance of the Cozad theme.

P: And right at the end, as he gets on his way the music trails off, what are you implying by using that effect there?

T: Mmm. It sort of floats off. Unsettles. I just had to wind up the scene, although you know the stories far from over.

P: That's all the time I get today. These are really big points in the opera, so thank you. I'm certainly available next week and then yeah.

T: Yeah!

Transcript 5/14/2021

Patrick: Let me pull up my notes. I actually started writing the document now quite a bit. All right, before I get into these questions, a chapter of my document is on how this work fits into the last five years of opera. I'm putting it in some context.

Tyler: Okay.

P: And I've currently got about 50 to 60 works. In the last five years, have you considered any of that when you're writing? You mentioned *Broke Back Mountain* in one of our interviews, right?

T: As a sort of reason not to do things, all right?

P: When you compose in this genre are you thinking of what other people are doing at all?

T: Not right away anyway, no. I think that would be the quickest way to get myself stuck.

P: Yeah, be the best version of you, not an imitation of someone else, right?

T: Yeah.

P: Let's go back and talk about what I actually want to talk about: Act two, scene five. We do get A recurrence of the "Great White House" town theme.

T: But it's a little distorted, we get some dissonance. When Cozad is ready to run and we have "my hat, my cane" after "sew your jewelry into your clothes" there's this crunch chord cluster.

P: Is that emotional content for one of the characters? Is that stage Direction? Where does that live in your mind?

T: It's those bad men. Emotional for sure. Then, we get a real texture shift when he's just to the boys. We get something significantly more tonal. This work is full of tone rows and all of that, but there are real moments of empathy about it.

P: It doesn't seem that you shy away from that, right? And when the orchestra does get sparse, it's not the sort of John Adams, "plink-plunk minimalism" sparse. There's always something, I don't know, substantial there. Unless it cuts out entirely there's really something significant under the singer for most of their material anyway. We get driving syncopations at measure 33 as he begins to deliver this "Richard H, Lee," and we mentioned, a few interviews back, the rest there really helped to bring out the proper nouns. And then we get a return of the family theme as they embrace, but still, with a whole lot of dissonance thrown into fit the mood. We get a return to traveling music as Cozad departs. It's a version of the postlude that we heard at the end of the aria in Act one, scene two. We get the same sort of thing as he's going out that we got as he was coming in.

T: It sounds like traveling music because we've heard it as such already. "Out of a tight spot again" comes back because this theme is so angular, it's sharp to the ear.

P: You used the word crooked as well to describe the theme. Once an interview you mentioned it has a certain hook to it. Here the hook up is augmented, and it took me three times going through in the practice to catch it since the other was so in my voice and ear by then. I learned the aria first, so finding augmented interval in my voice into this took me a second to process. To me it meant something to me as a vocalist. If didn't mean anything to you it's okay.

T: Yes. He's still Cozad, but a little more and with an extra layer or two. And we've lost that optimism. Maybe he hasn't quite learned his lesson yet.

P: Yeah, when we get the lucky Cozad theme returning. It's also in the minor mode.

T: It's part of minor harmonies. And again, what you've said before, that he can't stop to do anything that allows reflecting. No, what everybody else, including the audience and Henri, have come to is that they can now see his father in a different light. The theme lucky Cozad is represented again, but it's augmented rhythmically. The John J is augmented and then and then diminishes rhythmically.

P: Does that diminishing of Cozad act as a display of where he's going? Is it that you wanted to present the theme again, first broadly in a more identifiable way, and then when it repeated, you could warp it?

T: We do get lucky Cozad and tight spot themes in canon. I wanted his layers.

P: You want to talk about that just briefly?

T: So, the first two times, we get the first theme. Then, it's doubled in the orchestra essentially. But the third time "out of a spot again" it almost feels like it's out of sync in some way with the vocal line. It's grown out of memory. It's the complexity of the character that Henri now understands, these sorts of overlaying ideas and contradictions thrown in different modes, and understanding how they sort of fit together. A traveling "out of a tight spot again" and "Lucky Cozad" sort of all smashed together into one picture. It's not that it's a unified picture. It's just a complex one. At least on some maybe subconscious or deeper level he doesn't have to be in unison. This is part of the journey of Cozad reaching the point where he

apologizes to his son, but it comes from Cozad reviewing some of this as well. Thinking from a directorial perspective, it's hard to watch one person remember things. But it should inform some way older character acts in 1903.

P: We get an apology from Cozad in the opera unlike the Sandoz, right? And we do get a reimagining of the family theme a little bit later. It's around measure 49. Am I barking up the wrong tree with that? It seems like we don't get that directly after the apology, but instead we get it after acceptance of the apologies.

T: One sees the other. They need to sort of agree on what they see. And we get a reference to the Lee theme "I've been seeing it all with a new eye" Yeah. It's not quite resolved yet. But we're getting close.

P: What's the intent with the two against three.

T: Steading the pulse.

P: We talked a little bit about how I think it would make a great excerptible aria. I don't know that exactly how to shape it. I'm sure we could trim some of the intro. I think if you're doing in the auditions some of the introductory material isn't required.

T: Yeah, this could be cut. It's there.

P: I don't why I obsess about this, but the two against three is something we've seen before. The meter is something.

T: Yeah, I guess it's the two against three that propels things forward. Since he's had this emotional, relational breakthrough, it comes immediately. Anyone who's ever had one knows how it inspires you. There's an intellectual aspect to it this, two against three concept as well. It prevents the singer from getting too Puccini-esque and sort of keeps you honest. It gives a fervor that you were referring to. It's kept alive by that two against three. Yeah, I need to time this out and see what makes the most sense, cut wise. But if there's anything that you think, let me know. I think the real goal is to have something that's five minutes. All right, and if you go over that then people have trouble.

P: Mab, which can be done in two minutes is a standard. Though some of the longer Soprano arias can go on, but when you get past five minutes, your panel gets worried that that's all they're going hear.

T: That's very good too. When it comes to postlude there are clever ways you could wrap that up because it does end with the Lee Theme, which is neat, but I don't know that we need that necessarily for the purposes of an audition. I think probably ending with something like the fifth bar over here.

P: We get another one of these distorted family themes. We also get the town theme right after that, right?

T: And yeah, we've clearly taken on a very dark color as far as the way, it's been reharmonized. A kind of worried feel. You're going back and forth between these two times and locations which are now really established and is shown by the theme. So, it serves a little bit as a calling card, but also to give us a sense of location and a sense of the emotional content we're seeing right off the top.

P: I assume that the fermata before Teresa's entrance is just staging.

T: Yeah.

P: Our last time, I got hung up on a fermata. Here “It’s time to go” is not intended as a fermata over the bar, but just as a fermata on the word time. For emphasis?

T: Yes. It’s just a hint to the singer to really give that word emotional weight, and to have a little bit of leeway to do that.

P: We get a return to this sort of two against three. Two against three as we’ve just heard in Henri’s aria. Are those two linked in some way?

T: I wanted to avoid too much of a barcarole. That rhythm establishes a little pushing forward. Everyone sort of gets their moment. And then we get the three things sort of layered on top of one another.

P: Is that unity sort of a dramatic unity as well?

T: Well, it is the idea to paint the individuals first and then unify them. Yeah. And through the trio they unify.

P: And then you have another one of these great a cappella moments where everything drops out. And you’ve said before that, that has to do with sort of heightening, emotional content for the singers and really laser focus on their characters. And focus on how they’re feeling and what they’re emoting. I assume this is in that vein but feel free say otherwise.

T: Without instruments intervening, again, it’s an emotional climax for these characters in some ways, and everything sort of drops out right before the grand moment of arrival, which creates a great effect. I know what’s so great about opera is, in the room with you it’s sort of a... I don’t know. We don’t have the filters.

P: I’ve been known to push back against some of the electronic aspects of what I hear. 21st century Opera sometimes puts a wall between performer and audience, and some of the technical elements are intended to help engage an audience... well, sometimes less is more. I think these moments are a great example of that. Then we’re then transported back to New York, and we get our secretary bustling about. We get good bustling music, I would argue.

T: Yes. And that’s transition music here as the town goes away.

P: Yeah, we’ve got something that sort of screams stage direction from the orchestra to me where the secretary may be dusting or cleaning. Then we have a family theme coming in as the family comes in.

T: Right after, we get a calling card of Lee. And very cleverly, Henri turns around the hat and cane line. And that’s one of those themes that sort of shifts ever so slightly throughout the work. The basic contour of the theme remains the same, but the rhythms are never perfectly identical. It’s not just a rhythmic idea, it’s also a melodic one. It doesn’t need to align rhythmically. Theresa’s “you dear, you” is just Theresa affirming that it is in fact truly him. That well, “you may look a little Stern” but it is, in fact, very much who you are. And that’s not a put down. No, it’s exactly the opposite.

P: And then Lucky Cozad, that is the last one I think.

T: Yes.

P: Yes. So, we’ve got this waltz. And we get something that is very poetic and romantic. Does the waltz sort of set tone? What does the waltz mean here? Why did you use a waltz? A slow waltz.

T: A couple of things that, you know, even in very slow forms one thoughtful for waltzes do is move forward. Dance rhythms in general, right?

P: It should dance. It shouldn't get heavy. Especially this close to the end.

T: We've got the complete row finally, before four bars. Right before "you have made me as I am my son." Yeah, so, we sort of get the actual completion of the work, then the finishing of the painting, and finally having acceptance. And then we get the chords that we get afterwards signifying, the end of Cozad, or the end of Lee.

P: Can you talk a little bit about what? You did there?

T: This shows Lee going off into the sunset. I intentionally brought back the opening horizon idea to try to motivate and measure the spacing. So, by these measures you A major over F-sharp. Where the human passes into something in eternity, a history or a legend. He's now living through the lives of others. Really the end of story is his balance, where he apologizes to and partners with his son. It's delightful and joyful, and as they're walking out, that's awe inspiring. It's almost a quotation. It's a reorchestration of the last couple of measures of Socrates. Where, you know, Socrates has died and become one with kids. It's also a passing into legend moment akin to Stravinsky's ballet Apollo.

P: Then there's a Rosenkav reference at the end.

T: Yes. Laura's idea. Something to leave the audience smiling

APPENDIX D
LIBRETTO SOURCE MATERIAL

Direct quotations in libretto from the source material are highlighted in red

Libretto Text	Source Material¹¹¹
<p>1.1 <i>Robert Henri's Studio, NY, 1903</i></p> <p>Secretary: "Mr. Henri, Mister Henri! Your eleven o'clock sitting is here. Mister Henri? Well, Mister Lee, I'm sorry. He seems to have stepped out for a minute. I'm sure he will be back soon. Please make yourself comfortable, Mister Lee."</p> <p>Lee: "Thank you, thank you. I am early, after all... The truth is, this is my first time at having my portrait painted."</p> <p>Secretary: "Oh it's nothing to worry about, Mister Lee: Mister Henri's sitter always say he puts them at their ease. You know what he always says... To paint a man is to know him. Well, do call if you need anything, Mister Lee"</p>	<p>The Secretary and the character's text is invented by the librettist and the tone and setting are based largely on the 24th chapter of <i>Son of the Gamblin' Man</i> by Sanoz.</p> <p>"to paint a portrait is to know the sitter" AS p. 319</p>

¹¹¹ SGM = Sandoz, M., 1976. *Son of the Gamblin' Man*. Lincoln [u.a.]: Univ. of Nebraska Pr.
AS = Henri, R., 2019 *The Art Spirit*. Overland Park, Digireads Publishing

<p>Lee: “To paint a man is to know him... to know him, eh? But just how much do I really know this Robert Henri? Hardly at all, hardly at all... Yet he is my son! My son! This world of his, it’s not mine! Socialists, Anarchists, artists and their models... This world of Robert’s, it’s not mine. My world was a world of honor. My world was a world of gentlemen, and of rogues. A world of settlers of gamblers, a world of bright new towns, of new beginnings, the chance to start over to make something real! Ah no, this world of Robert’s it’s not mine. And yet... everybody says that Robert is at the top of his game, always in demand, always busy. And here I am now waiting to be made part of history... a part of history. But I was once before, wasn’t I? When I joined forces with the future at the Hundredth Meridian, in</p>	<p>“It was not only his own world that Richard H. Lee no longer understood. He barely knew this son who was preparing to paint his portrait. He did not understand his leaning toward a writer like Bakunin and the philosophical anarchism that Robert and his students and the other artists gathered around him read and chewed over for long hours. At the suggestion of Robert and the others, he had read <i>God and the State</i> and then realized even more that his son was a stranger, an alien.” <i>SGM</i> p. 317</p> <p>Text here is original by the librettist.</p>
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that fresh, new world. So long ago it was, and so far away.”

1.2

Cozad: “Out of a **tight spot** again! But then I’ve always been lucky! That’s me! John J. Cozad. Lucky Cozad, **lucky John J.!** Fifty grand from Omaha in just this one sojourn! Such a **great river metropolis!** And such easy marks in the gentleman’s clubs! But then I’ve always been lucky! Lucky Cozad, lucky John J.! I must have been by here a dozen times and never saw you: too busy scouting things out I guess, and here you are so bold and plain, and I am here and you are mine: The Hundredth Meridian. My Hundredth Meridian! The beginning of the West, the beginning of the future. The Hundredth Meridian of my own lucky life! For I’ve always been lucky.

“It had been so ever since he grew out of his awkward cowhide boots into that proud and arrogant cane-bearing stride that carried him through so many tight spots since.” *Son of the Gamblin’ Man* p.

3

“The man liked to think of himself as lucky: Lucky John J. Cozad.” *SGM* p. 5

“But somehow nobody nicknamed John Cozad, perhaps because he seemed lucky at larger stakes, larger sometimes than the \$50,000 he was said to have picked up at faro this summer between trains at Omaha... “I predict that city will become a great river metropolis” *SGM* p.

5

“I came along here a dozen times... Here you are so bold and plain and yet I

<p>Lucky Cozad Lucky John J.! Here I will place a shining new city, here I will place a new Washington! The deed to forty thousand acres! Everything here will be clean and new! Here I will place my beautiful Theresa, like a diamond set by Tiffany's. Here my two boys will grow up and ride like princes: you cattle driving rogues will have to find another way, for I've always been lucky, for I've always been lucky. Lucky Cozad. Lucky John J.! Hard times in South America. Almost had a town down there. Had a town in Ohio. I salute what you might have been. The mining camps round Frisco. The clubs in Saint Louis. Always at Faro and Poker. In the towns, on the rails, raising money for the greater good. I have lived by my wits, by my cain and pistol, and I've always been lucky. Yes, I've always been lucky.</p>	<p>never saw you. Too busy I guess" <i>SGM</i> p. 10</p> <p>"not even those advocating the Platte valley as an ideal site for the New Washington" <i>SGM</i> p. 75</p> <p>"Yes, he would build a strong, a spreading and prosperous settlement centered by a city of wide, treelined streets, an open and happy city, with a fine home for his family... He would display her like a diamond set by Tiffany's and it would be somewhere along the railroad running past his feet here, on the forty thousand acres he had arranged to buy." <i>SGM</i> p. 75</p> <p>"Robert had never known much about his father's early attempts to locate a community in South America, about the time that many defeated Confederates went there. But the primitiveness of everything, the health hazards,</p>
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<p>Lucky Cozad lucky John... You! You!</p> <p>You, you may be a rattler, sir, but you are a gentleman! Oh yes, I've always been lucky! Lucky! Lucky Cozad! Lucky John J.! Here everything will be clean and new! A great white house, prancing horses, dancing carriages, crowds of happy people out on promenade! Bright new schools, new churches with spires reaching to the sky.</p> <p>A new capital for Nebraska! A whole new Washington! The Jewel of the Platte! No! No! I tell you, no gambling will be tolerated in my splendid new city! For I've always been lucky, yes, I've always been lucky! Lucky Cozad! Lucky John J.!"</p>	<p>including his own, with the obvious political obstacles, the internal jealousies- these killed the venture dead as frost on the watermelons." <i>SGM</i> p. 324</p> <p>"But John had located a community in Ohio too, one of several attempts scattered as far as South America. Unfortunately his Cozaddale had been very close to the booming city of Cincinnati, much too close. The town was still on the maps but the builder had moved on." <i>SGM</i> p. 6</p> <p>"The man had been heading steadily westward, plodding, his jauntiness gone now that there was apparently no living thing to observe it, lost in his plans. Then a sudden whirring at his feet made him jump. He knew the sound - a rattlesnake. It was a big one, mottled and thick as his wrist, coiled, the great</p>
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broad arrow of its head poised to strike.

But the man did not raise his cne and after a long moment's lidless defiance, the snake slid off the road and away.

The gambler touched his hat. "You are a gentleman, sir" he said, and watched the grass shake a little, slowly, deliberately, with watchful pauses." *SGM* p. 8

"For years newspapers and the halls of Congress had echoed with periodic roaring, like buffalo bulls in rutting time, from those wanting to move the national capital west to the Mississippi valley. John Cozad had heard me like Sumner and Seward speak earnestly for this... the military reservation, miles larger than the District of Columbia, lay at the vast public domain, with enough government land close by to finance an excellent New Washington" *SGM* p. 12

<p>Man 1: "Hou, Doc, where's the pill sack?"</p> <p>"Maybe he's one a them walking' sky pilots!"</p> <p>Man 2: "Well, MY soul sure don't need savin'!"</p> <p>Cozad: "Gentlemen, I am neither a doctor nor a preacher. I seek a location."</p> <p>Man 1: "Oh a landseeker? Going to Willow Island? Hop on!"</p> <p>1.3</p>	<p>"Jewel of the Platte, I call it, for my Theresa in our new home" <i>SGM</i> p. 14</p> <p>"To those who asked if Cozad might start a roadhouse too, hinting at the faro discovered in his livery stable, Davel Claypool answered, "Uncle John J. never mixes gambling with his community.""</p> <p><i>SGM</i> p. 125</p> <p>""Hou, Doc! Where's the pill sack?"</p> <p>"Maybe he's one a them walking sky pilots-" Usually John J. Cozad ignored such familiarity, but here on the empty prairie and so near sundown it seemed less offensive. "I am looking for a location, gentlemen," he offered. "Oh, a landseeker! Going to Willow Island? Hop on," the older man said, moving over a foot or so." <i>SGM</i> p. 13</p>
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<p>Settler 1: “We’re having a little trouble sir, and wondered what could be done.”</p> <p>Settler 2: “Those Texas herds are eating us out, and when we complain to the trail bosses we get a gun under our noses.”</p> <p>Settler 3: “Lucky it ain’t worse”</p> <p>Settler 1: “It will be. Herd law don’t do us no good. They got the county on their side.”</p> <p>Cozad: “Well, gentlemen, I will do what I can, but we must wait til our colony is fully in. Then we can see about getting that courthouse gang out of office. Theresa, boys, Mother and Father Gatewood, welcome! Welcome! Welcome all I say! Mark well the sign of the Hundredth Meridian. All around you here is the winter fertilized ground of our new commonwealth. And you have been riding</p>	<p>“They were having some trouble, one said, and wondered what would be done. The Texas herds were eating them out , the fever taking their little startins cattle, the better the stock the surer to die. Even the work oxen and the children's milk cows dropped wherever the Longhorns passed. And when they protested to the trail bosses, they got guns stuck under their noses. Lucky it wasn't worse. "It will be," another added, raising his voice against the puff and grind of the slowing train. "Man down near the bridge been warned to get out of the country. Herd law don't do us no good. They got the county on officials on their side."” <i>SGM</i> p. 30</p> <p>“John Cozad nodded as the step was put down for passengers, and , reaching a hand around for their calloused clasps, promised to do what he could as soon as</p>
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<p>Along the Platte. A real summer resort in the making. Full of fish! We'll have a bridge soon for the furtherance of commerce! Welcome brother Traber. Welcome Pearson! Welcome Claypool, welcome Haskell, welcome all! A new Canaan on the plains!"</p> <p>Traber: "Glad to be here. I couldn't let you have all the fun."</p> <p>Johnny: "Where are the ponies you bought us?"</p>	<p>he got his colony in. "By running the elections the courthouse gang can keep right on in office unless we throw them out." <i>SGM</i> p. 30-31</p> <p>"Watch for the sign of the hundredth meridian as we pass it. All around you here is the winter-fertilized ground of our new commonwealth." <i>SGM</i> p. 48</p> <p>"pointing the buggy whip, he showed the fine hay bottoms and the beauties of the Platte, full of fish, a real resort spot for summer boating and bathing, winter skating." <i>SGM</i> p. 58</p> <p>"This New Canaan of the West," as one minister called it from his pulpit." <i>SGM</i> p. 30</p> <p>Theresa's brother, solid, square-built Traber Gatewood, stepped off the westbound train. "I couldn't let you have all the fun," <i>SGM</i> p. 38</p>
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<p>Robert: “Where are the Buffalo? Where are the Indians?”</p> <p>Cozad: “You’ll see them soon enough. Real Sioux, real Pawnee. And you can ride Nell and Bonnie in the morning.”</p> <p>Robert: “Look at the buffalo I drew, father!”</p> <p>Cozad: “That’s very fine, son, thought wait til you’ve seen a real one.”</p> <p>New Settler 1: “Look how well it all grew back since that prairie fire they had last summer!”</p> <p>New Settler 2: “I heard they got grasshoppers in Colorado.”</p> <p>Cozad: “We’ve got a vat of homegrown pinto beans right here down the line for</p>	<p>“There were half a dozen horses too, including a spotted pony for Robert, and saddles for them all.” <i>SGM</i> p. 22</p> <p>“During the winter the Cozad boys hopefully gathered a good-sized collection of material, mostly pictures of the Great Platte Valley, as their father called it, including Indians, buffaloes, covered wagons, trail herds, and gunmen, lots of gunmen.” <i>SGM</i> p. 16</p> <p>“Then she (Theresa Cozad) recalled the report of a great prairie fire earlier in the spring.” <i>SGM</i> p. 19</p> <p>“The home newspapers had a little story about grasshoppers in eastern Colorado too, but that didn't interest the boys as much as the one about Canada Bill, the rube gambler their father knew so well.” <i>SGM</i> p. 67</p> <p>“Grew them pintos right here on the place, folks.” In the tub was a great rib</p>
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<p>everyone and a fine standing rib roast. Welcome I say.”</p> <p>Sanderson: “That’s a real buffalo roast. Home grown just different. We staked it out on a bed of coals just like the Indians do.”</p> <p>Sanderson: “Say, ma’am, maybe you ought to try to talk Mister Cozad out of his big plans. You got two fine boys to think about.”</p> <p>Theresa: “You do not think that loyalty to your employers is part of your duty? My husband is the railroad’s largest land buyer.”</p> <p>Robert: “What happend to your hand father?”</p> <p>Cozad: “Seventeen Blackfoots ran me up a box canyon last night...”</p> <p>Robert: “That’s Jim Bridger’s story! You told it to us yourself last winter!”</p>	<p>roast of fat buffalo. "Home grown too, but a little farther out," Costin added.</p> <p>"Roasted Like the Indians do, staked over a bead of coals."” <i>SGM</i> p. 49</p> <p>““Maybe you ought to try to talk Mr. Cozad out of it," the station agent told her. "You got two fine boys to think about." Theresa Cozad considered the red-bearded little man. "You do not think that loyalty to your employers is part of your duty? My husband is the railroad's largest land buyer."” <i>SGM</i> p. 39</p> <p>“So in the morning he met the concerned and uneasy faces with an obviously exaggerated story, a tall tale.</p> <p>"Seventeen Blackfoots ran me up a box canyon last night." The sons hooted.</p> <p>"That's Jim Bridger's story! You told it</p>
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<p>Cozad: "Well, well, maybe I did! Let's get you boys something to eat!"</p> <p>Cowboy 1: "You Cozad the gambler? We hear you're honing for a game!"</p> <p>Cozad: "Game?"</p> <p>Cowboy 2: "Stud, draw, anything. Name your poison."</p> <p>Cozad: "Gentlemen, I never carry such business into my home."</p> <p>Cowboys 1&2: "We're staked to make it worth your while."</p> <p>Cozad: "No staking reaches that high. Here I deal in land! Good day, gentlemen."</p>	<p>to us yourself last winter!" So he had, the father admitted, making it sound doubly rueful, as he unfolded his napkin, touched it delicately to his bruised lip, and then poured the syrup on each stack of pancakes and handed the plate to the boys." <i>SGM</i> p. 37</p> <p>"He took them to where John Cozad was writing letters in the shade of his umbrella table. "We hear you're honing for a game," the leader of the men said. "Game?" "Stud, draw, anything. Name your poison." John Cozad acknowledged their offer with a little bow from his chair. "Gentlemen, I never Carry such business into my home." "We're staked to make it worth your time." "No staking reaches that high," John Cozad told them, and settled himself back to his</p>
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<p>1.4</p> <p>Secretary: "Mister Lee, Mister Henri has just returned."</p> <p>Lee: "Mister Henri, a pleasure!"</p> <p>Henri: "The same, Mister Lee! Father!"</p> <p>Lee: "Son! Good to see you! Your mother sends her love, and here I am, you see, ready to be immortalized!"</p> <p>Henri: "Your throne awaits! Good, good, now just a little to the left and up, good, good, and I'll get started. This is just a sketch at first, you know."</p> <p>Lee: "That lad there has something of the look of you as a boy."</p> <p>Henri: "Does he? I found him when I was in California."</p> <p>Lee: "California, eh? Dangerous country in my day."</p> <p>Henri: "Still is, in some ways. But people think painters are harmless.</p>	<p>work. "Here I deal in land."” <i>SGM</i> p. 25-26</p> <p>The greetings are created by the librettist.</p> <p>“Yet as Robert sketched in the first rapid outlines of the gaunt face he found it still very much like the one in the Brady photograph made almost thirty years ago, so much like it that the resemblance to anyone knowing John Cozad could not have escaped detection.” <i>SGM</i> p. 319</p> <p>“But not Richard H. Lee had to settle himself in his chair with some appearance of comfort while the artist in Robert considered him not as his father but as a subject for his brush.” <i>SGM</i> p. 318</p>
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<p>You're going to have to keep your chin up, Father!"</p> <p>Lee: "Sorry, son. Not used to not moving. Do you remember that time you drew that man with the scar from a grizzly?"</p> <p>Henri: "He SAID it was a scar from a grizzly! Do you remember when that team of broncos got stuck in the river mud?"</p> <p>Lee: "No, son, I must have been off on business."</p> <p>Henri: "Or the time that train car with the thousands of goldfish went into the river?"</p> <p>Lee: "No, son, nor that, but it must have been a fine sight."</p> <p>Henri: "Well, you must remember the that wounded Pawnee! It's a good thing Uncle Traver was a dentist, to pull that bullet right out."</p>	<p>"So he tried California but the dampness of San Francisco only aggravated the disease (consumption)" <i>SGM</i> p. 285</p> <p>"Robert made his first sketch since last fall - in marking pencil on stiff rawhide - of an old trapper, the wild hair over his shoulders mixed with the dirty gray beard, a great grizzly-bear scar down over one eye. At least the man said it was made by a grizzly." <i>SGM</i> p. 117</p> <p>"A roadmaster out inspecting the tracks had just been over it when a train came through with a car of open tanks full of live fish... The bridge pilings came undone and dropped the engine and the fish into the river, drowning the man." <i>SGM</i> p. 23</p> <p>"Traber Gatewood, a dentist, was an easy-laughing man, and he laughed now." <i>SGM</i> p. 38</p>
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<p>Lee: “I heard of it, but I was gone for that adventure too: pressing business.”</p> <p>Henri: “Well, you remember the grasshoppers...”</p> <p>Lee: “Yes, I remember the grasshoppers!”</p> <p>Henri: “What were the signs there, in that landscape? What were the signs in the air? How were we to know what we saw, what we didn’t see? If I knew what I saw, I could paint it, I could understand it. This sketch is no good at all! I can’t get at him! How much do I even know this man, my father? How much do I really know him? The light is right, but there’s a darkness in my vision.”</p> <p>Lee: “What if this painting turns out to be no good? What if Theresa is displeased, or I am? How much do I even know this man, my son? How</p>	<p>“Morning came, gray and hopeless, with the sky still darkened by the clouds of grasshoppers passing overhead and still falling, but it didn't matter much now. Everything was eaten bare, even the dead sunflowers Robert Cozad had whipped off with his willow switch yesterday.” <i>SGM</i> p. 73</p> <p>“What were the signs in that landscape, in the air, in the motion, in our companionship, that so excited our imagination and made us so happy? If we only knew what were those signs we could paint that county, could paint what it was to us.” “Somehow, things, places overlapped. Memories carried into each other.” <i>AS</i> p. 15</p> <p>“But something in his father's face as the man talked seemed to disturb Robert about his sketching. He squinted</p>
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<p>much do I really know him? The place is right, but there's a darkness in my mind."</p> <p>Henri and Lee: "What were the signs in that air? We do not remember, all things overlapped, memories into memories."</p> <p>Henri: "Please, father, do keep our chin up. That's better."</p> <p>1.5</p> <p>Robert: "Look at the knight I drew, Mother! I put rattler tails on his helmet!"</p> <p>Theresa: "Very nice, son. I don't think they had rattlesnakes in old England, though!"</p> <p>Robert: "What is that cloud down low in the west?"</p> <p>Theresa: "A storm, I guess. And I had wanted to leave the laundry out all day to dry..."</p>	<p>critically at the canvas, not looking at the sitter." <i>SGM</i> p. 321</p> <p>This is previous reference to <i>The Art Spirit</i></p> <p>"That evening Robert drew a page of pictures with his blue crayon. It was a string of plumed knights riding spotted horses like his new pony, but with rattles in their helmets instead of feather plumes." <i>SGM</i> p. 34-35</p> <p>"I hear that up on the Niobrara River the hoppers are so thick they're damming the whole 300-foot-deep canyon, dropping pebbles in, to flood the</p>
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<p>Traber: “That better not be grasshoppers, Theresa. I hear they’ve been hatching in droves on the Niobrara!”</p> <p>Pearson: “If they come, there won’t be anything left by the morning. Dear God, they’re coming closer.”</p> <p>Johnny: “I must take care of the ponies; they’ll be frightened!”</p> <p>Cozad: “Theresa, my hat, my cane! Pressing business: I’ll be back as soon as I can. Cursed things: there won’t be anything left by the morning.”</p> <p>Townfolk: “There’s nothing left.”</p> <p>Sanderson: “Missus Cozad! Missus Cozad! A telegram just came through for you ma’am!”</p> <p>Theresa: “Listen everyone! Listen! Tell everybody hold fast stop railroad has promised haul relief goods to grasshopper regions stop employment</p>	<p>country and grow their own green stuff”</p> <p><i>SGM</i> p. 122</p> <p>“Robert couldn't stand it, with the hoppers still falling like hail all around. He threw a slicker over his head and bolted out toward the little pasture to comfort his calico pony and the other horses too, all running in wild circles along the pole fence” <i>SGM</i> p. 72</p> <p>“By eleven o'clock Sanderson came running through the darkness with the yellowish sheet of a telegram. It was from Mr. Cozad, he said, and addressed to Mrs. Cozad, the Gatewoods, Dave Claypool, and all the rest of the colony: Tell everybody hold fast stop railroad promised to haul relief goods free to drouth and</p>
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<p>for all in great local improvement stop John J. Cozad." Well!"</p> <p>Sanderson: "Well maybe"</p> <p>Townfolk: "We do not live, we only stay. We are too poor to go away."</p> <p>Sanderson: "All this country's a bare a a Pawnee papoose's bottom."</p> <p>Theresa: "Well, at least the cattlemen won't range here now: there's nothing to graze on. But we must have faith in Mister Cozad!"</p> <p>1.6</p> <p>Robert: "See mother, look, I drew the passenger pigeons! Poor pigeons..."</p> <p>Theresa: "Yes, dear, but not just now..."</p>	<p>grasshopper regions stop I have a great plan for employment for everybody in great local improvement. John J. Cozad" <i>SGM</i> p. 72-73</p> <p>"Many left, if they could get out of the country, seeing no humor in the parodies on "Rock of Ages" or on "Beulah Land": We do not live, we only stay, we are too poor to get away." <i>SGM</i> p. 109-110</p> <p>"Now it didn't matter, with the whole region as bare as the bottom of a Pawnee papoose." <i>SGM</i> p. 84</p> <p>"Their father had written a little about one story in the paper, the great flight of passenger pigeons, dark as storm clouds over Ohio and now up in Michigan, dropping on the crops, cleaning them out slick. The farmers tried guns, traps, nets, and poison, and even built fires to start them flying again. Robert thought</p>
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<p>Cozad: "Fellow citizens I have decided to bridge the Platte: a grand project for our little republic here on the plains! Better than the one in Plum Creek! I will employ every hand who wants work. I shall start the bridge tomorrow."</p> <p>Pearson: "What the hell for? Grasshopper got no trouble crossing!"</p> <p>Cozad: "I will not have my people starving, and this bridge will be a boon to commerce. The pilings are being delivered by rail: Brother Traber, we'll</p>	<p>about the birds, hoping they would not come here too, pitying them. He begged a strip of wrapping paper from his grandmother for a long picture, showing the pigeons coming, settling, eating, the farmers hurrying out, their wives with calico skirts flying, and the children and dogs while the hungry pigeons were eating and eating." <i>SGM</i> p. 84</p> <p>"I've decided to bridge the Platte," he announced, speaking with difficulty in the jaw brace, standing dramatically against the light of the early sun outside the doorway. "I shall start the bridge tomorrow." "A bridge, Mr. Cozad?" one of the men spoke up. "What the hell for? The grasshoppers got no trouble crossing." But the town colonizer ignored the interruption. "It will encourage those over south to stay and</p>
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<p>need men to plow, cut, and haul the sod.”</p> <p>Pearson: “We do not live, we only stay. We are too poor to get away.”</p> <p>1.7</p> <p>Sanderson: “So the first grand payday for the bridge!”</p> <p>Traber: “Yes, Brother Cozad has just returned, he said with a surprise for everyone.” <i>Cozad enters from the saloon door with a large leather bag in his hands. He silently dumps its contents into the wheelbarrow.</i></p> <p>Traber: “Line up, please, gentlemen, to receive your first month’s pay.</p> <p>Atkinson: 28 days, 21 dollars: thank you for your service. Next! Let’s see, Young, 24 days, 18 dollars. Claypool, 31 days 22 dollars and 50 cents. McIntyre: 28 days, 21 dollars.”</p>	<p>bring their business here, instead of going to the Plum Creek bridge.</p> <p>Furthermore, I won't have any of my colony needy, starving.” SGM p. 80</p> <p>“We do not live, we only stay, we are too poor to get away.” SGM p. 109-110</p> <p>“Look at the boys! - working like nailers. Anything except what they ought to be doing, ” he complained, and went back to add up the men's time for their first payday... He got out, threw the lines to Robert, and went to dump the contents of a big leather pouch into an empty wheelbarrow - silver and a scattering of gold pieces rattling against the metal of the barrow, the greenbacks falling like wilted leaves.” SGM p. 89</p> <p>“But they took their pay and stepped aside, one after the other, until one man, leading his lathered team, caught sight</p>
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<p>Pearson: “The Goddamned Copperhead showoff!”</p> <p>Cozad: “Brother Traber, perhaps you would do the honors? Ingrates! They would have starved without me!”</p> <p>Traber: “Griffith: 30 days, 21 dollars and 75 cents. Thank you for your service, sir. Handley, 28 days, 21 dollars. Matthews: 24 days, 18 dollars. O’Neil: 28 days, 21 dollars. Schooley: 21 days, 17 dollars. Russell: 29 days, 21 dollars and 25 cents. Costin: 28 days, 21 dollars. Thank you, gentlemen, thank you all.”</p> <p>Townfolk: “What good is the gold now? The bridge is coming, but nothing is growing.”</p>	<p>of the pile in the wheelbarrow.” <i>SGM</i> p. 89</p> <p>The list of names come from prominent figures in town in the Sandoz discussed below.</p> <p>““Why, the goddamn Copperhead show-off!” he shouted.” <i>SGM</i> p. 89</p> <p>Original text from the librettist</p> <p>These names come from the Sanoz and were men about town. Atkinson was one of the original settlers. Young was a teacher. Claypools were the niece and nephew of Cozad. McIntyre was a distant relative of Theresa. Griffith was a carpenter. Handley ran a livery stable. Matthews was a buffalo hunter. O’Neil worked at the livery. Schooley was a foreman. Russell ran the grocery. Costin was also a foreman.</p>
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<p>Theresa: "I fear we will have to go. I fear this will be like Ohio."</p> <p>Disgruntled Citizens: "All that loose money! He thinks he's a king! He forgets what happens to kings in this country!"</p> <p>Cozad: "I will make this town a site of greatness even if I have to do it all by myself!"</p> <p>Robert: "I am going to have to grow up very fast."</p> <p>1.8</p> <p>Secretary: "Oh, Mister Henri, not to worry, but Mister Lee has had to go to New Jersey on pressing business. He says he will contact you to arrange the next sitting."</p> <p>Henri: "Thank you. That's as well. That's just as well for now. Just not right, just not right. To paint a man is to know him. And yet my own father: and I cannot seem to know him, to get at him,</p>	<p>A reference to the Sanoz about the town of Cozaddale <i>Son of the Gamblin' Man</i> p. 6</p> <p>These lines were created by the librettist based on the tone of the town set by Sandoz.</p> <p>Original</p> <p>"I must grow up fast," the son told himself." <i>SGM</i> p. 120</p> <p>The Secretary's lines are original.</p> <p>"He squinted critically at the canvas, not looking at the sitter." <i>SGM</i> p. 321</p> <p>Previous reference to <i>The Art Spirit</i>.</p> <p>"If one could but record the vision of these moments by some sort of sign! It was in this hope that the arts were invented. Signposts on the way to what</p>
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<p>to see him as he is, as he was. The planes of the face, the heart of the man... What were the signs in the air? What were the signs in the air? There are moments in a day, in our lives, when we see beyond the usual. We reach into reality. Such are our moments of happiness, such are our moments of wisdom. There is a song going on within us, a song to which we listen, a song from within. We live in the memory of that song: those moments of vision, where do they go? If I knew what I saw, I could paint it. The Planes of the face, the hear of the man. I love the tools that are made by human hands: they are not MADE beautiful, they ARE beautiful, so simple and plain. It is harder to SEE than to say or paint. The planes of the face, the heart of the man...</p>	<p>may be. Signposts toward greater knowledge." <i>AS</i> p. 12</p> <p>"There are moments in our lives, there are moments in a day, when we seem to see beyond the usual - become clairvoyant. We then reach into reality. Such are the moments of our greatest happiness. Such are the moments of our greatest wisdom.</p> <p>It is in the nature of all people to have these experiences; but in our time and under the conditions of our lives, it is only a rare few who are able to continue in the experience and find expression for it." <i>AS</i> p. 22</p> <p>"I love the tools made for mechanics. I stop at the windows of hardware stores. If only I could find an excuse to buy many more of them than I have already bought on the mere pretense that I</p>
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<p>There is a color over all colors which unites them. At sunset the sun glows, over grass, and houses, and people. Over all the sunset glow. I need to remember those days more fully: if I can remember, I can get to the heart of it all. The light is right but there's a darkness in my vision."</p> <p>2.1</p> <p>Robert: "Look at this, mother, it's when the Sioux tried to kill that Pawnee man; and here's a Pawnee papoose. I wish I could have a papoose!"</p> <p>Theresa: "That's lovely darling."</p> <p>O'Dell: "I come looking for Kitty: I want John J. Cozad."</p>	<p>might have use for them! They are so beautiful, so simple and plain and straight to their meaning. There is no "Art" about them, they have not been made beautiful, they are beautiful." AS p. 29</p> <p>"It is harder to see than it is to express" AS p. 50</p> <p>"There is a color over all colors which unites them and which is more important than the individual colors. At sunset the sun glows. The color of the grasses; figures and houses may be lighter or darker or different, but over each there is the sunset glow." AS p. 50</p> <p>"There had been a shooting here between a few Pawnees and some Sioux." AS p. 22</p>
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<p>Cozad: “Well O’Dell, how do you do sir?”</p> <p>O’Dell: “I come for Kitty! Last time I shot the wrong man, but now I’ve got you, so trot Kitty out!”</p> <p>Cozad: “Kitty? Which one? I seem to recall several.”</p> <p>O’Dell: “Now don’t you try to mushmouth me! You were with Kitty twenty years ago!”</p> <p>Cozad: “You must excuse me, I was waiting for my wife.”</p> <p>O’Dell: “I got the letters you wrote her!”</p> <p>Cozad: “Here’s King O’Dell, with tales of my shady past! Tell away!”</p> <p>O’Dell: “Here they are and they show why... well, here they are. Uh, I heard</p>	<p>The O’Dell interaction is a compilation of two events in the Sandoz in chapters 7 and 9.</p> <p>““Well, O’Dell how do you do, sir!” “I come for Kitty,” the man announced loudly. “Last time I shot the wrong man. Now I got you, so trot Kitty out-” “Kitty? Which Kitty? I seem to recall several.”“By God, Cozad, don’t you mush-mouth me!” O’Dell shouted, jerking a pistol from his pocket. “I saw Kitty with you - last thing, twenty years ago - and me giving you, a scart kid, a start!”” <i>SGM</i> p. 99</p> <p>““Pandon me,” he said, with a bow. “I have been waiting for my wife.”” <i>SGM</i> p. 100</p> <p>““King O’Dell comes to me with what he claims is part of my shady past and I’ve</p>
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<p>that Kitty hung herself with one of your own neckties! I want \$25,000 for them letters: It's only fair, he lost my Kitty for me."</p> <p>Theresa: "May I see them?"</p> <p>Cozad: "He wants \$25,000. Open them my dear! Let's see if they are worth the money! As I said, I was waiting for my wife. Good day sir."</p> <p>2.2</p>	<p>gathered you all to hear him tell it."" <i>SGM</i> p. 119</p> <p>"Yes, his Kitty hung herself, and with one of John Cozad's neckties..."I got the letters you wrote to Kitty." "That's a double-damned lie. I never wrote her a scratch!" The man unbuttoned his coat and took out a package tied with a faded claret-red ribbon. "I want \$25,000 for the lot," he said, tapping the bundle on the desk." <i>SGM</i> p. 118</p> <p>"There was a small sound from Theresa, but she recovered herself. "May I see them?" she asked... "I got to have money for the stuff. They lost my Kitty for me-" "He wants \$25,000-" John Cozad said, stroking his goatee gently..."Open it my dear," he suggested speaking softly... stack of paper, sheets of newspaper, cut and folded the size of letters." <i>SGM</i> p. 120</p>
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Julia: “I remember now where that J. in John J. comes from. His father told me it was for General Jackson. It was to show he would do great things. We all believed that then, at the wedding.”

Theresa: “We all believe it now! The morning I was married, my mother gave me her Bible with the family tree so far. My father said where I was going was where all of the new things are. My little sister picked violets for my hair, but it was my darling aunt who gave me this prayer: “A woman’s finest destiny is to marry a good man.” So we said our vows, signed the book and drove away. Here is my mother’s Bible, with the family tree so far. My father was right that here is where all new things are. My sister’s violets long ago dropped from my hair. My aunt is gone now, in God’s eyes, who knows where, But a

This aria is original text by the librettist

woman's finest destiny is to marry a good man. My mother is here to watch Our growing family tree so far. My father has come here with me to where all of the new things are. My little sister was laid to rest with violents in her hair. But my aunt's blessing still rings in this prairie air: "A woman's finest destiny is to marry a good man" And so we took our vows, signed the book, and drove away."

Cozad: "Theresa, my cane, my hat! My jewel, I will be back soon as I can! Pressing business!"

Theresa: "And so we took our vows, signed the book, and drove away."

2.3

Dealer: "Say! Isn't that one of Cozad's kids?"

Pearson: "It's okay: he's just here to watch."

Introduction by the librettist.

<p>Dealer: "All welcome. As you know, Master Cozad, faro's a mighty easy game. You just lay down chips and see what card's under the stack. You see? Place your bets!"</p> <p>Boy: "Woo! I won!"</p> <p>Dealer: "There you are Master Cozad. Complimentary. Well then let's make it a loan of a twenty."</p> <p>Robert: "We are not permitted to take gifts of money or to borrow sir."</p> <p>Pearson: "Let me have it. I owe Robert's father some rent for my place. Here's the rent boy."</p> <p>Robert: "Thank you."</p>	<p>"Welcome" the dealer said, and motioned Robert up closer, to see better. "As you know, Master Cozad, faro's a mighty easy game. All you got to do is pick the right card, win or lose, any way you bet it." <i>SGM</i> p. 104</p> <p>"The dealer offered him a stack of hips. "Complimentary," he said. And when the boy couldn't take them, he was offered the loan of a twenty-dollar bill. Embarrassed further by this generosity, and by his brother urging him to leave, Robert managed to say that they were not permitted to accept gifts of money or to borrow." There was talk and sign-making over the boy's head until the livery-stable keeper reached out for the bill. "Let me have it," he said. "I owe Robert's father some back rent on the place-" He folded the bill down small and slipped it into the boy's breast</p>
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<p>Pearson: "There's the lookout! Get ready, men!"</p> <p>Cozad: "So you pull a gun on me on my own premises, you broken-down would be jackleg!"</p> <p>"Deputy": "So Mister Cozad, you not only run a gambling hell for the young, but you also put counterfeit money into the hands of your own innocent kid!"</p> <p>Cozad: "Where did you get this?"</p> <p>Dealer: "From his pocket!"</p> <p>Robert: "He gave it to me for the rent!"</p> <p>Dealer: "He's a goddamn liar! Just like his old man! Put the cuffs on Cozad!"</p> <p>Pearson: "String him up! String him up!"</p>	<p>pocket. "The rent," he said...he said "Thank you" to the man and remained at the table..."Three, four coming!" <i>SGM</i> p. 105-106</p> <p>"So you pull a gun on me on my own premises, you broken-down would be jackleg!" <i>Son of the Gamblin' Man</i> p. 106</p> <p>"So Mister Cozad, you not only run a gambling hell for the young, but you also put counterfeit money into the hands of your own innocent kid to-"</p> <p>"Counterfeit?" the colonizer demanded, and after a glance at the bill he ignored the man as though he and his gun were not there. "Where did you get this?" he demanded of his son, his voice filling all the loft. And to the dealer's shout, "From his pocket!" all Robert could do</p>
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<p>Cozad: “Well, well, gentlemen! So you have gathered for a little game? I fear I have discomposed your outing at faro. No matter: gather round, we shall continue the proceedings.”</p> <p>Traber: “Nobody move!”</p> <p>Sanderson: “Stay Where you are!”</p> <p>Cozad: “As I suspected: this badge is a fake. Frauds! Imposters!”</p> <p>Sanderson: “Frauds alright. I telegraphed over to Plum Creek, and the sheriff has no deputies out.”</p> <p>Cozad: “Son, we will return home to your mother.”</p> <p>Robert: “Now I know how to make \$50,000! I didn’t mean it. I didn’t mean it.”</p>	<p>was motion to the stablekeeper. "I wouldn't take it from the card man, and so he loaned it to Mr. Joe, and he gave it to me on the rent-" "He's a damn liar, like his old man!" the dealer shouted. "Put the cuffs on Cozad! String him up!"</p> <p><i>SGM p. 107</i></p> <p>“Ah, gentlemen," the man of faro said genially, rubbing his palms together as becomes a good host. "So you gave gathered for a little game?" <i>SGM p. 107</i></p> <p>"Frauds! All frauds and impostors!" he roared, and motioned toward Traber and the double-barrel buck gun in his hands, the agent behind him holding up a telegram. "He's a fraud alright," Sanderson said. "I telegraphed Sheriff</p>
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<p>Cozad: “No son of mine will ever be a gambler! Never! My son will never be a gambler. The game was crooked to catch him. The game was crooked to catch me! I must guard us all and prevail”</p> <p>Robert: “I didn’t mean it, I truly didn’t mean it! The game was crooked to catch me. The game was crooked to catch him! I must grow up very fast. Those men were up to no good. My father taught them all a lesson. Did they teach me a lesson?”</p> <p>Cozad: “Those men are low schemers. Rogues, upstarts everywhere! I’ll lesson them until they squeal for peace. I must guard us all and prevail. If it weren’t for all this pressing business...”</p> <p>2.4</p> <p>Traber: “Brother Cozad!”</p> <p>Cozad: “What news Brother Traber?”</p>	<p>Jamease at Plum. He has no deputies out”” <i>SGM</i> p. 107-108</p> <p>““Now I know, now I know, how to make \$50,000-”...”I didn't mean it-" he started to say, trying to keep his voice from whimpering, but his father grabbed him by the neck and marched him across to the family stable, and in at the door.</p> <p>There he set the lantern down and took the yellow buggy whip from the socket. Once, twice, three times he cut it hard across his son's stockinged legs, until the boy was gasping to keep from crying out and then crumpled sobbing into the straw.” <i>SGM</i> p. 108</p> <p>The librettist stated in an interview that the “Pressing business” is an obfuscation of Cozad’s gambling.</p>
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<p>Traber: “Bad news. That petition I warned you about: it passed. The town’s new name is Gould. It’s not Cozad anymore.”</p> <p>Cozad: “Gould? Jay Gould? Why he’s no better than Boss Tweed. He’s a crook.”</p> <p>Traber: “Well maybe, but he owns all the railroad from KC to the coast and so they think he’ll have their backs.”</p> <p>Cozad: “I have their backs! I always have! Ingrates! So it is my fault, I see, when there are prairie fires, and locusts, and cattle out of range! I have half a mind to leave them to their just desserts! I demand you leave my property alone. In fact I demand you hand over that sign this moment.”</p> <p>Pearson: “This ain’t your town anymore, Mister Cozad. This town is now Gould.”</p> <p>Cozad: “This town may not be mine, but</p>	<p>This text is original by the librettist.</p> <p>The petition is a large point in the Sandoz, and is summarized here by the librettist.</p> <p>“The name of the post office had been changed by petition from Cozad to Gould. "Gould? -Why Gould?" an Eastern landswecker asked. "I'm hoping that Jay Gould will be pleased enough to help the town get ahead more than all the Cozads put together been able. Might even use railroad influence to get the county seat moved to the town named for him."” <i>SGM</i> p. 273-274</p>
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<p>I own this property, and I own this sign.”</p> <p>Pearson: “Well take it then. You know you owe me money for the work I did on the bridge, so I think you don’t really own half what you think you do.”</p> <p>Cozad: “You were paid long ago, and your stock has eaten a thousand times more in my hay flats. If you say otherwise, you’re a liar.”</p> <p>Pearson: “Don’t call me a liar.”</p> <p>Cozad: “If you claim I owe you money, you are a damned liar!</p> <p>Run for a doctor quick!”</p> <p>Theresa: “John, oh my dear, what has happened? What have you done?”</p> <p>Cozad: “I must hurry: that’s a lynch mob in the making.”</p> <p>Robert: “You can’t go from the station here. They’re watching and some of them have ropes.”</p>	<p>“A new sign over the post-office door, a new piece of pine board with black stove-polish lettering: GOULD P.O.” <i>SGM</i> p. 275</p> <p>““Welcome to the city of Gould!” the men called to him” <i>SGM</i> p. 276</p> <p>“Then Al Pearson began to shout that Cozad owed him money for the work he had done long ago. “You know you were paid long ago, and on top of that your stock has eaten a thousand times the amount in my hay flats. If you deny this you are a liar.” “Don’t call me a liar!” Pearson shouted, his red face suddenly swelling. “If you claim that I owe you money you are a damned liar!”” <i>SGM</i> p. 291</p> <p>“Run for a doctor” <i>SGM</i> p. 291</p>
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Johnny: "Uncle Traber has gone to get the tickets from the station. I don't think they'll try to take the place with women here."

Cozad: "First a telegram to the sheriff at Plum Creek. Take this down Johnny. I John J. Cozad acted in self defense and will deliver myself to the authorities at the proper time, but do not intend to hand myself over to those after my blood."

"Oh, John! Oh, my dear, what have you done?" "I must hurry. They'll mob me, lynch me," *Son of the Gamblin' Man* p. 292

"you can't go this way now," motioning off along the alley with his chin, to where men were already peering, around corners. "They have ropes, I suspect. I don't think they would try to take this place with women here." *SGM* p. 292

"Now," Robert said, matter-of-factly, "first we have to send a telegram." Oh, yes, the father agreed, nodding his head vaguely. Yes, perhaps a telegram to the county judge - no, that was Plum Creek. Better to the district attorney or somebody at Lincoln, maybe. Or - or - Robert looked at his father in sorrow, seeing the hesitation, knowing there must be action now. He would send a

<p>2.5</p> <p>Cozad: “Theresa, my hat, my cane.”</p> <p>Traber: “We get to the south railroad on foot, and then you have all the tickets.”</p> <p>Cozad: “Yup. Four different envelopes. Remember the plan: we will all meet up by and by. Theresa, remember to sew your jewelry into your clothes: these bad men might stop at nothing. Boys, take care of your mother.”</p> <p>Robert: “Yes sir.”</p> <p>Johnny: “Yes, Father.”</p> <p>Cozad: “From henceforth, I shall be known as Richard H. Lee. It is a family name and he was related to General Lee. It augurs to be a good name. Out of</p>	<p>telegram to the sheriff, yes, to Plum Creek. A brief telegram but stating his father's case...and finally the shot in self-defense and the wounded man's consciousness. Also that he, John J. Cozad, would deliver himself into proper and effective custody in time for the trial but that he did not propose to be taken by a mob and given the customary Plum Creek rope.” <i>SGM</i> p. 292-293</p> <p>Line by the librettist.</p> <p>“His tickets were in four blank envelopes.”</p> <p>“Theresa worked for hours lining her widest underskirts with currency and sewing gold pieces into a pouch to fit between her breasts.” <i>SGM</i> p. 313-314</p>
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<p>a tight spot again. We've made a handsome profit here. It's time to conquer the East! The Hundredth Meridian long may it prosper, but without me. Lucky Cozad. Lucky John J."</p> <p>2.6</p> <p>Henri: "I've been remembering things, Father, both good and bad. I remember the night you left. That night, what did you do about your mustache?"</p> <p>Lee: "Nothing til Iowa. Then I cut it up rough. I was not going to leave my face bare! I put on a checkered coat there and no one bothered me all the way to</p>	<p>"To avoid extradition, his father must use another name. Robert's grandfather, Henry Cozad, had selected the name of Jackson from the Stonewall relatives living near his birthplace in Upshur county, Virginia, for the middle name of John Jackson Cozad, so why not use an honored name of the Gatewood region in Kanawah County now- say, Richard H. Lee. He was a relative of General Lee but prominent in his own right back when John Cozad married Theresa Gatewood there." <i>SGM</i> p. 294</p> <p>"But my appearance? I will not bare my chin-" No, not this chin, but he must get</p>
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<p>New Jersey. But I hated to leave you without my guard.”</p> <p>Henri: “Pearson’s condition kept getting worse. Everyone watched us.”</p> <p>Lee: “I am so sorry, son. I am sorry about all the grief I causes your mother and you boys. I truly am.”</p> <p>Henri: “It’s all right, Father. I am glad it all happened as it did, for that boy’s life is my own storehouse. I’ve been seeing it all with a new eye.”</p> <p>Lee: “Well, you do fine work, I see. You’ve got a flair!”</p> <p>Henri: “You’ve got a flair, too, father! The good things get stronger. You know, I always tell my students that a person should paint like one going over the top of a hill, singing.”</p> <p>Lee: “That’s very poetic, son. It seems to me I’ve gone over quite a few hills with a song myself.”</p>	<p>away, John Cozad insisted” <i>Son of the Gamblin’ Man</i> p. 294</p> <p>“He got a checkered jacket too, instead of the frock coat, and clipped his mustache and neate goatee into ragged edges with the tiny folding card shears he carried in his cufflinks.” <i>SGM</i> p. 321</p> <p>“He’s (Pearson) not dying from the wound, but from the infection... He (John) ought to get away from the worry and anger of the town, away from the worsening reports of Alf Pearson's condition" <i>SGM</i> p. 312</p> <p>These lines of apology are creations of the librettist.</p>
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<p>Henri: “So you have, father, so you have. Art is not in pictures alone. Never change the course of a line unless you have to. Never change the shape of a form unless you have to. Never change the tone of a color, unless you have to. But when you have to, every change must count and count strong. All the past up to a moment ago is our legacy. All the past is our own. We have a right to it.”</p> <p>2.7</p> <p>Traber: “It’s bad sister. Pearson died last night. Here’s the paper.”</p> <p>Theresa: “A gambler named Cozad is worth about three hundred thousand dollars; he won it all playing faro and has become so noted a breaker of faro</p>	<p>“He paints like a man going over the top of a hill, singing.” <i>AS</i> p. 63</p> <p>“Art is not in pictures alone. Its place is in everything, as much in one thing as another. It is up to the community as a whole, in conduct, business, government and play.” <i>AS</i> p. 80</p> <p>“Never change the course of a line until you have to. Never change the shape of a form until you have to. Never change the tone of a color, til you have to. If you follow these injunctions intelligently you will practice that great economy which is necessary to expression in your medium. Every change must count and count strong.” <i>AS</i> p. 120</p> <p>“All the past up to a moment ago is your legacy. You have a right to it.” <i>AS</i> p. 53</p>
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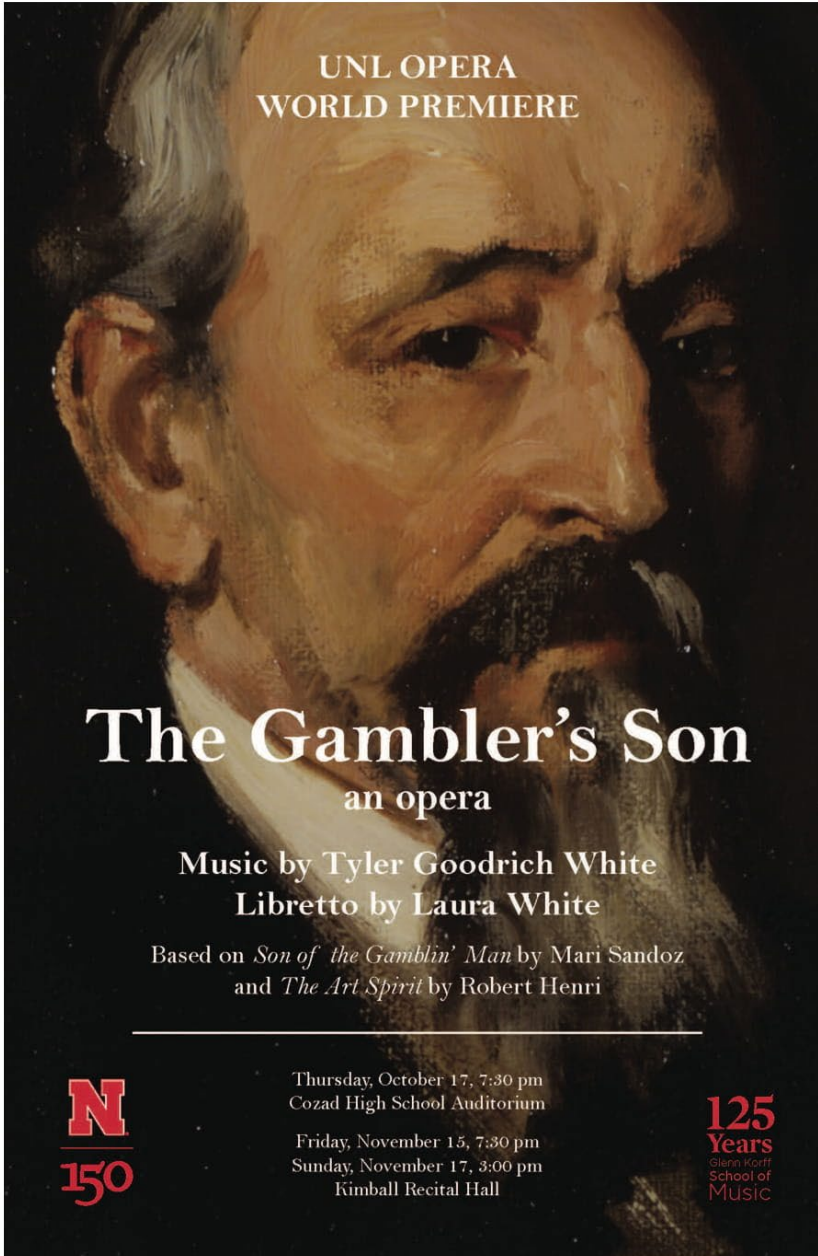
<p>banks he has been barred from all games where he is known. He is now a fugitive from justice. All town lots owned by John J. Cozad are attached for damages to the estate of Alfred Pearson.”</p> <p>So that’s that. They don’t know we already sold all the property. It’s time to go.”</p> <p>Julia: “Yes, let’s finish sewing things up in the undershirts, and then we can always use the bodice.”</p> <p>Robert: “I will never see my Nebraska sky again! What have I learned in this light! Sunsets elsewhere, but not here. I am not afraid; I will see other skies. But</p>	<p>“Alfred Pearson had died. So now it was called murder. Once more the newspapers carried items that Robert had to see. One that the State Journal picked up for the December 30 issue seemed to reach everybody: A gambler named Cozad is worth about three hundred thousand dollars; he won it all playing faro and has become so noted a breaker of faro banks he has been barred from all games where he is known. He is now a fugitive from justice and accused of murder. The news was that all town lots owned by John J. Cozad were attached for damages to the estate of Alfred Pearson.” <i>SGM</i> p. 313-314</p> <p>“Before this Theresa Gaetwood Cozad had quietly sold the town property to Hendee of Illinois,” <i>SGM</i> p. 314</p>
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<p>I will never see my Nebraska skies again.”</p> <p>Johnny: “I will never see my Nebraska ponies again. Bonnie and Nell we must go far away. Uncle will take good care of you: he promised. I am not afraid; I will find other things to love. But I will never see my Neberaska ponies again.”</p> <p>Theresa: “I will never see this Nebraska town again. What have I learned in this place? Sunsets and sunrises: can I count my blessings? But I will never see this unhappy town again. We will all be together, seeing other skies. I will find my husband(father), my John, again.”</p> <p>2.8</p> <p>Henri: “Come in, Father. Mother, come right in for the grand unveiling. Father, your hat? Your cane?”</p>	<p>“Then, with Julia Gatewood and Robert to help, Theresa worked for hours lining her widest underskirts with currency and sewing gold pieces into a pouch to fit between her breasts.” <i>SGM</i> p. 314</p> <p>Sandoz mentions the Nebraska sky on multiple occasions:</p> <p>“Then the prairie fires started, pearling the horizon by day, burning the night sky to red and orange.” <i>SGM</i> p. 130</p> <p>“The grocery stores that had been giving credit all spring and summer on cop prospects shut the books when the first gray shimmer of grasshoppers appeared in the sky.” <i>SGM</i> p. 149</p> <p>“What were the signs in that landscape, in the air, in the motion, in our companionship, that so excited our imagination and made us so happy?” <i>AS</i> p. 15</p>
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<p>Lee: “Well, well, perhaps that’s me. Don’t I look a little stern?”</p> <p>Theresa: “You dear, you. I think you look lucky!”</p> <p>Lee: “It’s a real achievement, my boy. You will have to do the beauty in the family next.”</p> <p>Theresa: “No, John, not me!”</p> <p>Henri: “Well, we’ll see. One of the great joys of living is painting it, and seeing it in its full beauty. So we’ll see. There are certain moments in our lives when we see further. When we see the signposts we follow, signposts on the way to what may be. What were the signs in that landscape? What were the signs in that air? How it came to this is a mystery. How were we to know what we saw, what we didn’t see?”</p> <p>Theresa: “There he is, all as he is. I married a good man, and we ran in the</p>	<p>This scene is loosely based on the final chapter in the Sandoz.</p> <p>The lines are original from the librettist.</p> <p>“There are moments in our lives, there are moments in a day, when we seem to see beyond the usual” <i>AS</i> p. 22</p> <p>“If one could but record the vision of these moments by some sort of sign! It was in this hope that the arts were</p>
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<p>dark to be together. The darkness is gone. We are all together, seeing the same skies. What delight, what pain we have in the memory of it all. Memories on memories. We read the signs here in the air. We read the signs here with these skies. But Robert, where's the signature? You always sign your paintings."</p> <p>"No, mother, I haven't signed it yet. I needed to see how you felt."</p> <p>"You have made me as I am my son. My son... my beloved son."</p> <p><i>Henri signs the painting: "Now finally, smiling into his father's eyes, the artist picked up a brush, dipped it into the black, and in the left-hand corner signed the portrait. He did it firmly, as always, Robert Henri, dotting the eye very carefully.</i></p>	<p>invented. Signposts on the way to what may be. Signposts toward greater knowledge." AS p. 12</p> <p>"What were the signs in that landscape, in the air, in the motion, in our companionship, that so excited our imagination and made us so happy?" AS p. 15</p> <p>"What delight we have in the memory of it! What is that memory?" AS p. 15</p> <p>Original lines, but reference Sandoz p. 333</p> <p>"My son, my beloved son," he murmured. Now finally, smiling into his father's eyes, the artist picked up a brush, dipped it into the black, and in the left-hand corner signed the portrait. He did it firmly as always: Robert Henri, dotting the I very carefully. The End"</p> <p>SGM p. 333</p>
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APPENDIX E

COPY OF PROGRAM FROM UNL OPERA'S PRODUCTION OF *THE GAMBLER'S SON*

UNL OPERA
WORLD PREMIERE

The Gambler's Son
an opera

Music by Tyler Goodrich White
Libretto by Laura White

Based on *Son of the Gamblin' Man* by Mari Sandoz
and *The Art Spirit* by Robert Henri

Thursday, October 17, 7:30 pm
Cozad High School Auditorium

Friday, November 15, 7:30 pm
Sunday, November 17, 3:00 pm
Kimball Recital Hall

N
150

125
Years
Glenn Korff
School of
MUSIC

UNL OPERA PRESENTS

THE GAMBLER'S SON

an opera

Music by Tyler Goodrich White

Libretto by Laura White

based on *Son of the Gamblin' Man* by Mari Sandoz
and *The Art Spirit* by Robert Henri

ARTISTIC STAFF

Stage Director, Director of UNL Opera	William Shomos
Conductor/Musical Director	Tyler Goodrich White
Coach, Rehearsal Accompanist	Michael Cotton
Scenic Design	Jill Hibbard
Lighting Design	Kathleen Turner
Costume Design	Jill Hibbard
Fight Choreography	Ian Borden
Rehearsal Accompanists	Michael Cotton, Jeremy Duck

The Gambler's Son was created with the generous support of
Jane Rohman, the Family of Willard Bellamy,
the Family of Ivan and Shirley Paulsen,
the Lincoln Community Foundation,
the UNL Friends of Opera, and the Wilson Foundation.

*The opera is dedicated to
Jane Rohman
by the composer and librettist.*

*CAST***1903, in New York**

Robert Henri's secretary	Emma Thomas
Richard H. Lee (John J. Cozad as an old man)	Trey Meyer
Robert Henri, his son, a noted painter	Matthew Clegg
Mrs. R. H. Lee (Theresa Cozad as an old woman)	Maddy Stark

1870's, in Nebraska

John J. Cozad, a gambler and real estate developer	Patrick McNally
Theresa Gatewood Cozad, Cozad's wife mother of Johnny and Robert	Elaina Matthews
Johnny Cozad, Cozad's eldest son	Cooper Creal
Robert Henry Cozad, Cozad's younger son, Robert Henri as a teenage boy	Hayley Shoemaker
Traber Gatewood, Cozad's brother in law	Matthew Gerhold
Sanderson, the town of Cozad's stationmaster	Michael O'Brien
Alfred Pearson, a struggling farmer and rancher	Nicolas Caberos
King O'Dell, an old acquaintance of Cozad's	Matthew Carter
Julia Gatewood, Theresa's mother	Krista Benesch
Handcar Man, Cowboy, Disgruntled Citizen	Trent Poley
Handcar Man, Cowboy, Disgruntled Citizen	Ryan Wortmann
Settler, Disgruntled Citizen, "Deputy"	Daniel Ikpeama
Settler, Disgruntled Citizen, Dealer	Connor Husa
Settler, Disgruntled Citizen, Lookout	Samuel Chase Kennedy
2 city women	Casey Jo Allen, Regan Hennings

Citizen's Chorus

Casey Jo Allen, Karin Berg, Regan Hennings, Andrea Lock, Calli Mah, Brianna Smith, Edgar Estrada, Jacob Fee, Adam Leshner

Mrs. R. H. Lee (understudy)	Regan Hennings
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UNL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

UNL, November 15, 17

Tyler Goodrich White, director

Rebecca Nederhiser, Kao Zhou, graduate associate conductors

FLUTE & PICCOLOAllison Movesian
Samantha BrownOBOE

Brandy Trucke

CLARINETSeason Cowley
Taeyeong JungBASS CLARINET

Taeyeong Jung

BASSOON

Brock Nutter

HORNEric Linke
Justin MohlingTRUMPETQiwei Li
Katherine SchmidtTROMBONE

Ian Rutherford

TIMPANI ANDPERCUSSIONDietrich Hitt
Josh SpauldingHARP

Sarah Brady

PIANO

Jeremy Duck

VIOLIN IClaudia Holm,
concertmaster
Eva Shvartcer
Sophia Revesz
Lucy Collins
Liam Carroll
Alexandra LarsonVIOLIN IIAnthony Nesland,
principal second
violin
Adrienne Stratton
Patrick Knowles
Richard Xu
Kao Zhou
Ethan HarrisonVIOLAMee-Hwa Roche,
principal
Tori Hartley
Michael Anderson
Grace DowdCELLOBrett Lytle
Sam Stanley
India Enter
Jocelyn MeyerBASSJonah Bennett
Kate Mathews*CHAMBER ENSEMBLE*

Cozad, October 17

Allison Movesian, flute/piccolo
Taeyeong Jung,
clarinet/bass clarinet
Claudia Holm, violin
Brett Lytle, celloLouis Raymond-Kolker,
mallet percussion
Anthony McIntosh, percussion
Jeremy Duck, piano

TECHNICAL STAFF

Technical Director	Jason Hibbard
Stage Manager	Cole Talbert
Master Electrician	Archie Diaz
Costume Coordinator	Stephanie Tolliver
Master Painter	Alexa Axthelm
Public Relations	Brian Reetz
Graphic Designer	Miranda Finn
Supertitles	Jacob Ludwig
Technical advisor for Cozad performance	Kyle Vincent
Photography	Justin Mohling

Costumes provided by Kansas City Costumes
Wigs by Wigboys

SPECIAL THANKS...THE GAMBLER'S SON ON TOUR

As a preview for the November 15 and 17 week-end run in Kimball Recital Hall, UNL Opera is taking this production of *THE GAMBLER'S SON* on the road. And what better location than Cozad, Nebraska, where this wonderful story takes place! This tour to Cozad supports UNL Opera's ongoing mission to bring opera to rural Nebraska.

The tour exists thanks to the generosity of the James C. and Rhonda Seacrest Tour Nebraska Opera Fund, which is dedicated to supporting the production, promotion, travel and other expenses incurred for outreach opera events, both artistic and educational, across Nebraska, especially in rural venues.

Over the past four years, UNL Opera has brought productions of *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, *The Tender Land* and *The Ballad of Baby Doe* to Nebraska audiences in Friend, Ord, Central City, North Platte, Wayne, and Red Cloud.

UNL Opera extends its heartfelt gratitude to Rhonda Seacrest for her astounding generosity, support, and encouragement. Thank you, Rhonda, for the amazing gift you have given to UNL Opera and to the State of Nebraska.

MORE SPECIAL THANKS

UNL Friends of Opera, for a major contribution to the entire *Gambler's Son* project, including the sponsorship of Mid-America Video Images for archival recording of the productions

The Ariel Bybee Endowed Visiting Professor of Opera fund for its sponsorship of Matthew Clegg

Anonymous Donors supporting the Chamber Ensemble for the Cozad Tour

Charles O'Connor, Dean, Hixson-Lied College of Fine and Performing Arts

Dr. Sergio Ruiz, Director, Glenn Korff School of Music

The Voice Area of the Glenn Korff School of Music

Don Burt, for his ever-impactful encouragement of UNL Opera students

FROM THE DIRECTOR

The Gambler's Son, based on actual events, concerns the relationship between John J. Cozad and his son Robert Henry Cozad, who have changed their names to Richard H. Lee and Robert Henri, as a result of the ruinous circumstances that ended their earlier life in Nebraska. Henri has grown into a notable New York City artist and finds himself charged with painting a portrait of his father, a lucky gambling man ever-occupied with "pressing business." The interaction between the two is at first awkward, tense, and distant.

To paint a man is to know him.

Set to a recurring musical motive these words cut to the core of what the opera is about. Henri struggles with the portrait, for in order to capture the right image of his father, he must know who this man really is--no easy task, given the apparent disconnect that characterizes their relationship. It is not enough to see the man sitting in his studio. Robert must understand his father's life through a process of excavating his own memories.

The opera unfolds in a series of flashbacks. Set entirely in the 1903 studio of Robert Henri, the past emerges out of the walls and enters into the artist's space--a visual metaphor for the storehouse of Henri's memories. Through these memories, the artist gradually comes to know who his father truly is--a multi-faceted, complex, conflicted individual with qualities both good and bad. And only with this knowledge can Henri achieve the right course of the line, the right shape of the form, the right tone of the color.

Though very much a true story out of the pages of Nebraska history, the opera nevertheless transcends its local connection and offers a much-needed message for our times. *To paint a man is to know him.* To understand our fellow human beings is to know the road they have journeyed, and, as Henri with his father, to recognize the plurality contained within each other--not to judge, but to understand--to see each other with clarity and light, and like Henri's art, to help "transform the pains of the past into beauty and value."

--William Shomos
Director, UNL Opera

THE CREATORS OF THE OPERA

Tyler Goodrich White, composer

Professor of Composition and Conducting, Director of Orchestras



Tyler Goodrich White has been Director of Orchestras at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln since 1994 and a member of the composition faculty at UNL since 1996; before coming to Nebraska, White led orchestras at Cornell University and Trinity University (Texas). In 2004, he was a guest lecturer in conducting at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, China, and in September 2007 he was named

Best Musical Director at the Waterford International Festival of Light Opera in Waterford, Ireland. Recent seasons have seen additional guest conducting engagements in Mexico, Brazil, and China. He has also been Resident Conductor of Lincoln's Symphony Orchestra (2000-2019), and is currently the orchestra's Composer-in-Residence.

White was born in Atlanta, Georgia and was raised in Manhattan, Kansas. After graduating Phi Beta Kappa from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, he earned his master's and doctoral degrees in composition from Cornell University, studying with Pulitzer Prize-winners Steven Stucky and Karel Husa. He has also studied at the University of Copenhagen (Denmark) and the American Conservatory at Fontainebleau (France). National and international recognition for his compositions has come through awards from ASCAP, BMI, The American Conservatory at Fontainebleau (*Prix Maurice Ravel*), Vienna Modern Masters, the Omaha Symphony Guild, Tulane University, Indiana State University, and the Southeastern Composers League, and through commissions from the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, the Cleveland Chamber Symphony, Lincoln's Symphony Orchestra, the National Symphony Orchestra, and other ensembles.

In 1997, White's cello concerto *Threnos (William Schuman in memoriam)* became the first work by a Nebraskan to win the Omaha Symphony's International New Music Competition, and in 1999 his opera *O Pioneers*, the first-ever operatic treatment of a Willa Cather novel, was premiered at UNL and televised on Nebraska Public Television. In 2001, Dr. White was named Composer of the Year by the Nebraska Music Teachers Association. In 2003, White's *Elegy "for the orphans of terror"* was awarded the Masterworks Prize and was recorded by the Sofia Philharmonic on the inaugural volume of ERM Media's "Masterworks of the New Era" CD series, and in 2006 his *Mystic Trumpeter* (Symphony No. 2) was awarded Honorable Mention in the ASCAP Foundation/Rudolf Nissim Prize

competition. In 2014, the newly revised *O Pioneers* was awarded a Silver Medal in the Global Music Prize competition, and was named a finalist for the American Music Prize. In 2017, he was awarded an Individual Artist Fellowship by the Nebraska Arts Council. White's latest opera, *The Gambler's Son* (libretto by Laura White, based on writings of Mari Sandoz and Robert Henri), premieres in November 2019, and his newly completed Symphony No. 3 was awarded a Silver Medal in the Global Music Awards.

Laura White, librettist

John E. Weaver Professor of English and Coordinator of Literature



Laura White is the John E. Weaver Professor of English at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. She writes on a variety of interdisciplinary nineteenth-century British topics, including three books on Jane Austen; her most recent work, *The Alice Books and the Contested Ground of the Natural World*, examines the adult satires in Lewis Carroll's Alice books. She is currently working on an intellectual history of the Victorian fairy. *The Gambler's Son* is her first libretto.

SYNOPSIS

Robert Henri's studio, New York, 1903, and Cozad, Nebraska in the 1870s and early 1880s.

Act I

Scene One. New York, 1903. Robert Henri's studio. Richard Lee (once John J. Cozad) comes to have his portrait painted by his son, the noted artist, Robert Henri; while waiting, he muses on the differences between his rough and glorious history and the modern world.

Scene Two. Nebraska, 1873. The Hundredth Meridian, empty prairie except for the marker. Entering on the heels of a cattle stampede, John J. Cozad arrives at the hundredth meridian with plans for a New Washington on the Plains, free of gambling and strife.

Scene Three. The same, a year or so later, with the beginnings of what will be the town of Cozad. Cozad fends off settler complaints to greet a contingent of Cozad settlers, including his own wife, Theresa, his two sons, Johnny and Robert, and his in-laws. Theresa is warned off the project by the station-master, Sanderson, and Cozad himself rejects the approaches of some cowboy gamblers.

Scene Four. Henri's studio. Henri and Lee meet in the studio and Henri makes the first sketches for the portrait, as the two men rather awkwardly reminisce.

Scene Five. Cozad, some time later, now grown substantially. Robert brings his mother a picture, but a cloud on the western horizon turns out to be a coming grasshopper plague. The town makes what preparations they can, expecting complete devastation, while Cozad leaves town on "pressing business." A telegram from Cozad announces relief goods and a make-work project for the citizens.

Scene Six. Cozad, a few days later. Cozad has returned to trumpet his proposal for a bridge across the Platte; the citizenry is dubious.

Scene Seven. Cozad, one month later. The first pay-day has arrived; Cozad dumps huge pile of greenbacks and gold into a wheelbarrow as the men line up. When Alf Pearson yells his anger at Cozad as a "Copperhead showoff," Cozad retreats, leaving the payments to Traber, his brother-in-law. As Cozad fumes about ingratitude, the citizens vent their anxieties.

Scene Eight. Henri's studio. A few weeks after Lee first appeared in Scene One. The secretary announces that "pressing business" keeps Lee from coming for his sitting. Henri agonizes over his difficulties with the portrait and the elusiveness of his memories.

Act II

Scene One. Cozad, some time later and even more prosperous than before. Robert again shows his mother a drawing, but they are interrupted by a stranger, King O'Dell, who is looking for his wife, Kitty. Cozad appears, confronting O'Dell, who accuses him of adultery with Kitty and of causing her death by suicide; O'Dell presents what seem to be an incriminating packet of letters and demands \$25,000. Cozad calls his bluff, giving the packet to Theresa, who finds that it contains nothing but torn newspaper. O'Dell retreats.

Scene Two. The same, later that day. Theresa remembers her wedding day; she thinks of her husband and long married life with both loyalty and pain. Cozad departs on business.

Scene Three. The same, months later. Gamblers enter Cozad while Cozad is away and set up a faro table in the stables. Looking on, Robert is pressured by the gamblers into taking \$20 betting money (as partial payment of rent to his father). Cozad returns and violently breaks up the faro game. A "deputy" tries to expose Robert for being in possession of forged money and the whole gang tries to have Cozad arrested, but Traber and Sanderson rush in to expose the "deputy" as a fake. While the bad guys scatter, Robert exults that he now knows how to make \$50,000; Cozad, furious, beats his legs with his cane. Cozad retreats to meditate on his need for vigilance; Robert, weeping, determines that he must "grow up very fast."

Scene Four. The same, months later. Traber brings news that the citizens have successfully petitioned a change of name for the town, from Cozad to Gould. Furious, Cozad confronts Pearson, who is painting the new name onto the old sign over the stable. During the ensuing altercation, Pearson tries to stab Cozad; Cozad shoots him in self-defense. The whole family realizes Cozad is in danger of lynching; Cozad plans his departure.

Scene Five. The same, later at night. Cozad leaves under cover of darkness, thinking of his luck and new plans for profit in the East.

Scene Six. Henri's studio, a few weeks later after we last saw it. Lee is sitting for his portrait, Henri is painting. Lee apologizes for putting his family

through so much; Henri affirms the value of the past in creating art--“all of the past is our legacy.”

Scene Seven. Cozad, in the morning, a few weeks after John J.'s departure. Traber brings the news that Pearson has died of his wounds and that Cozad's property has been “attached for damages” to the Pearson estate. Theresa and the boys prepare to leave, safe in the knowledge that Cozad's property has already been converted to cash and gold to be sewn up in Theresa's underskirts. Theresa, Johnny, and Robert say their farewells to Nebraska with its ponies, its skies, and its heartaches.

Scene Eight. Henri's studio. Again a few weeks have passed. Lee and his wife (Theresa) enter for the unveiling of the portrait. All three muse on how far they have come from their Nebraska experience and how Henri's art has helped transform the pains of the past into beauty and value. On Theresa's urging, Henri signs the portrait and the family leaves together in harmony.

There will one 10-minute intermission between Acts.

After the show...

UNL Friends of Opera invites you to a reception immediately following the Friday night performance in the lower lobby of Kimball Recital Hall. Please join us to meet the artistic team and the cast of *The Gambler's Son*.

On display...

November 11-17, at the Sheldon Museum of Art
 Robert Henri: *Portrait of John J. Cozad (Richard H. Lee II)*, 1903
 Robert Henri: *Self Portrait*, 1903

Cooper Creal (Johnny Cozad) is a senior vocal performance major from Lincoln, Nebraska, studying with Dr. Bill Shomos. Cooper has appeared with UNL Opera in *The Ballad of Baby Doe*, *Don Pasquale*, *The Return of Ulysses*, and *The Tender Land*, as well as with Opera Omaha in their annual season preview. This past summer, Cooper was a studio artist with Opera in the Ozarks in Eureka Springs, Arkansas, and was involved in their touring production of the children's opera *Monkey See Monkey Do!*.

Edgar Estrada (Citizen's Chorus) is sophomore Sociology and Music major from Omaha, Nebraska. At UNL, he is involved with University Singers, Big Red Singers, and the premiere co-ed a capella group, Pitch Please. He studies voice with Professor Donna Harler-Smith. Last year, he was a finalist at West Central NATS and he is very excited to participate in his first opera at UNL.

Jacob Fee (Citizen's Chorus) is a sophomore music education major from Omaha, Nebraska. He hopes to be able to teach high school choir and direct a school's music program. He is very active in the School of Music participating in three choirs and the opera.

Matthew Gerhold (Traber Gatewood) is a first year Masters student in vocal performance from Atkins, Iowa. He studies the art songs of Debussy, Britten, and Schubert, as well as the arias of Bach, Mozart, Bizet, and more. Matthew recently graduated from Concordia University, Nebraska with a B.M in vocal music education, and he is excited to be a part of this production and wishes the audience a great experience for the world premiere of *The Gambler's Son*.

Regan Hennings (Citizen's Chorus, City Woman, *understudy* for Mrs. R. H. Lee) is a junior Music Education major from Wausa, Nebraska. This past summer she attended Orfeo music festival in Vipiteno, Italy, where she studied music, collaborated with new music colleagues, and performed both at the conference's student recital and Opera showcase.

Connor Husa (Settler, Disgruntled Citizen, Dealer) is a senior vocal performance major from Beatrice, Nebraska. Some of his past productions include *Amahl and the Night Visitors* and *The Return of Ulysses* with UNL Opera; *The Lion in Winter* and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* with Community Players Inc. in Beatrice; and *Tony 'n Tina's Wedding* with Tada Productions.

Daniel Ikpeama (Settler, Disgruntled Citizen, "Deputy") is a second year master's degree choral conducting student from St. Louis, Missouri. He is involved across Lincoln in various music scenes as both a performer and

music director. His most recent solo recital performance *Of Love and War* is available to be watched on YouTube.

Samuel Chase Kennedy (Settler, Disgruntled Citizen, Lookout) is a sophomore vocal performance major from Troy, Missouri. He has appeared in many productions, including *The Return of Ulysses*, *The Tender Land*, *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, and continues to be in many more. This year he is excited to continue his music career within the music school and cannot wait to show you what he can do.

Adam Lesher (Citizen's Chorus) is a sophomore music education major studying voice with Professor Donna Harler-Smith. In his free time, he can be found performing in many ensembles including University Singers, Big Red Singers (dance captain), Varsity Men's Chorus, and the premiere coed a cappella group on campus, Pitch Please (music director). This is Adam's first-ever performance in an opera production at UNL and he wants to thank the directors for the new experience--enjoy the show.

Andrea Lock (Citizen's Chorus) is a sophomore music major from Carrollton, Missouri. She studies vocal performance with a psychology minor.

Calli Mah (Citizen's Chorus) is a sophomore vocal performance major from Mitchell, South Dakota, home of the World's Only Corn Palace. Along with the opera, Calli is involved in UNL's all-collegiate choir and the all-female a cappella group, Take Note. She would like to thank you for attending the performance tonight and hopes you enjoy the show.

Elaina Matthews (Theresa Cozad) is a second year master's degree student in vocal performance. She was seen as Laurie Moss in UNL Opera's production of *The Tender Land* last spring and as Minerva in UNL Opera's production of *The Return of Ulysses* in 2018. Last summer, she appeared as Erste Dame and covered the role of Pamina in New York Lyric Opera Theater's production of *Die Zauberflöte*, with other past roles including the Dew Fairy in *Hansel and Gretel*, Young Catherine in Opera Omaha's workshop of *Stranger from Paradise*, and Hope Cladwell in *Urinetown*.

Patrick McNally (John J. Cozad) is a second year doctoral in vocal performance from Boston, Massachusetts, by way of New York City. Represented by MIA Artist Management, he has had a 12-year career as a professional opera singer and occasionally a crossover artist into the realm of musical theater, having recently performed the role of Ozzie in Bernstein's *On the Town*. He is a Hixson-Lied fellow, winner of the Shoshana Foundation's Richard F. Gold Career Grant, and will be appearing as Belcore in Permian Basin Opera 2020 production of *L'elisir d'amore*.

Trey Meyer (Richard H. Lee) is a second year doctoral student in vocal performance at the Glenn Korff School of Music. He has recently been seen on stage in UNL productions of *The Return of Ulysses* as the title character, *Così fan tutte* as Guglielmo, and *The Tender Land* as Grandpa Moss. A native of Brookings, South Dakota, Trey wishes to thank his wife for her steadfast love and support.

Michael O'Brien (Sanderson) is a junior music education major from Ralston, Nebraska. This is his 2nd year with UNL Opera, appearing as Grandpa Moss (Cover) in Copland's *The Tender Land* and Melchior in Menotti's *Amahl and The Night Visitors*. After graduation, Michael wants to either teach elementary general music or high school vocal music.

Trent Poley (Handcar man, Cowboy, Disgruntled Citizen) is a junior music education major from Beatrice, Nebraska. In addition to his studies in the studio of Dr. Shomos, Poley is involved in UNL's University Singers and has competed in NATS, both at the state and regional level. This is his first experience with the UNL Opera program.

Hayley Shoemaker (Robert Henry Cozad) is a first year doctoral student from Quinter, Kansas. She most recently sang the title role in *La Cenerentola* with the Red River Lyric Opera. She loves getting to perform pants roles and is extremely excited to premiere the role of Robert Cozad.

Brianna Smith (Citizen's Chorus) is a 2nd-year Ph.D. student in the vocal pedagogy program and currently lives in Omaha, where she teaches private voice lessons at the 402 Arts Collective. She most recently appeared as Despina in UNL's production of *Così fan Tutte*. She is grateful for the opportunity to be a part of this new opera!

Maddy Stark (Mrs. R. H. Lee) is a sophomore vocal performance major from Omaha, Nebraska. She was recently seen in the ASCAP Grow A Show at the Lied playing Grace in the musical *Modern*. Maddy also performed in the musical *Violet* with UNL Opera.

Emma Thomas (Secretary) is a junior undergraduate vocal performance major from Blair, Nebraska. While at UNL, Emma has participated in UNL's Friends of Opera Gala, was a cast member of *The Tender Land*, and studies under Dr. Jamie Reimer. She is grateful for this opportunity to perform *The Gambler's Son* with such an incredibly talented cast.

Ryan Wortmann (Handcar man, Cowboy, Disgruntled Citizen) is a junior vocal performance and International Business major from Omaha, Nebraska. This is his first opera performance ever. This past summer he placed second at the NATS Nationals for classical singing!



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APPENDIX F

LIST OF MAJOR MUSICAL THEMES IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE WITH EXAMPLES
OF THEIR FIRST OCCURENCE

Unrest Theme

Precipitato ♩ = 132

5

10

15

Lee Theme

Molto Moderato ♩ = 60

p *f*

Lee * Lee

"To paint a man is to know him"

39 **Poco piú lento** ♩ = c. 52

The image shows a musical score for a vocal line. It starts at measure 39. The tempo is marked 'Poco piú lento' with a quarter note equal to approximately 52 beats per minute. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The melody is written on a single treble clef staff. The lyrics are: 'You know what he al-ways says: "to paint a man — is to know him!"'. A red rectangular box highlights the final phrase of the lyrics and its corresponding musical notes.

You know what he al-ways says: "to paint a man — is to know him!"

Lucky Cozad Theme

Cozad

51

The image shows a musical score for a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is on a bass clef staff, and the piano accompaniment is on a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). The tempo is marked 'Poco piú lento'. The lyrics are: 'Lucky Cozad, lucky — John J!'. The words 'Lucky Cozad' and 'lucky — John J!' are highlighted in yellow. A red rectangular box highlights the first two measures of the vocal line. The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes.

Lucky Cozad, lucky — John J! —

Town Theme

96

Cozad

— John J! — Here I will make a

96

99

Cozad

shin-ing new ci - ty, here I will make a new Wash-ing - ton!

99

Danger Theme

167

Cozad

You! You!

167

171

Cozad

171

Family Theme

Ancora meno mosso

$\text{♩} = \text{c} 44$

72

mp dolce

Public Persona Theme

A musical score for piano. The right hand part features a melodic line with a red box highlighting a specific phrase. The left hand part provides a harmonic accompaniment. The score includes a dynamic marking of *f* (forte) and a hairpin crescendo.

“My hat, my cane”

A musical score for voice and piano. The voice part is for a character named COZAD. The lyrics are: "The-re - sa, my hat, my cane!". A red box highlights the vocal line. The piano accompaniment is shown in two staves below the vocal line.

APPENDIX G

IMAGES OF THE PREMIERE PERFORMANCES

Provided by Kathe Andersen at the Hixson-Lied College of Fine and Performing Arts

Kimball Recital Hall at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Photo credit to Taylor Sullivan







Cozad High School Auditorium

Photo credit to Jim Wickless







