

THE INFLUENCE OF SISTER HELEN PREJEAN ON THE LIFE AND WORK OF
JAKE HEGGIE AS SEEN IN THE SONG CYCLE *THE DEEPEST*

DESIRE: FOUR MEDITATIONS ON LOVE

Rebecca Choate Beasley, B.A, M.M.

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APPROVED:

Jeffrey Snider, Major Professor and Chair of
the Division of Vocal Studies
Paula Homer, Committee Member
Jennifer Lane, Committee Member
Graham Phipps, Director of Graduate Studies
in the College of Music
James C. Scott, Dean of the College of Music
Sandra L. Terrell, Dean of the Robert B.
Toulouse School of Graduate Studies

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Jake Heggie, American art song and opera composer, began his association with Sister Helen Prejean, CSJ when he composed *Dead Man Walking*, an operatic adaptation of her memoirs. Though from two very different backgrounds, the two developed a deep friendship and spiritual bond that provided the impetus for further compositions dealing with spirituality. Heggie adapted Prejean's meditations as a text for his song cycle *The Deepest Desire* in 2002, producing what he considers to be his finest work to date. Using *The Deepest Desire* as a gateway, this paper explores the social and cultural aspects of their association, revealing their personal perspectives on their relationship, collaborations, and shared sense of spirituality.

Chapters include the biographies and spiritual philosophies of both Heggie and Prejean, Heggie's compositional style, *Dead Man Walking*, a performance analysis of *The Deepest Desire*, and the continuing influence of the relationship between Heggie and Prejean on Heggie's work. The appendix includes transcriptions of personal interviews with both individuals, Prejean's original meditation texts, correspondence with Heggie, Prejean, and Joyce DiDonato, and performance notes for *The Deepest Desire* derived from a musical coaching with the composer.

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Excerpts from *The Deepest Desire*, music by Jake Heggie, words by Sister Helen Prejean, CSJ. Copyright © 2002 by Bent Pen Music, Inc. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A source of inspiration is the indispensable prerequisite for any composer attempting to create a work of meaningful artistic expression. The relationship between composer and poet can be an integral part of this search for artistic epiphany. When united, text and music are each heightened by the presence of the other, working in tandem to guide the emotional experience of the auditor. The choices of two individuals regarding style, subject matter and scale are woven together, creating one cohesive work of art. Shared convictions, aesthetic ideals and lifestyle all play a part in creating a compatible alliance. Throughout music history, personal relationships forged with poets and librettists have guided the artistic development and output of composers. Personal, political, and religious beliefs are shaped through these collaborations, resulting in new musical and thematic choices that might otherwise not have occurred.

Sometimes the connection between the two individuals involved in this process is obvious to outside observers, but at other times further exploration is required to fully understand and appreciate the reasons behind an effective artistic union. Composer Jake Heggie and Sister Helen Prejean, CSJ, are an example of the latter, seeming on the surface to be worlds apart but sharing a common bond that has inspired two of the most noteworthy works of Heggie's career to date, his opera *Dead Man Walking* and the song cycle *The Deepest Desire*.

Early in the history of vocal music, selection of text was often less personal, as many different composers set the same libretti of noteworthy writers, such as Ottavio Rinuccini or Metastasio, to suit popular demand. Others were inspired by writers who

were not their contemporaries, as seen in Verdi's love of Shakespeare. Sometimes, however, particular composers and poets were drawn to one another's work, shaping their artistic choices to fit cohesively as a joint work of art. The connection between the composer and poet are as closely linked as the music and text themselves. Personalities emerge, political and religious beliefs rise to the forefront, humor and individual styles make indelible imprints on the music produced, and in many cases the life and mindset of the composer is changed forever.

Notable composer and poet pairings throughout history have illustrated the high level of artistry and skill that can be achieved through the right inspiration and collaboration. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Lorenzo da Ponte yielded works considered to be at the pinnacle of operatic repertoire: *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Così fan tutte*. Lorenz Hart was to Richard Rodgers a dear friend and enormously successful artistic partner for twenty-four years, producing twenty-six Broadway musicals and nine films.¹ Due to Hart's alcoholism, Richard Rodgers was forced to seek a new partner, which he found in Oscar Hammerstein II. Together, Rodgers and Hammerstein dominated Broadway with works like *Cinderella*, *Flower Drum Song*, *Oklahoma!*, *Carousel*, *South Pacific*, and *The King and I*.

Yet another example is Richard Strauss, who saw Hugo von Hofmannsthal's play *Elektra*, and was inspired to create an operatic adaptation to the delight of Hofmannsthal. The hugely successful *Der Rosenkavalier* followed, as well as many other operatic collaborations including *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Die ägyptische Helena*, and *Arabella*. Upon the death of Hofmannsthal, Strauss sent a

¹ Geoffrey Block, *Rodgers, Richard*, in Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/23644> (accessed September 24, 2008).

letter to the widow stating: “This genius, this great poet, this sensitive collaborator, this kind friend, this unique talent! No musician ever found such a helper and supporter. No one will ever replace him for me or the world of music!”²

In the late twentieth century, source materials used by composers expanded from previously existing libretti and adaptations of stage plays to include others such as novels, movies, letters and memoirs. Rather than filtering source material through a librettist, modern composers have often chosen to work directly with text still in a raw, non-poetic form. Dominick Argento is considered a pioneer in the use of unconventional text, writing his own adaptations of unusual source materials. In his 1982 composition *The Andrée Expedition*, Argento borrows and greatly elaborates on text found in the diaries of three Swedish explorers who died in their failed attempt to fly to the North Pole in a hot-air balloon.³ In 1983 Argento composed *Casa Guidi*, assembling text based on letters written by Elizabeth Barrett Browning to her sister, arranging and altering them as needed to maintain the flow of drama.⁴

Libby Larsen, a student of Argento, is also known for her unusual source materials and personal involvement with the development of texts. Larsen’s *Try Me, Good King: Last Words of the Wives of Henry VIII* draws text from the final letters and gallows speeches of the first five wives of Henry VIII.⁵ In addition, the melodies of well-known lute songs by Dowland, Praetorius and Campion are blended into the music as a

² Bryan Gillam and Charles Youmans, *Strauss, Richard*, in *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40117pg3> (accessed September 24, 2008).

³ Dominick Argento, “*Catalogue Raisonné As Memoir: A Composer’s Life*,” in *Collected Song Cycles* (Milwaukee: Boosey and Hawkes, distributed by Hal Leonard Corporation, 2006), 88-89.

⁴ *ibid.*, 156-157.

⁵ Libby Larsen, “The Official Website of Libby Larsen,” <http://www.libbylarsen.com>, (accessed 23 September 2008).

secondary source of text and musical commentary. For *Mary Cassatt*, Larsen created a libretto using articles from the period, Cassatt's letters, and material derived from personal research.⁶

As one of America's increasingly well-known composers, Jake Heggie has routinely used texts written by friends and colleagues, freely adapting the words to achieve the most effective setting. Even when working with a librettist, Heggie openly retains the right to alter the text or flow of the libretto as needed, though he is careful to preserve the original intention of the text. Greater than any other contribution a librettist can make toward the inspiration of music, Heggie says, is the spirit and emotion behind the words.⁷ Sister Helen Prejean's memoir, *Dead Man Walking*, seemed to inspire in Heggie a new depth of composition and musical expression previously untapped in him.

The inspiration obtained from Sister Helen grew through continued friendship and discussion, being manifested once again in Heggie's song cycle *The Deepest Desire*. This cycle represents what Heggie considers to be his finest work,⁸ and is an excellent catalyst for understanding the deep connection between Sister Helen and Jake Heggie. Sister Helen says *The Deepest Desire* is "a good gate to go through. A good prism if you will, because that's probably the link to everything."⁹

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ Jake Heggie, interview by author, 24 January 2008.

⁸ Jake Heggie, interview by author, 14 March 2008.

⁹ Sister Helen Prejean, interview by author, 3 June 2008.

CHAPTER 2

BIOGRAPHY OF JAKE HEGGIE

Born in West Palm Beach, Florida on March 31, 1961, John (Jake) Stephen Heggie shares his first name with both his father and grandfather, though he has been called Jake since childhood. His father John Francis Heggie, born January 21, 1930 in New York, had a deep appreciation for music and was an amateur jazz saxophonist while working as a physician. John Heggie met his bride Judith Rohrbach when they both attended Columbia University in New York City. Judith, born in 1932 in New Jersey, was attending nursing school. They married in 1955, and shortly thereafter John was drafted into the army. He was sent to Texas for basic training in 1956 and then to San Francisco for three months to study psychology.

Following his training, John was sent to Osaka, Japan to treat civilians and work in a field hospital. Though his wife was still living in a housing base in Japan, he was sent to Korea to perform the same services. Following the death of his father, John requested reassignment to Japan, and shortly thereafter was stationed in Sagami-hara where he was reunited with his wife. This is where their first child, Joanne, was born in 1957. In 1958, they returned to New York City where John was in residency at Children's Presbyterian Hospital. 1959 saw the birth of their second child, Jill.

The family's frequent relocations continued due to John's job with a laboratory company. Jake Heggie was born in West Palm Beach, Florida in 1961, the family moved to Torrance, CA, in 1963, and their fourth child, Jason, was born there in 1965. Now a family of six, they moved to Bexley, Ohio in 1965. It was here that Heggie would begin his musical studies.

Surrounded by the big band music his father loved, Heggie's love for music was cultivated at an early age. Haunting melodies like Earle Hagen's "Harlem Nocturne,"¹⁰ and the music of jazz legends like Jo Stafford, Ella Fitzgerald and Peggy Lee filled his ears and captured his imagination. Musical theatre masters Julie Andrews and Barbra Streisand were also a prominent influence.¹¹ In 1968, at the age of seven, Heggie began group piano lessons with a young teacher named Anne Swesty and loved it immediately.¹² When he became more advanced, he began private lessons with a second teacher, Joe Weisberg.¹³

March 21, 1972, ten days before Heggie's eleventh birthday, his father committed suicide. Struggling with a history of deep depression and lacking the medications to treat his condition, John disappeared one day and shot himself. This event took a terrible toll on his family and they began to unravel. Heggie's sisters rebelled against their mother, attempting to run away and ultimately leaving home at an early age.¹⁴ Judith never remarried after John's suicide, eventually settling in San Diego, California. In spite of Heggie's desire to quit music after his father's death, his mother urged him to continue. He then began lessons with Anna Mae Millard, who pushed him farther in his studies.¹⁵

¹⁰ Jake Heggie, e-mail message to author, 13 September 2008.

¹¹ Heggie, interview by author, 24 January 2008.

¹² Carolyn Redman. "Songs to the Moon: A Song Cycle by Jake Heggie from Poems by Vachel Lindsey." (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 2004), 2.

¹³ Kendra Allyn Lynch. "A Comparative Analysis of Four Pieces by Jake Heggie." (MM diss., California State University, Long Beach, 2006), 100.

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ Jake Heggie, e-mail message to author, 13 September 2008.

Heggie immersed himself in his music and began to experiment with composing, though he did not begin formal composition training until his family moved to Martinez, CA in the summer of 1977. Encouraged by Doris Marliave, his piano teacher in Martinez, Heggie joined the composers group of the Performing Arts Society of Contra Costa that met for monthly lessons with a composition master. Through this group, Heggie met internationally recognized composer, Ernst Bacon, in 1977.¹⁶ By April 1978, Heggie began full time private studies with Bacon, bringing his compositional techniques to a new level through new compositional exercises and basic theory lessons. Bacon also introduced Heggie to the idea of setting poetry written by others, especially Emily Dickinson.¹⁷

Following his graduation from high school in 1979, Heggie moved to Paris to study. Having never experienced a feeling of belonging while in high school, he sought to create a new life in a location far removed from California. “The allure and romance of Paris was irresistible,” says Heggie.¹⁸ His only college application was to the American College in Paris. Paris, the city of great musicians like Chopin and Liszt, is where Heggie hoped to reinvent himself.¹⁹ During this period he was aware of his feelings of homosexuality, but was terrified of what that would mean for him in a culture where that lifestyle was viewed as unacceptable.²⁰ He called himself “John,” and tried

¹⁶ Ernst Bacon (1898-1990), recipient of two Guggenheim Fellowships and a Pulitzer Prize (1932), was known for his sensitive text settings and use of distinctly American musical idioms.

¹⁷ Lynch, 103.

¹⁸ Jake Heggie, e-mail message to author, 12 September 2008.

¹⁹ Jake Heggie, e-mail message to author, 13 September 2008.

²⁰ Lynch, 104.

to “become a different person; one who either wasn’t gay or was fine with being gay.”²¹ Emotionally, Heggie was still plagued by his father’s suicide, feeling that perhaps he had not been good enough to make his father want to live.²² A trust fund set up by his father before his death along with the social security benefits provided to the child of a deceased parent helped to defray the living expenses and the cost of tuition while in Paris. His mother also helped provide financial support, and he took a job working in the school registrar’s office. Heggie used this time to explore Europe, study French and attend world-class concerts.

Soon he began to search for a formalized program of study and in 1981, on a friend’s recommendation, he went to the University of California, Los Angeles to study with Johana Harris. Ms. Harris was to play a special role in Heggie’s life. Known affectionately as “Lady Jo,” she was admired as much for her charming personality as her exceptional talent. Heggie no doubt felt an immediate appreciation for her love of folk song settings, improvisational abilities, and performance skills that have been described as a “tour de force by a master.”²³ Heggie says she brought him to a deeper musical understanding and depth that had been previously missing in his work.

She made it real. She made it human... It wasn’t just about learning good technique and learning to play beautifully. It was about going to museums, and talking about books and going to libraries, going to see movies, looking at beautiful art and talking about it, looking at and talking about dark times in history and bright times, and talking about current events and talking about things that people were going through. And saying, ‘this piece is so much like that.’ And then realizing each of these composers had an inspiration, reason for writing this piece and a human connection, which is why it still resonates. And I think that

²¹ Jake Heggie, e-mail message to author, 13 September 2008.

²² Lynch, 104.

²³ Stephen M. Fry, “Johana Harris: In Memoriam (1913-1995),” *International Alliance for Women in Music Journal* 2 (1996), pp. 48-49.

affected me deeply as a pianist and I think, as a composer. And that's the thing she gave me that no one else had really given me.²⁴

Married 43 years to composer Roy Harris, Johana was widowed in 1979. Jake Heggie began his studies with Ms. Harris in 1981, and within a year their relationship grew into something much deeper. As described by Harris' biographer, Louise Spizizen, "Johana was a week away from her 70th birthday [and] she proposed to her most talented student, an Adonis who was barely 21 when they married."²⁵ That highly talented "Adonis" was Heggie. "It raised eyebrows, but people who knew us understood completely," he explained years later to the *New York Times*.²⁶

Though Heggie had never told Johana about his father's suicide, she had a dream about meeting him and shared it with Heggie. In her dream, Johana went by a creek into a grassy meadow and found Heggie's father lying on his side. He sat up, expressed his gratitude that she was in his son's life, and then put his hands to the side of his head, lay down, and fell asleep. This was monumental to Heggie, as that was exactly the position of his father's body when he was found on a grassy bank near a creek following his suicide.²⁷ This omen, paired with his intense fear of accepting his homosexuality, led him to make the choice to accept her proposal. The two were wed on December 18, 1982.

The first person to really believe in Heggie as an artist, no other woman could have meant more to him or understood him so completely as Johana. Heggie says of her, "...there was a sincere and abiding love, admiration and appreciation...and timeless

²⁴ Lynch, 105.

²⁵ Louise Spizizen, "Why Are You Writing About Her?," *Belles Lettres*, v.10, no. 1 (Fall, 1994), 20-25.

²⁶ Ralph Blumenthal, "For an Operatic Life, Check Out the Composer's," *New York Times*, March 13, 2008, Arts section, Midwest edition.

²⁷ Lynch, 109

connection. I miss her very, very much... One of the finest and most natural musicians I've ever known."²⁸ While Heggie studied at UCLA and after he graduated in 1984 with a degree in piano and composition, they toured together performing duo piano concerts throughout the United States.²⁹ Though in her heart Johana knew of Heggie's homosexuality, she loved him in a very heterosexual way.³⁰ They two eventually came to an understanding, choosing to remain married as the dearest of friends. He began his graduate studies in composition at UCLA in 1986.

In 1988 Heggie developed muscular problems with his right hand due to playing with poor technique. Diagnosed with focal dystonia, a neurological condition causing his hand to seize up into a fist, his dreams of performing and composing seemed to come to an abrupt end in 1989.³¹ He pursued recovery therapy with Nina Skolnik at the University of California, Irvine, and worked on his piano technique using the Dorothy Taubman method, but was forced to greatly reduce the frequency of his playing. He stopped composing and fell into one of the most depressing, difficult times in his life.³²

In the summer of 1989, he got a job as the director of the L'Ermitage Hotel private concert series in Beverly Hills. He met various arts administrators and managers, and met Frederica von Stade while attempting to schedule her on the concert series in 1990. Heggie left L'Ermitage in the fall of 1990 in order to work for Pebbles Wadsworth at the UCLA Center for the Arts, organizing the 1991 conference of the International Society of Performing Arts Administrators (ISPAA) in Los Angeles.

²⁸ Jake Heggie, e-mail message to author, 12 September 2008.

²⁹ Redman, 3-4.

³⁰ Jake Heggie, e-mail message to author, 12 September 2008.

³¹ Redman, 4.

³² *ibid.*

This introduced him to arts administrators on the international level. After the conference, he began full time employment as the staff writer at the UCLA Center for the Arts, working primarily in Marketing and Public Relations.

After Johana was diagnosed with cancer in 1992, Heggie cared for her and even brought a keyboard to the hospital for her to play, but the disease proved to be debilitating.³³ November 18, 1993, with the full support of Johana, Heggie moved to San Francisco and took a job as the Public Relations and Marketing writer at Cal Performances, University of California at Berkeley. He would try to embrace his life as an openly gay man, while still being near Johana, who was in a Los Angeles hospital. Trapped in a cycle of loss and feeling the grip of depression surrounding his inability to play, Heggie threw out all of his early compositions. Never anticipating that anyone would have a desire to see them in the future, he perceived them to be of no value and too painful to keep as a reminder of what once was. "It was kind of too painful to have it around you, because it was all those childhood hopes and dreams in that one box," says Heggie.³⁴ Johana eventually succumbed to cancer and died in her West Los Angeles home on June 5, 1995.

Heggie became involved with the San Francisco Opera in April 1994, when he was hired as the company's writer, primarily in Public Relations and Marketing. With his charming personality, it was easy for him to meet and befriend the world-class singers performing with the opera company. Among these was mezzo-soprano Frederica von Stade, whose friendship would change his life forever.

³³ Tom Savage, "High Scorers: Jake Heggie," *Opera News* 64, no. 7 (January 2000): 10-13.

³⁴ Lynch, 101.

In 1994, inspired by von Stade to return to composing and playing piano, Heggie set three folk songs for her and gave them as a gift for the opening night, world-premiere performance of Conrad Susa's *Les Liaison Dangereuses*. To his surprise, she came early the next evening to read through them and instantly loved his settings of *Barb'ry Allen*, *The Leather-Winged Bat*, and *He's Gone Away*.³⁵ Von Stade expressed interest in doing a recital with Heggie and became his enthusiastic champion, spreading the word of his skill to other famous performers. For the first time, Heggie began to accept himself as he was. Says Heggie, "All of a sudden I realized, 'It's ok that I'm gay and that I like music. And I'm the PR guy, but I'm writing songs. It's all ok...Maybe I am enough.'"³⁶ In 1995, Heggie submitted a demo tape of his work, sung by von Stade and Kristin Clayton, to the G. Schirmer American Art Song Competition. Just days after Johana died, he was notified that his setting of Emily Dickinson's *If You Were Coming in the Fall* was chosen as one of seven winners. Von Stade and Heggie performed together for the first time, singing only his music, at a Berkeley AIDS benefit in October 1995. Lotfi Mansouri of the San Francisco Opera approached Heggie regarding the possibility of an opera commission in November of 1995, and sent him to New York City to meet with Terrence McNally for the first time regarding a possible collaboration. Renee Fleming sang Heggie's composition, *I shall not live in vain*, in recital at Alice Tully Hall in May 1996.

After the previous, seemingly fruitless meeting with Terrence McNally, Terrence requested another meeting with Heggie in January 1997. McNally suggested *Dead Man Walking* in June of that year as a possible topic for their collaboration. When

³⁵ Lynch, 10.

³⁶ Lynch, 112.

Heggie was named the first San Francisco Opera Chase Composer-in-Residence in January 1998 it enabled him to work full time on *Dead Man Walking*, and the first workshop reading took place in August of 1999.

From this point forward, he would earn a living strictly as a composer. Commissions, royalties, residencies, and performance fees from concerts and master-classes became his only source of revenue, found largely through the singers and conductors championing his work. The previous administrative connections made in the world of public relations proved to be of little help and even worked against him. Of his transition from public relations worker to composer Heggie says:

Most people couldn't imagine that a PR writer for an opera company would have anything to say artistically -- and they were dead set against ever accepting that. Some of the reviewers and writers on the East Coast, in particular, have been consistently brutal to me, and I think in no small part because of that past job experience.³⁷

The skills gained through his previous work experience, however, have served Heggie well. As the San Francisco Opera company writer he learned effective writing, editing and interview techniques. Seeing opera production at all phases of development gave Heggie a deeper understanding of what elements are needed to make a work successful.

Faces of Love, the first compact disc collection devoted to his art songs, was released in 1999 by BMG/ RCA Victor Red Seal and recorded by some of the most famous singers of the opera world. In 1999 and 2000, G. Schirmer published *Faces of Love*, a collection of Heggie's art songs in three volumes. It was during this frenzy of success that he met his life partner, Curt Branom, in September of 1999. Heggie's

³⁷ Jake Heggie, e-mail to the author, 21 September 2008.

songs were featured in a recital at Tully Hall in New York on May 1, 2000, and that summer *Dead Man Walking* went into production. After Heggie's residency ended in June 2000, he lived on unemployment and awaited a response to the premier of his new opera.

Oct. 7, 2000 saw the 1998 San Francisco Opera commission come to fruition in the production of *Dead Man Walking*. Following its monumental success, Heggie was contacted regarding future productions of *Dead Man Walking* with Opera Pacific and offered an opera commission by Houston Grand Opera. Numerous other operas and opera scenes followed, including *Three Decembers* (premiered as *Last Acts*), *For a Look or a Touch*, *At the Statue of Venus*, *The End of the Affair* and *To Hell and Back*. *Dead Man Walking*, however, is by far the most successful work to date. The opera was praised for the sheer beauty of its music, the unflinching treatment of the subject matter, and the remarkable dramatic sensitivity of both the music and the libretto. Swiftly becoming one of the most frequently performed modern operas, *Dead Man Walking* has been performed by Opera Pacific, New York City Opera, Cincinnati Opera and numerous other companies of international scale.

Heggie has written numerous operas, concerti, orchestral and chamber works, and over 200 songs to date. He was the first Composer in Residence for the EOS Orchestra in New York City from 2000 to 2002, and was the recipient of a 2005-2006 Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship. He is currently composing *Moby Dick*, commissioned for the 2010 inaugural season of Dallas Opera's new venue, the Winspear Opera House.

CHAPTER 3

BIOGRAPHY OF SISTER HELEN PREJEAN, CSJ

Born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana on April 21, 1939, Helen Prejean grew up in a loving home with her father Louis Sebastian Prejean³⁸, mother Gusta Mae Bourg³⁹, brother Louis Sebastian Jr.⁴⁰, and sister Mary Ann⁴¹. She was well provided for, traveled extensively throughout the United States, Canada and Europe, and attended Catholic school. Growing up in the 1940s and 50s in Louisiana, Helen witnessed segregation and racism but was largely shielded from the issue. Though her parents were always kind to the African-Americans in their community, no attempts were made to confront the injustices or encourage change.

The nuns who taught her throughout Catholic school were “great, alive, smart nun teachers with a great sense of humanness and humor.”⁴² As she wanted to be a teacher and felt that marriage and family would be too confining, Helen joined the Sisters of St. Joseph of Medaille⁴³ in 1957 at the age of eighteen, a choice of which her family was very proud and supportive. She attended Saint Mary’s Dominican College, New Orleans, earning a Bachelor of Arts in English and Education in 1962, and received her Master of Arts in Religious Education from Saint Paul’s University in Ottawa, Canada in 1973. Thoroughly enjoying her position as a teacher, Sister Helen taught junior and senior high school students for four years and taught adults in the parish for

³⁸ born 1893 in Marks, Louisiana

³⁹ born 1911 in Grosse Tete, Louisiana

⁴⁰ born March 16, 1944

⁴¹ born May 13, 1938

⁴² Sister Helen Prejean, e-mail message to author, September 20, 2008.

⁴³ currently called The Congregation of St. Joseph

seven years following her studies in theology. From 1968 to 1975, she served as the Religious Education Director at Saint Frances Cabrini Parish in New Orleans. She was also the Director of Novices for her religious community from 1975 to 1981.

When Sister Helen attended a speech given by Sister Marie Augusta Neal, A.N.D. deN. in June of 1980, she could never have anticipated the new path her life would follow as a result. Sister Helen's community had decided to focus their ministry on the poor, though she had difficulty reconciling this decision with her preconceived ideas of appropriate spiritual callings. As stated in her memoir *Dead Man Walking*:

I resisted this recasting of the faith of my childhood, where what counted was a personal relationship with God, inner peace, kindness to others, and heaven when this life was done. I didn't want to struggle with politics and economics. We were nuns, after all, not social workers, and some realities in life were, for better or worse, rather fixed- like the gap between rich and poor.⁴⁴

Sister Marie, a sociologist, said that the practice of social justice was an integral part of the Catholic faith; in order to follow the teachings of Christ one must fight to help the poor and disenfranchised. She asserted that to remain neutral was in all actuality a decision to uphold the current system. Sister Marie discussed the remarkable inequality found in all reaches of the world and gave startling statistics that woke something in Sister Helen. For the first time, Sister Helen was aware of an inner voice calling her to fight for those who could not fight for themselves. The poor could no longer be held at arms length, but instead were welcomed into her heart and her life.

In 1981, Sister Helen and her community began a ministry in a St. Thomas housing development dedicated to helping the poor of New Orleans. She and her fellow

⁴⁴ Helen Prejean, *Dead Man Walking: An Eyewitness Account of the Death Penalty in the United States* (New York: Random House, 1993), 5.

Sisters lived among the poor, witnessing the high crime, social injustice and overwhelming despair present in the daily lives of the people they sought to help. In January of 1982, Chava Colon from the Prison Coalition asked Sister Helen to become the pen-pal of Elmo Patrick Sonnier, inmate number 95281,⁴⁵ on Death Row in Louisiana State Penitentiary, Angola, having been convicted of savagely murdering two teenagers. As their correspondence progressed, Sonnier asked Sister Helen to visit him and ultimately to become his spiritual advisor. As such, she would remain with him until the moment of his death in the electric chair.

The remarkable events that followed were documented in her memoir, *Dead Man Walking: An Eyewitness Account of the Death Penalty in the United States*. This critically acclaimed book rose to the forefront of media attention and stirred discussions on the ever-controversial topic of the death penalty. Its credits include a 1993 Pulitzer Prize nomination, a place on the 1994 American Library Associates Notable Book List, inclusion on the International Best Seller List, translation into ten different languages, and thirty-one weeks as the number one book on the New York Times Best Seller List.⁴⁶

The movie adaptation, directed by Tim Robbins, was released in the United States on January 12, 1996. Sister Helen was portrayed by Susan Sarandon, who won the Oscar Award for Best Actress in a Leading Role for her work in the film. Then in October 2000, Jake Heggie's operatic adaptation of *Dead Man Walking* premiered at San Francisco Opera to critical acclaim.

⁴⁵ Prejean, 3-4.

⁴⁶ Helen Prejean, "The Official Website of Helen Prejean," <http://www.prejean.org>, (accessed 19 September 2008).

The artistic collaborations of Sister Helen and Jake Heggie continued with *The Deepest Desire*, a song cycle published in 2002 featuring four of Sister Helen's meditations. In addition, Heggie set her poem *Seeking Higher Ground: Bruce Springsteen Rocks New Orleans, April 30, 2006* for chorus and full orchestra in a 2006 commission for the Pacific Chorale in California.

Music had always been an important part of Sister Helen's life, as it still continues to be. Singing in her high school glee club, she found great joy in learning and memorizing music. Even now, singing is a part of her daily life and a cherished way to express great joy. After times of great sadness or confusion, Sister Helen has stated her awareness of "getting her spirit back" when she finds herself singing.⁴⁷ When Heggie was writing *Dead Man Walking*, Sister Helen sent him a cassette tape of her singing, which he cherishes to this day.⁴⁸

She has been interviewed and discussed in a wide range of print media, including "New York Times Magazine, Vogue, Good Housekeeping, the St. Anthony Messenger, the Ligourian, the Chicago Tribune, the Atlanta Constitution, the Times Picayune, the San Francisco Chronicle, the New Orleans Magazine, the Tablet, Sisters Today," and many others.⁴⁹ An equally extensive list of "broadcast appearances includes 60 Minutes, NBC's Today Show, ABC World News Tonight; the Tom Snyder Show on CNBC, Larry King Live (radio), the Phil Donahue Show, BBC World Service Radio, National Public Radio's Weekend Edition and Fresh Air, and NBC Special on the

⁴⁷ Sister Helen Prejean, interview by author, 12 September 2008.

⁴⁸ Jake Heggie, interview by author, 24 January 2008.

⁴⁹ Helen Prejean, "The Official Website of Helen Prejean."

Death Penalty, the Canadian Broadcast Company Man Alive, the BBC's Everyman, ABC's Primetime Live, and PBS' Frontline."⁵⁰

As an activist, writer and frequent lecturer for universities and organizations, Sister Helen seeks to educate the world concerning those contradictions she sees as inherent in the death penalty. She has also reached out to the families of crime victims through "Survive," a New Orleans based victim's advocacy group. The recipient of countless honorary degrees and service awards, she has served from 1985-1995 on the board of the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty,⁵¹ is a member of Amnesty International, and is an honorary member of Murder Victim Families for Reconciliation. In her efforts to secure a worldwide moratorium on the death penalty she is serving as Honorary Chairperson of The Moratorium Campaign, gathering signatures on a petition to end state funded killing throughout the United States.⁵² Sister Helen was even requested to carry the Olympic torch in New Orleans on May 24, 1996.⁵³ She is currently writing her memoirs concerning her journey to death row awareness, entitled "River of Fire."⁵⁴

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

⁵¹ Chairperson of the board from 1993-1995

⁵² Helen Prejean, "The Moratorium Campaign Website," <http://www.moratoriumcampaign.org> (accessed 18 September 2008)

⁵³ Helen Prejean, "The Official Website of Helen Prejean."

⁵⁴ Sister Helen Prejean, CSJ, interview by author, 3 June 2008.

CHAPTER 4

DEAD MAN WALKING

A triumphant success, *Dead Man Walking* heralds what many consider to be the future of opera in America. “Heggie may prove to be contemporary opera’s savior,” said the Chicago Tribune.⁵⁵ “The powerful hold *Dead Man Walking* exerted on its opening-night audience foreshadows a watershed moment in contemporary American opera,” said USA Today.⁵⁶ Though it is uncommon for a new work to become part of the standard repertoire, *Dead Man Walking* has become one of the most performed American modern operas of its day, with over 100 performances internationally in less than eight years.

Terrance McNally, the librettist for *Dead Man Walking*, was responsible for introducing the subject to Heggie as a possibility for adaptation into an opera. Heggie was familiar with the story due to the extensive press coverage surrounding the book, the movie, and Sister Helen herself. But ironically, he purposely avoided seeing the movie adaptation when it came out. He feared being emotionally manipulated, coerced into pitying someone who had done something terrible. After watching the film with McNally, Heggie was so moved by Sister Helen’s story that he immediately began reading the book to get the first hand account.

It was in the process of composing *Dead Man Walking* that Heggie had his first personal encounter with Sister Helen Prejean, CSJ. The feisty, compassionate, and completely disarming woman called him when she heard of the opera commission. In

⁵⁵ Stephanie von Buchau, “Alive, Well Done San Francisco’s ‘Dead Man Walking’ Powerful Modern Opera,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 9, 2000, Tempo section, Northern edition.

⁵⁶ Thomas May, “‘Dead Man’ is execution extraordinaire Savvy writing, vivid music lift S.F. opera,” *USA Today*, October 9, 2000, Life section, Final Edition.

her thick Louisiana accent Sister Helen said “Jake, I don’t know boot scat about opera, so you’re gonna have to educate me... Now, just to be clear, you don’t write that atonal stuff, do you? I mean, people are gonna be able to hum a tune, right?”⁵⁷ He immediately loved her open, jovial nature and they became fast friends.

Sister Helen and Heggie met in person for the first time at the Chase Manhattan Bank, San Francisco Opera press conference, announcing the *Dead Man Walking* collaboration. She immediately sensed his loving nature and deep convictions regarding human rights. He was empathetic to the loss felt by the families on both sides of the conflict surrounding the death penalty, and had strong ideas of how to portray their struggle. As Heggie saw it, those involved were “all singing the same pain” because their deepest desires had been destroyed.⁵⁸ The victims’ families wanted their children to grow and flourish but lost them in a brutal murder; Sister Helen sensed she was failing in her attempt to be “a spiritual source of strength and consolation”⁵⁹; Mrs. DeRocher, the murderer’s mother, felt as though she had failed as a mother to Joseph. In the Act I sextet of *Dead Man Walking*, “You don’t know what it’s like,” Heggie weaves together all of these perspectives, expressing anger, loss, helplessness, and fear, underscoring the sense that they are all victims sharing in the same pain. As he composed the opera, Heggie played and sang portions to Sister Helen. He trusted her to see beyond the musical skeleton into the spirit behind it. They shared the

⁵⁷ Jake Heggie, interview by author, 24 January 2008.

⁵⁸ Sister Helen Prejean, interview by author, 3 June 2008.

⁵⁹ *ibid.*

understanding that *Dead Man Walking* should portray “everyone’s journey for healing and reconciliation.”⁶⁰

Learning about Sister Helen’s personality had a direct impact on his musical representation of her. “She is so human and so real,” says Heggie. “And she approaches everything with this appreciation for life and joy, and with great humor. And the way she gets a point across is by telling stories really well.”⁶¹ All of these elements found their way into the musical and textual portrayal of Sister Helen in *Dead Man Walking*. Her good humor, direct speech, and genuine warmth pervade every part of her character. Preconceived ideas of what a nun can or should be have to be completely abandoned when describing Sister Helen. The pious, quiet nun imagery is replaced by the reality of an activist, defiantly facing extreme pain, violence, and the darkest part of humanity.

Joyce DiDonato, who played the role of Sister Helen Prejean in the New York City Opera’s production of *Dead Man Walking* in 2002, feels that Heggie’s representation of Sister Helen could not be more accurate. “He captured the passion, the questioning nature, the firm belief that she must do this work, but the fragile vulnerability of walking a path full of doubt and questions - certainly at the beginning of her journey in this life. Questions of faith, of humanity, of rights, of herself - it is all realized beautifully in Jake’s music.” DiDonato once expressed to Heggie her fears about performing the last scene of *Dead Man Walking*, which calls for an exposed, unaccompanied solo hymn sung by Sister Helen. Understanding how emotionally and

⁶⁰ *ibid.*

⁶¹ Jake Heggie, interview by author, 24 January 2008.

physically drained DiDonato would be at that point in the opera, Heggie explained why he made that musical choice.

Joyce, that is the Sister Helen that works tirelessly today. She sees these horrible things, lives these horrible deaths with the prisoners and the victim's families, and it devastates her, but then she must carry on and speak her mind so that people will hear their stories. It's the warrior that is Sister Helen today.⁶²

Before working on *Dead Man Walking*, Heggie was ambivalent about the death penalty. Never being personally touched by it, he put his faith in the justice system. He thought surely those on death row had done something horrible and must deserve to die. While working on *Dead Man Walking*, he was exposed to the issues surrounding the death penalty; through Sister Helen's eyes he saw manipulation for political gain, rampant inequity and prejudice in the system, and the moral question of the sanctity of human life.⁶³ The strong support given to the death penalty by the Christian community is a curiosity to Heggie, who wonders how the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" can be reconciled in the mind of someone who truly believes Christian teaching. "If you believe in the New Testament," Heggie says, "Jesus was all about turn-the-other-cheek forgiveness."⁶⁴ Prison without parole, which would not have been an option to early nomadic societies as it is today, seems to him to be the way to remove risk to the public while still honoring the sanctity of life.

Sister Helen's impact on Heggie's life transcended his shifting opinions on the death penalty, and led him to a deeper focus on his spirituality. While he found confirmation on some issues, he began to question others. "She definitely had a huge impact on my life. She's also one of those people whose entire being suggests

⁶² Joyce DiDonato, e-mail message to author, 5 April 2008.

⁶³ Jake Heggie, interview by author, 24 January 2008.

⁶⁴ Lynch, 113.

generosity. And to me, that is almost the highest plane of being on this earth...to be generous.”⁶⁵ Heggie likens Sister Helen to Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., giving every part of herself for a cause she believes in, willing to see it through to the end regardless of the personal cost.⁶⁶ He admires her commitment to fight against injustice and the pain it leaves in its wake. According to Heggie, the most important message he has taken from Sister Helen is “if you believe in something, you devote your life and heart to it. That’s where *The Deepest Desire* came from.”⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Jake Heggie, interview by author, 24 January 2008.

⁶⁶ *ibid.*

⁶⁷ *ibid.*

CHAPTER 5

COMPOSITIONAL STYLE OF JAKE HEGGIE

As Heggie's first composition teacher, Ernst Bacon introduced him to the concept of setting texts written by others. Bacon's particular affinity for the poetry of Emily Dickinson is strongly reflected by the many Dickinson settings present in Heggie's own body of work. Drawn to poetry of a deeply philosophical nature, Bacon's "unusual sensitivity to the color and inflection of words and a masterly use of syncopation to give the impression of natural speech."⁶⁸ His distinctly American compositional style using African-American spirituals, jazz, ragtime and dance music, and Appalachian melodies and hymns can be seen as an overarching influence in Heggie's compositions, reflecting their shared love of American musical idioms.

While at UCLA, Heggie continued his studies with a variety of other noteworthy musicians. Johana Harris emphasized musicianship rather than technique, encouraging Heggie to explore the relationship of music to history, art, and society. Jim Low taught Heggie about art song and accompanying over several years, directing his studies through a significant body of art song repertoire. Says Heggie of his studies with Low,

One summer he even worked with me on all the great song cycles of Schubert and Schumann. I'd learn the piano parts and he'd sing (horribly)... stopping regularly to point out wonders and innovations and ideas in the notes, the dynamics, the nuances with the words and the connections throughout. It was heaven.⁶⁹

Heggie's composition teachers while at UCLA included Roger Bourland, Paul DesMarais, Paul Reale and David Raksin. According to Heggie, Bourland taught him to

⁶⁸ Phillip L. Miller, *Bacon, Ernst*, in Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/01726> (accessed October 16, 2008).

⁶⁹ Jake Heggie, e-mail message to author, 17 October 2008.

preserve the architecture of a piece, keeping a sense of direction while working on small details. DesMarais educated Heggie about the virtues of a variety of musical styles, studying the works of composers like Sondheim, Pendercki and Chopin. In addition, DesMarais encouraged the formation of musical ideas away from the piano in order for Heggie to compose beyond his own performance abilities. Paul Reale taught him to think orchestrally, which Heggie now does as a matter of course, even when composing for the piano. Raksin, known for his remarkable film scores, shared with Heggie a strong background in jazz and dance-band music. Says Heggie,

David Raksin helped me think pragmatically and economically in terms of musical ideas and materials. This reinforced something I'd learned from Ernst Bacon many years before. Since David was a great film composer, he also encouraged me to think theatrically and motivically.⁷⁰

When asked about his compositional style, Heggie struggles to give a definitive answer. He “writes what he hears” in response to a poem or inspiration, without giving attention to any particular stylistic boundaries.⁷¹ As comfortably accepted in a concert hall as in a Broadway revue, his compositions find their stylistic roots in Broadway and jazz, but are generally written for those who have been classically trained. Perhaps it is this versatility and melting pot style that make Heggie as distinctly “American” as Copland, Barber and Weill. Inspired in his youth by movies featuring singing actors like Julie Andrews and Barbra Streisand, he seeks to incorporate music in a way that is unobtrusive to the flow of the story and presents very clear text. Clarity of words,

⁷⁰ *ibid.*

⁷¹ Jake Heggie, interview by author, 24 January 2008.

sensitivity to context and lyric lines stand out to him as the most important elements in vocal music.⁷²

The relationship of text and music is paramount in Heggie's compositions. A self-professed "theatre composer," he seeks to capture the meaning and spirit of the words, elevating them to a new level of emotional and psychological depth.⁷³ In order to see Heggie's compositions more clearly, he suggests first speaking them as monologues without rhythm or notes.⁷⁴ Joyce DiDonato, who performed the role of Sister Helen Prejean in the New York City Opera production of *Dead Man Walking* and premiered the orchestral arrangement of *The Deepest Desire*, echoes this sentiment:

Recite the text. Every single marking that he makes, every accent, every melodic rise or fall of the line is derived *directly* from the text. He has a huge love of plays and poetry, and I think that background contributes enormously into his love for setting words. He spends so much time contemplating each phrase, each sentence, and is never satisfied if someone is just 'singing' the words - he wants someone to get into the marrow of the words, to live with them, to decide what they mean to them as an individual, and then to sing it with all their heart.⁷⁵

Consistently described as an intensely empathetic person, Heggie says he is fascinated by real human experiences. Rarely drawn to mythology and other tales that seem to lack direct application to everyday human life, he finds great poetry in the way people speak, even in casual exchanges. Therefore Heggie's most successful pieces have been about people living in the modern era, struggling with the emotional burdens of the present.⁷⁶ Reflective of his life experience, Heggie's body of work strongly

⁷² Lynch, 104.

⁷³ Jake Heggie, interview by author, 24 January 2008.

⁷⁴ Jake Heggie, interview by author, 14 March 2008.

⁷⁵ Joyce DiDonato, e-mail message to author, 5 April 2008.

⁷⁶ Jake Heggie, interview by author, 24 January 2008.

emphasizes the subjects of spiritual journey and struggle and parent- child relationships.

Stylistically, Heggie prefers an improvisatory, organic feeling of spontaneous performance in which the performer moves beyond the academic exercise of reading notes, rhythms and text. When composing, he generally envisions the voice of a classically trained singer and prefers the consistent use of vibrato, with straight tone relegated to moments where the affect is needed to enhance the drama.⁷⁷ As in the performance of jazz, Heggie does not want the performer to be bound by bar lines and measures. Rather, he prefers a free approach, preserving the notes, rhythms and the basic intent of the song, while remaining cognizant of the musical-textual connection in the phrase. Composers, says Heggie, “don’t want you to be a metronome. They want artistry.”⁷⁸

Heggie actively intends each interpretation to be highly individual, allowing the music to bend to the creative desires of the performer. Many score markings are left intentionally ambiguous. Tempi, dynamics and pauses are free and varied, inviting the performer to bring his or her individuality to the piece. “If a piece is good, there isn’t only one way to do it. There are many ways to do it. There are many sides to a tempo; there are many ways to interpret a song,” says Heggie.⁷⁹

The conductor Patrick Summers has remarked that Heggie writes in a very Baroque manner in regards to the treatment of notes and tempi.⁸⁰ Heggie’s

⁷⁷ Jake Heggie, interview by author, 14 March 2008.

⁷⁸ Lynch, 111.

⁷⁹ *ibid.*

⁸⁰ Jake Heggie, interview by author, 14 March 2008.

compositional style provides artistic freedom and control to the performer, a standard practice in the Baroque period, thus providing Summers' conclusion a very understandable assessment. Also reminiscent of the Baroque is his favoring of mid-range voices and emphasis on text. Says Heggie, "I grew up playing Bach... but I also love Broadway. I think it's all in there."⁸¹

When performing his own compositions, Heggie makes varied choices depending on the singer, venue and interpretation of the moment. No two performances are exactly alike. While the notes and rhythms remain the same, the dynamics, pacing and tempi are all subject to change. It is his hope that performers will not analyze his markings in a purely academic fashion, attempting to replicate the previous performances of others. Regarding this he says:

It's important to have all of that knowledge and all of that awareness, but the actual act of making music is a very different thing. It's not academic. And...if it comes off as academic, it's boring. That's not why we go to concerts. We don't go for a theory lesson. I don't anyway. I go to be moved and excited and to have some kind of a transformative, meaningful experience.⁸²

The mezzo-soprano voice is clearly a dominant presence in his compositions, ranging from mezzo-sopranos as operatic heroines to multiple song cycles written for the lyric mezzo range. According to Heggie, among the most appealing attributes found in that voice type is clarity of words. The range does not lend itself to over-modification of vowels or consistently high pitches that can obscure the text. It retains an earthiness in the sound while still allowing for soaring, high passages.⁸³ For these reasons, lyric mezzo-soprano and lyric baritone voices are his favorite types for which to compose. In

⁸¹ *ibid.*

⁸² Jake Heggie, interview by author, 14 March 2008.

⁸³ Jake Heggie, interview by author, 24 January 2008.

addition, some of Heggie's closest friends are mezzo-sopranos who enjoy singing his compositions. With Frederica von Stade, Susan Graham, Jennifer Larmore, and Joyce DiDonato, to name a few, Heggie understandably regards this as "a golden age of lyric mezzos."⁸⁴

⁸⁴ *ibid.*

CHAPTER 6

SPIRITUALITY AND PERSONAL PHILOSOPHY OF JAKE HEGGIE

Jake Heggie's father John was a first generation American from a strongly Roman Catholic, Hungarian family. His decision to marry Judith, a Presbyterian, was not well received. Judith's in-laws never accepted her, and John broke from both his family and the Catholic Church. This religious clash was the first of many that Heggie would observe in his struggle with spirituality. The pomp of the Catholic traditions and the clergy that seemed to be in an exalted position above the congregation never appealed to him.⁸⁵ To Heggie, this was the sort of establishment that Jesus Christ railed against. Although raised Presbyterian, the family was never devout and after his father's suicide, they ceased attending church.

The negativity, war and conflict Heggie associates with organized religion led him to explore his spirituality away from the traditions of the church. "The thing that bothers me most about man-made 'organized' religion is hypocrisy," says Heggie. "So much of the time it's a matter of choosing which brand of intolerance each religion promotes."⁸⁶ Though he feels that no one religion is completely bad, he feels that all too often they stray from the original message they profess to believe. In a discussion with Sister Helen, she told him "any time there's a prophet or someone who's really had a big impact on the world or society, you can count on that in one hundred to one hundred fifty years, their message will be completely twisted around."⁸⁷ Heggie feels that the desire to manipulate power and influence has altered the true teachings found in the

⁸⁵ Lynch, 106.

⁸⁶ Jake Heggie, e-mail message to author, September 13, 2008.

⁸⁷ Lynch, 106.

New Testament.⁸⁸ Though he appears to admire the basic teachings found in religious writings, he has lost faith in the establishments that claim to promote them.

Heggie considers himself a spiritual person, operating “almost solely from the heart.”⁸⁹ Rather than holding God accountable for everything that happens, Heggie feels that we should accept responsibility for ourselves and for the world, not just as a society, but also as individuals.⁹⁰ He wants to do work that will touch lives in a meaningful way, and invest himself personally into making the world better.

On August 17, 2003, Heggie’s sister Joanne collapsed due to a brain aneurysm while shopping in San Diego. There was no brain activity and the hospital had placed her on life support. Because other family members were unable to get there quickly due to distance, Heggie and his brother made a painful decision allowing the doctors to pull the plug and harvest her organs. Though Heggie had struggled for years with issues of faith, spirit and existentialism, the sudden loss of his sister led him to the final decision that there can be no higher power. Says Heggie, “After my sister died I became a confirmed atheist, or rather, a secular humanist. Because I do believe in the human spirit, the essential bond between us and all the natural world, but I don't believe in God or a supreme being at all.”⁹¹ He struggled with the questions of traditional mortality and deeper meaning and came up empty. He was left only with the feeling that humans are very advanced animals, changed by evolution and biology, and sharing in common a life force that cannot be recreated or held on to.

⁸⁸ *ibid.*

⁸⁹ *ibid.*

⁹⁰ Lynch, 107.

⁹¹ Jake Heggie, e-mail message to author, September 12, 2008.

Ultimately, Heggie does believe we are bound together in some way, though not necessarily through intelligent design. “For me, God is love,” Heggie says. “If I believe in God, it’s love. It’s that mysterious force that joins us all, that floats through all humanity. It is untouchable and it is unidentifiable. It is recognizable, but it has no color, no gender, it has no shape, no size.”⁹² Perhaps being witness to the deaths of so many who were dear to him led to this conclusion. One cannot help but recall the feelings of isolation and loss so prevalent in Heggie’s childhood and early adulthood when hearing his thoughts on life’s meaning.

All of us struggle with the fact that we are ultimately alone. That no matter how many human connections we make, we’re an individual vessel walking around on this earth and we seek to connect and find common threads and people who will help fill that void and emptiness. When we find it, it’s miraculous.⁹³

Spirituality has a constant presence in his work. When Heggie first chose to set a text written by someone other than himself, he used the poems of Paramahansa Yogananda. The author of *Autobiography of a Yogi*, Yogananda was the founder of the self-realization fellowship, a yogi and a poet.⁹⁴ In 1996 he wrote a song cycle entitled *Eve-Song*, based on the poetry of Philip Littell, that discusses the Eve found in Genesis in a way that is sometimes flippant and other times moving. *Of Gods and Cats*, a song set written in 2000, sets the poetry of Gavin Geoffrey Dillard. One song blends a cat’s perspective with the biblical story of creation, while the other is an irreverent comedy about the bad behavior of God in his childhood. *The Deepest Desire*, written in 2002, sets the religious meditations of Sister Helen Prejean, the Catholic nun who authored *Dead Man Walking*. These settings approach spirituality from an earnest, searching,

⁹² Lynch, 107.

⁹³ Lynch, 107.

⁹⁴ Lynch, 103.

and emotionally exposed perspective. Other works, while not written on overtly religious themes, consistently reference the human spirit.⁹⁵

Other works specifically on spiritual themes include *Dead Man Walking*, *For a Look or a Touch*, *Holy the Firm: Essay for Cello and Orchestra*, and *The End of the Affair*. The latter, with a story written by Graham Greene, spoke to Heggie on a very personal level. The main character struggles to determine if God is in fact present and acting in answer to her desperate prayers. This struggle ultimately leads to a destructive end. Says Heggie, “It really, really spoke to me, because there’s part of me that wants to be one of those people who just believes, and I don’t. I believe in the power of love to transform and redeem our lives. I think that’s a human tenet and I believe in humans. I believe we could make this place better.”⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Jake Heggie, e-mail message to author, September 13, 2008.

⁹⁶ Lynch, 108.

CHAPTER 7
SPIRITUALITY AND PERSONAL PHILOSOPHY OF
SISTER HELEN PREJEAN, CSJ

The Deepest Desire is born of a concept from Ignation spirituality. Saint Ignatius of Loyola's writings, or "spiritual exercises," were designed to give guidance for discerning the "deepest desires" of the heart, and by that understanding to make the spiritual path of the individual clear.⁹⁷ In the Buddhist tradition, it is presented as "living in the presence of reality... in the fullness of now."⁹⁸ The deep desires explored in Ignation spirituality are vastly different than those referred to by Sister Helen as "imitative desires" prevalent in modern culture. According to Sister Helen, the consumerist desires such as money, ownership and professional advancement distract from the true desires of the heart, while the spiritual exercises of Saint Ignatius encourage quiet reflection in order to unearth an individual's spiritual core, ultimately leading to the deepest desire.

Duty, perceived need and pressure from others cannot guide an individual forever, says Sister Helen. "We can only really operate out of guilt so long. Finally, the deepest thrust of life, which is embodied in our desires, our deepest desires, is what we have to get in touch with."⁹⁹ Saint Ignatius says that a sure sign of being called to something deeper or wider than the current self is the presence of anxiety and

⁹⁷ Sister Helen Prejean, interview by author, 3 June 2008.

⁹⁸ *ibid.*

⁹⁹ *ibid.*

restlessness that he calls "desolation of spirit."¹⁰⁰ However, when giving, serving and loving, the individual can find peace and consolation.¹⁰¹

Sister Helen describes surrendering to the deepest desire as a boat catching a wave:

Like on the death penalty issue, I have caught a wave. I'm engulfed in a passion. That... it's really me, it's bigger than me. But you have this feeling of you moving in a current. And you've tapped into it and the energy and the power of it flows through you. But yet you're aware there's a humility in it because you know you are a part of something bigger.¹⁰²

This concept resonated with Heggie, drawing him to explore her meditations and set them to music. In the habit of keeping a constant journal, she writes daily spiritual reflections on the happenings of her life and the concerns of her heart in order to maintain self-awareness. At Heggie's request, Sister Helen sent him entries from her journal, chosen based on his interest in the *deepest desires* of the heart.

When asked about Jake Heggie, Sister Helen enthusiastically confirms their "affinity of spirit."¹⁰³ She harbors no desire to shape or change him in any way. "He's just so good and pure in his own being," she says.¹⁰⁴ Though Heggie had never written an opera before, Sister Helen feels that it was a calling buried deep within him. She maintains that his talent, unknown even to himself, waited to bloom until a "full sized

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*

¹⁰² *ibid.*

¹⁰³ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*

piece of work” drew it to the surface.¹⁰⁵ “Jake’s music comes out of his deep capacity and the suffering that he has gone through,” says Sister Helen.¹⁰⁶

Though religion would seem on the surface to be the largest contradiction of their unlikely relationship, shared spirituality is in actuality what ties them together. Of their relationship, Joyce DiDonato says,

...they both carry with them a raging passion for human dignity, which is why I think these two people from vastly different backgrounds, leading vastly different lives can have such a meeting of the minds and the hearts, because their vision of the right of each human being to have dignity and respect is inherent to our race, and they actually *act* on that fundamental belief. I've never met two more upright, direct and beautiful people.¹⁰⁷

Sister Helen focuses on matters of spiritual growth and understanding and puts enormous faith in the ability of music to reach the heart of the listener.

Art takes us into an immediate spiritual experience of great intimacy. And it’s a way of translating to people experiences that we human beings have, from heart to heart and soul to soul. And music does it in a way nothing else can, really, because you can only be so linear. You can only be so logical and only put it in so many words. And so I have great hopes for the music, and what it can do for people.¹⁰⁸

The deep response of audiences to *The Deepest Desire* and *Dead Man Walking* enables one to fully understand the impact on the listener. The marriage of Sister Helen’s words and Heggie’s music seem to elicit emotional responses that often inspire philosophical discussions about the spirit or morality. This response, Sister Helen explains, is the way to gauge the effectiveness and power of a message.

Jesus says you know a tree is a healthy tree or not if you got a lot of little red apples hanging from it...‘By their fruits you know them.’... It’s that deep

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Sister Helen Prejean, interview by author, 12 September 2008.

¹⁰⁷ Joyce DiDonato, e-mail message to author, 5 April 2008.

¹⁰⁸ Sister Helen Prejean, interview by author, 3 June 2008.

resonance or vibration of spirit that we look for. And so, Jake's music and ability to be evocative of the human heart is...a vital and important part of just healing our society, and summoning us to deeper places in our hearts.¹⁰⁹

Heggie's setting of *Dead Man Walking* strikes a universal chord, discussing the struggle to forgive those who have been responsible for hurt, pain and grief. The death penalty is his starting point, but he moves the spiritual and moral questions beyond that issue. Heggie and Sister Helen's further collaborations continue to focus on a deeply human theme. *Seeking Higher Ground* focuses on healing and rebuilding rather than the blame and hurt felt in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.¹¹⁰ *The Deepest Desire* portrays a journey beyond self, learning to love "even the undeserving ones," and letting "praise and blame fall where they may." Intentionally anchored in the heart of each piece is a call to forgiveness, compassion and living for something greater than self.

The inherent mission of Sister Helen is to awaken people to the realities of the death penalty and preserve the sanctity of human life. She describes the death penalty as a "crystallization of violence, using violence and coercion as a way of dealing with social problems instead of love and caring and nurturing in a society."¹¹¹ She has dedicated her life to fostering change through education and reaching out to help victims on both sides of the death penalty.

The Catholic Church, early Christian theologians and mystics and eastern philosophy all influence Sister Helen's spiritual ideals. According to Sister Helen, all religions share the same source and are unified by the same thought that the universe and all who inhabit it are one. She maintains that the "consciousness of being" that is

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*

¹¹⁰ On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina made landfall in Louisiana as a Category three hurricane, devastating much of New Orleans and surrounding areas.

¹¹¹ Sister Helen Prejean, interview by author, 3 June 2008.

associated with humanity can inspire feelings of alienation and pain because we are conscious of suffering, loss, grief, and death.¹¹²

But the deeper we go, when we get to that deep underground stream, it's *then* we come to the place where, in Buddhism, all thought ceases and it's just the oneness in being. The mystics in contemplation in Christianity, Teresa of Avila, and Catherine of Sienna and Julian of Norwich, and all the mystics point to that place that we get to where we are simply *one with*...So Christianity at its heart is about learning to love in a way that we are still one with everything. That there is no one we call enemy. There is no one so foreign, so different, so evil, so hostile that I must kill that person. That compassion is the driving force. It was the driving force in the heart of Jesus.¹¹³

This compassion is her motivation to join the fight for human rights and to teach about the death penalty.

Sister Helen feels that the teachings of Christ have been perverted, almost since the beginning of Christianity itself, and “religion has also been manipulated and made into a huge banking system.”¹¹⁴ She references some religious groups who emphasize fear of hell and eternal damnation rather than compassion and love as the basis for spirituality. This doctrine of fear is the sort of Christianity spoken of by Jake Heggie, inspiring him to seek elsewhere when exploring spiritual growth.

In order to fully understand the spiritual relationship between Heggie and Sister Helen, one must first understand several principals of historical Christian doctrine and philosophy. The “theology of atonement,” developed by Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109), is embraced by many Christians of the Western world. According to Anselm’s *Cur Deus Homo (Why God Became Human)*,

...human sin had caused an affront to God’s honor, an affront that God could not simply dismiss or overlook. God’s righteous nature required satisfaction; a

¹¹² Sister Helen Prejean, interview by author, 12 September 2008.

¹¹³ *ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*

penalty had to be paid. Sinful humanity by definition was unable to pay this debt to God's righteousness and honor. Here is where God's mercy prevailed, for God took upon himself, in the form of Jesus Christ, the penalty of sin that humanity could not pay, in effect substituting Jesus Christ for the human beings who deserved condemnation and death. Those who accepted the penalty paid by Jesus Christ were thus freed from the legal consequences of their sins and rewarded eternal life through Christ.¹¹⁵

Due to this treatise, the twelfth century saw the issue of redemption rise to the forefront as a point of contention for the first time in the history of the Christian church.¹¹⁶

Anslem's "theology of atonement" is directly contrary to Sister Helen's beliefs. The need for a bloody sacrifice as payment is to her thinking a "projection of our own violence onto God."¹¹⁷ Rather than atonement demanded by God, she explains the crucifixion of Jesus Christ as an assassination of one who would expose truth to humanity; because he reached out to the poor and other undesirables, the religious hierarchy in Jerusalem felt threatened and turned Jesus over to Roman authorities. This scandalous slaying of God incarnate out of human hate and fear, Sister Helen says, is what led to the atonement theology.

Oscar Ramero, Martin Luther King, the six Jesuit priests in El Salvador, the four church women in El Salvador, Gandhi... were forces of love and non violence in the world in service...Those who use violence and exploit cannot stand the presence of that and so they try to kill it and stomp it out. And that's why Jesus was killed.¹¹⁸

Rather than accepting the theology of Christ being sent as a living sacrifice as defined by Anslem, Sister Helen follows the theology that God came to Earth in the form of Christ out of compassion to teach his lost children.

¹¹⁵ Dale T. Irvin and Scott W. Sunquist. *History of the World Christian Movement, Volume I: Earliest Christianity to 1453* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2001), 426.

¹¹⁶ J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines, Fifth Edition* (New York: Continuum, 1977), 375.

¹¹⁷ Sister Helen Prejean, interview by author, 12 September 2008.

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*

Eternal damnation in hell for sinners who have not accepted Christ was not considered firm Church doctrine until the fifth century when it took hold in the West¹¹⁹ and is currently a doctrine of prominence in the United States. Sister Helen's views on hell seem to echo those of Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa, early theologians who questioned the existence or permanence of hell.¹²⁰ "We have huge biblical illiteracy in the country and the study of the Bible. There's a thrust toward liberation of people, respect for people, love for people...and that is incompatible with putting people in a big iron skillet and burning them for all eternity,"¹²¹ says Sister Helen. The concept of an eternal, torturous hell is to her a further projection of human violence onto God with the concept of God's eternal punishment being used to theologically defend and sanctify the temporal punishment of state administered execution, making even priests part of the process through formally blessing the executions.

Without the doctrine-inspired fear of eternal damnation in hell, Sister Helen's motives and behavior toward others of different faiths is dramatically different. Rather than attempting to remake Heggie's faith system, as would be obligated by other doctrines, Sister Helen focuses instead on what she sees as the beauty of his spirit. "Love doesn't have to merge things into itself, or subsume it into self. It is respectful of the self of another."¹²² She says the common ground found among people of all faiths and belief systems is that "all life must be respected, especially in those who are most

¹¹⁹ Kelly, 484.

¹²⁰ Kelly, 483.

¹²¹ Sister Helen Prejean, interview by author, 12 September 2008.

¹²² *ibid.*

vulnerable.”¹²³ Sharing that common viewpoint, Heggie and Sister Helen relate to one another with full acceptance, nurturing a deep respect and admiration for each other.

You see, any ideologue, or anybody who wants to proselytize, always wants to remake people because they have a preconceived image of who God is. When you think of the arrogance in this, it’s stunning. It’s stunning arrogance to say ‘I know what God wants people to be, and I’m going to set about to remake these people according to my image of what I think God has told us.’ Anything that smacks of coercion and lack of respect for dignity of the person cannot be of God...I believe Jake Heggie is an image, in fact I believe he is the self-expression, of God in the world, because he is truly a loving being. He’s a creative being. And he’s joyful. What in the world would I want to change in him?¹²⁴

The most obvious difference between the spiritual philosophies of Heggie and Sister Helen is the acceptance or rejection of a “higher power.” Heggie is self-proclaimed atheistic and feels that humans are “just really fancy animals” resulting from “evolution and biology,”¹²⁵ while Sister Helen believes humans are created in the image of God. Regarding Heggie’s atheism, Sister Helen says,

Atheism is ‘against the theism of the day.’ And the God that Jake doesn’t believe in, I don’t believe in either... And of course he would have to reject this God that has been used against him...as a gay man. Religion that forces the religion and the violence and the hostility and ...that causes self loathing...I don’t know how Jake in honesty in his life could say anything else, because the God of the Christians and of the Bible has been so oppressive to him. Almost killed him.¹²⁶

The terms “higher power” and “supreme being” are disagreeable to Sister Helen, who feels they create an image of a God who is “extrinsic to life, who’s working the strings” and allows suffering.¹²⁷ By removing God to an exterior force, he is made a

¹²³ *ibid.*

¹²⁴ *ibid.*

¹²⁵ Lynch, 107.

¹²⁶ Sister Helen Prejean, interview by author, 12 September 2008.

¹²⁷ *ibid.*

“puppeteer-God,” “an ogre and an idol.”¹²⁸ Rather, she believes in a God who created a universe that continually creates itself, unfurling in infinite possibilities. When asked to describe the force that unites all of humanity, both Heggie and Sister Helen provide the same answer. Their mutual belief in love and compassion for all mankind, respect for human dignity, and following the deepest calling of one’s spirit unite them in a way that few shared theologies could.

When asked to summarize what it means to live a life following the teachings of Christ, Sister Helen said,

Watch what I do to see what I really believe...That takes belief out of the realm of dogma, and religious traditions that get into competition with each other... What’s the spiritual practice of our life? What kind of being does it lead us into, and what does it lead us to do?¹²⁹

The love found in Christ’s teachings, explains Sister Helen, reaches wider than our families, ourselves, or to those like us. Rather, it must also extend to immigrants, prisoners, the oppressed, outsiders, and those with no voice in society. Sister Helen adds:

So let us love each other, and let us share what we have learned from our experience in life that has taught us what is true and good and noble. And let’s be willing to share that with each other and not to impose our view on another, or to coerce them to change through fear.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ *ibid.*

¹²⁹ *ibid.*

¹³⁰ *ibid.*

CHAPTER 8

VPÒÄÒÒÙÒÙVÄÒÒÜÒKÄDUWÜÄÒÖVCEVQIPÙÁPŠUXÒ

The Deepest Desire: Four Meditations on Love was born of conversations between Sister Helen and Heggie regarding spirituality. Never having found an adequate definition, he asked her to explain what she considered to be spirituality. Sister Helen stated that earlier in her life she had been convinced of one set of beliefs, never questioning her upbringing. Dealing with the most desperate parts of humanity, she explained, led her to a new understanding. Life purpose and beliefs defined by those who reared her did not necessarily fill her needs. Heggie explains in his preface to *The Deepest Desire*,

She'd had to throw away all the 'stuff' she'd been told she needs, the 'stuff' she'd been told she *must* have, *must* pursue, *must* obtain. She went to the deepest waters of her being, and it was there she found the core of her spirituality: the deepest desire of her heart.¹³¹

Given the traditional preconception that nuns should not have desires, much less desires about which they are extremely passionate, this answer surprised him. Heggie asked her to put her thoughts into words that he might use in his music and Sister Helen was glad to oblige.¹³² The resulting texts were meditations on faith, love, struggle, and self-realization, taken from her daily journal writing. Sister Helen gave him the freedom to edit as needed in order to make them better suited to a musical setting, and he trimmed them down to a more concise, poetic form. *The Deepest Desire* was commissioned by the Bravo! Vail Valley Music Festival, where it was first performed on July 16, 2002 by mezzo-soprano Susan Graham, flutist Eugenia Zukerman, and Jake

¹³¹ Jake Heggie, program notes to *The deepest desire : four meditations on love*, piano version, text by Helen Prejean (San Francisco, CA: Bent Pen Music, 2002).

¹³² *ibid.*

Heggie at the piano. Zukerman, the Artistic Director of the music festival, requested a piece she could perform in, resulting in the deeply emotional and prominent flute part present in *The Deepest Desire*. Susan Graham, who created the role of Sister Helen in *Dead Man Walking*, was asked by Heggie to participate and is the person to whom *The Deepest Desire* is dedicated.

For Heggie, the conversation with Sister Helen helped to clarify many questions concerning spirituality. Above all, it seemed to solidify for him the concept that true spirituality transcends dogma and traditional thought. When discussing *the call* at the heart of this piece Heggie said:

Some of us recognize it as a spiritual call, others recognize it as a different kind of call. It's whatever your deepest desire is in your heart. That's the good in the world that's somehow pulling you in this way, whether it's to be a parent, volunteer at a school, to make music, to share it... all of that is a calling.¹³³

With the orchestral texture of the piano and the clarity and power of the flute, Heggie decided that he could easily cast the flute as an additional character in the drama. As the voice of *the call*, it pulls the speaker toward her true purpose. They fight against each other, as the flute grows more insistent and urgent. Only at the end of the cycle are the voice and flute finally united as one voice.

Heggie views *The Deepest Desire* as an extension of *Dead Man Walking*, serving as a *scena* that allows the audience to see the inner struggle of Sister Helen in her search for the deepest desire of her heart.¹³⁴ The genre of art song allows for deep emotional exploration, where prolonged internal character development can often inhibit dramatic progression in the context of an opera. "This Journey to Christ," Sister Helen's

¹³³ Jake Heggie, interview by author, 24 January 2008.

¹³⁴ Jake Heggie, interview by author, 24 January 2008.

aria from *Dead Man Walking*, touches on the issue of her struggle to follow the call, but Heggie felt further elaboration would have compromised the flow and effectiveness of the work as a whole.¹³⁵ Of the song cycle Heggie says, “To me it’s as much a scene as anything from an opera. It’s a journey that you’re taking everybody in the audience on...a very dramatic journey. It’s an internal one, but it’s a journey nonetheless.”¹³⁶

The first movement of *The Deepest Desire* is divided into three distinct sections and is titled *The Call- More is Required- Love*. *The Call*, a thirty-eight measure unaccompanied flute prelude, establishes the thematic material built on conflicting major and minor thirds. Heggie’s consistent enharmonic spellings of major thirds as diminished fourths indicate the pull toward the call, which will be represented in the last movement as a perfect fourth. As the title indicates, the flute is the voice of conscience calling to the speaker. According to Heggie, the first occurrences of the major and minor third motif are set in a descending interval to portray the speaker aspiring to reach higher but ultimately falling in failure.¹³⁷ As the cycle progresses, the ascending inversion of this motif is presented as an indication of the fulfillment of *the call*. Performance directions are provided in the score in order to enhance the otherworldly shimmer and theatrical features of the prelude. “*The pianist should hold the pedal down throughout the Prelude. The flutist should try to play directly into the open piano so the strings resonate and create a shimmer of sound.*”

¹³⁵ *ibid.*

¹³⁶ Jake Heggie, interview by author, 14 March 2008.

¹³⁷ *ibid.*

The prelude begins with a mezzo-forte statement of thematic material, the fighting major and minor thirds upon which the piece is constructed. It then repeats at a quieter dynamic, tied to variants that will appear throughout the piece.



Figure 1: *Prelude: The Call*, mm. 1-3.

The theme is again presented, this time an octave down and still at a quiet dynamic. Measure 6 includes slides between half steps that will be heard again in the fourth movement, *Primary Colors*, representing the peace attained by following *the call*. These slides are placed in the lowest register of the instrument, producing the effect of a Native American wooden flute.

The thematic statements that follow grow in intensity and range. Each time, *the call* is presented in a new way. It is sometimes a gentle whisper, pulling at the soul, stirring something buried deep in the subconscious. Quiet dynamics, slides, *mezza di voce* markings, and the dominance of the low and middle flute registers achieve this affect. Other times, the flute sounds demanding and frantic, begging to be heard as can be seen in measures 18 through 23. Marked *accelerando* and *crescendo*, these measures include arpeggiated sixteenth notes rising to a trill on an F in the flute's highest octave.

Frustration and urgency reach their height in measure 24.



Figure 2: *Prelude: The Call*, mm. 24-27.

Marked *fast* with a crescendo to forte, the line follows a chromatic scale in two groups of septuplets, ultimately building to two consecutive restatements of the theme. Rather than the softer affect of the trill seen previously, now the flute uses flutter tonguing on a high G. This shrill, rough articulation produces a guttural sound, resembling a cry or scream.

Measure 28 includes a fortissimo high Bb, the highest and loudest moment of the prelude. This statement is then repeated in a quieter dynamic and slowing tempo. *Tempo I* returns at measure 32 with another statement of *the call* motif. The gentle, pianissimo piano entrance is heard at measure 35, consisting of an ascending line of thirty second notes built on major and minor thirds.

Measure 39 arrives at G major and 6/8 meter, creating a seamless transition from the prelude to the second part of the first movement (marked 1. *More is Required*). This measure is marked “*easily-flowingly*,” and “*freely but clearly*.” At this point the flutist should move to a stand, ideally preset stage right of the pianist, in order to make room for the singer.¹³⁸ The singer may choose to enter the stage at the end of the prelude, or wait stage left of the piano until the vocal entrance. In either case, the theatrical relationship between the flute and voice should be carefully established and

¹³⁸ Jake Heggie, interview by author, 14 March 2008.

preserved. The singer is on a journey guided by the flute, which represents the inner voice calling her to the path she must follow.

The rocking affect of the piano line, achieved through ascending sixteenth-note patterns, reflects the textual imagery of being tossed among shifting currents. *The call* is still present in the flute line, and especially present in measures 61 through 64 as the vocal line says, “*What can one person do against a sucking tide?*” The gentle prodding of the flute in measures 66 to 68 answers the speaker, guiding her with *the call* motif to act against the injustice that surrounds her.

The image shows a musical score for measures 66-68. It consists of four staves. The top staff is the flute part, featuring a melodic line with a 'p' dynamic and a 'slowing' marking. The second staff is the vocal line, with the lyrics 'tide?' written below it. The third staff is the piano part, showing a series of ascending sixteenth-note patterns with a 'p' dynamic and a 'slowing' marking. The bottom staff is the piano part, showing a series of ascending sixteenth-note patterns with a 'p' dynamic and a 'slowing' marking.

Figure 3: 1. *More is required*, mm. 66-68.

The flute seems to feed the next thoughts to the singer, playing a musical line that the singer mimics and builds upon. Flutter tonguing in the flute increases the urgency of the message and the call to fight against the currents. The ascending chromatic movement in the piano line furthers the imagery of swelling waves.

The image shows a musical score for measures 70-75. It consists of three staves: Flute (Fl.), Mezzo-soprano (Mezzo), and Piano (Pno.).

- Flute (Fl.):** Starts at measure 70 with a melodic line. Dynamics include *a tempo*, *mp*, and *getting faster*. The line continues through measure 75.
- Mezzo-soprano (Mezzo):** Lyrics are "I coil like a bow." and "I gath-er like a fist. I forge like a". Dynamics include *a tempo*, *mf*, and *getting faster*.
- Piano (Pno.):** Accompaniment with dynamics *p*, *f*, and *cresc.*. It features complex chordal textures and arpeggiated patterns.

Figure 4: 1. *More is required*, mm. 70-75.

The line trades off between flute and singer, building by half steps until the climax of measures 78 through 80, when the text first indicates a push against the waves. Measures 94 through 96 are an exact restatement of measures 1 through 3 of the prelude. The voice responds to the flute in measures 97 and 98, also quoting measure 1 of the prelude as though finally hearing the full intensity of *the call* on her life. “My voice alone until a chorus joins” is begun with unaccompanied voice on measure 99, and joined by piano on measure 100. The piano line is a gradually building, frantic

repetition of *the call* motif played in quintuplets and placed in the highest and lowest extremes in the piano's range.

Figure 5: 1. *More is required*, mm. 98-100.

The final section of the first movement, designated 1 A, begins in measure 111. Marked “*reverently*,” it is an emotional arrival for the speaker. She has accepted *the call* and will follow where it leads. She must give of herself, loving “even the undeserving ones.” For the moment, the conflicting major and minor intervals find rest in the repeated D flat major triads of the piano part. Adding to this joyful moment of realization, the flute plays trills and septuplets running up and down the octave. The piano part accompanies the excitement of the flute with repeated sixteenth notes layered with a thirty second note triplet pattern, building in dynamic as well as forward motion. Measures 127 through 130 contain a variation of *the call* motif, this time in an ascending line as can be seen in the following figure.

Figure 6: 1A: Love, mm. 127-131.

By answering *the call* she has risen to something greater than herself. She is now moving upward, a change from the falling motion indicated in the original *call* motif.

I Catch on Fire, the quirky second movement of the cycle, tells a true story from Sister Helen's years as a Catholic School teacher. Teaching a religion class and wearing a traditional habit consisting of yards of fabric, she caught fire from a nearby candle and had to be rescued by twenty-five fourth graders. She laughingly recounted this story to Heggie one day, and as humor and quick wit is an integral part of Sister Helen's personality, he felt this would be appropriate to include among the other pieces of the cycle. While the words included in this movement all belong to Sister Helen,

Heggie organized them in a way that would flow musically and dramatically, generally in fragments rather than complete sentences. Heggie wanted the story to be presented in the “matter of fact” way that she would deliver it.¹³⁹ The original text of Sister Helen’s narration is presumed lost, as it was written “on the back of something” that was probably discarded.¹⁴⁰ *I Catch on Fire* is paced in a way that effectively builds theatrical tension, just as one would when telling a story.

The conflicting major and minor thirds found throughout the piece are now used to create a motif variation used repeatedly in this movement. The ascending eighth notes, slurred together and punctuated with an ending staccato, resemble a short giggle, which is followed by a knowing sigh on a sustained lower pitch. This laughing motif is present in both the piano and the flute at the beginning of the movement and echoed by the voice on its first entrance.

The image shows a musical score for the first measure of the piece. It features three staves: a Flute staff at the top, and a Piano staff consisting of two staves (treble and bass clef) at the bottom. The tempo is marked 'Quickly' with a quarter note equal to approximately 80 beats per minute (ca 80). The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The Flute part begins with a whole rest. The Piano part begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The right hand of the piano plays an ascending eighth-note motif (B-flat, C, D, E-flat) slurred together, followed by a staccato eighth note (F) and a sustained lower pitch (G-flat) in the bass clef. A performance instruction at the bottom reads 'dry - very little pedal'.

Figure 7: *I catch on fire*, m. 1.

¹³⁹ Jake Heggie, interview by author, 14 March 2008.

¹⁴⁰ Jake Heggie, interview by author, 24 January 2008.

The flute part is intertwined with the vocal line, sometimes being the first to recall the memory and other times commenting on the text. Following “A walking bolt of black material” the vocal line slides, bending the pitch between F and Ab on “Ah.” This jazz-like element furthers the image of a casual, amused storyteller, laughing at herself. The piano and flute comment with the laughing motif and seem to sigh in measure 20 before returning to the story.

The piano, flute and voice continue with the story, ultimately leading to a very quiet, exposed moment in measures 36 and 37 in which we hear the words “Lit candle.” Starting on measure 38, the piano plays parallel octaves on each beat. This quarter note repetition resembles the quickening of a pulse that leads up to the text, “fifty little eyes wide.”

Figure 8: *I catch on fire*, mm. 37-41.

The ensemble begins at a *pianissimo* dynamic and the laughing motif is played over the pedal tone. The intensity builds and explodes into two measures marked *suddenly slower* where the students call “Sister! Sister!” Held with fermatas and unaccompanied, “You’re on fire!” creates the climax of the piece’s dramatic arc. The flute and piano

swell into a faster, louder section in which the students beat out the flames. There is a *poco ritardando* and *decrescendo* as the fire dies and the chaos stills. In the following silence and minimal accompaniment, one can feel the suppression of laughter as she delivers the punch line, “*Children, this teaches us always to be careful with fire.*” The piano and flute pick up the laughing motif in response to the text and gradually lead to a much slower, warmer section. “*Now, years later when I pray I catch on fire*” is given an air of solemnity in the organ-style triads building from the low to high register and the sustained walking bass as a foundation. This reverent moment is interrupted by the laughing motif once more in measures 85 through 88.

Figure 9: *I catch on fire*, mm. 86-91.

The piano enters in measure 89, returning to the solemn, sustained pedal tone. As though ending her story with a wink and a moment of dry wit, “*Amen*” is sung in a slurred, jazz-like style that heightens the comic effect.

The third movement, while not the emotional climax of the cycle, can be considered the dramatic climax.¹⁴¹ *The Deepest Desire* tells of the awakening that took

¹⁴¹ Jake Heggie, interview by author, 14 March 2008.

place in response to *the call*. The movement begins in a quiet, meditative state, strongly referencing *the call* motif interwoven in all lines. The shift to 6/8 meter in measure 27 recalls the wave-like rocking of *More is Required*, in which the text discusses being tossed on the currents. This movement tells of a voice calling to the speaker, “Lose yourself upon the deeper currents!” This water imagery links movements one and three, and gives the auditor a vivid image of being pulled by an overwhelming tide, both emotionally and musically. An element of agitation enters in measure 32, with *the call* still in the bass line and the singer’s triplets fighting against the steady eighth note pulses in the treble piano line. Starting on measure 37, an otherworldly affect is achieved through the use of trills and arpeggiated flourishes in the piano. The voice and flute echo each other with *the call* motif, utilizing pitches identical to that of measure 1 of the prelude.

Figure 10: *The Deepest Desire*, mm. 37-41.

The call builds in intensity until the piano also begins to include the theme in measure 44. The shift into 6/8, trill in the treble line, crescendo and accelerando are all utilized simultaneously, providing impetus for the frenzied septuplets starting in measure 49. The piano’s sweeping septuplet arpeggios are accompanied by a climbing, trilling

flute line that ultimately results in five consecutive high Cs, the highest standard note on the instrument. The drop from the flute's highest range to the piano's lowest in measure 57 depicts the crushing weight and emotional tumult of *the call*. The following section takes the listener on Sister Helen's journey to the inner city, witnessing pain and injustice, prison cells and death chambers, and people crying, "Is there life before death?"

Measure 77 returns to the melodic material and eighth note pulses found in measure 32. Earlier this material was used to depict the voice calling the speaker to something deeper, and now it is the realization of the deepest desire of her heart. "A desire for justice woke in me. A fierce desire that will not let go," says the speaker. The piano once again includes *the call* motif in the bass line and trills in the treble. This, paired with the repeated *call* motif in the flute part, creates the otherworldly affect seen previously in measure 37.

The image shows a musical score for measures 84-85. It features three staves: Flute (Fl.), Mezzo-soprano (Mezzo), and Piano (Pno.). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. Measure 84 begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The flute part starts with a high C (C6) followed by a descending line. The mezzo-soprano part has a vocal line with the word "go." written below it. The piano part is written in grand staff notation, with a treble clef and a bass clef. The piano part features a complex texture with trills in the treble and a bass line with eighth-note pulses. Dynamics include *mf* (mezzo-forte) and *p* (piano). The score ends with a double bar line at the end of measure 85.

Figure 11: *The Deepest Desire*, mm. 84-85.

In a rare moment of unity, the flute and voice move together on measure 90 in parallel octaves, as the speaker finally discovers the meaning of *the call*. Feverish repetitions and variations of *the call* pervade the turbulent piano and flute lines from measures 91 through 98, ending in a climactic setting of “Come home!” The final measures again push the flute to the highest note in its range, and the piano descends in accented, *fortissimo* major and minor thirds. Being called to something bigger than herself, she knows what she must do. “Home doesn’t mean that safe, secure place where you go and bar the door and no one can get at you,” says Sister Helen. “Home means the most resonant part of your being, where you know this is quintessentially who I really am.”¹⁴²

The final movement and emotional climax of the cycle, *Primary Colors*, reflects the peace found by the speaker in following *the call*. As an advocate for justice, Sister Helen is often surrounded by the darkest parts of humanity. Her greatest moments of peace are found at a Northern Cheyenne reservation in Montana where she goes to write and meditate.¹⁴³ In reference to this place of solace, Heggie directs the flute to bend the pitch “like a wooden flute.”¹⁴⁴ “With utmost calm” is the affect marking, and the first page of the piano part is written completely in treble clef. This produces a transparent, clear sound, unburdened by the weight of the previous movement.

Rather than the stumbling and failure represented by the previous descending *call* motif, *the call* is now an ascending variation symbolizing the successful rise to

¹⁴² Sister Helen Prejean, interview by author, 12 September 2008.

¹⁴³ Heggie, program notes.

¹⁴⁴ Jake Heggie, *The deepest desire : four meditations on love*, piano version, text by Helen Prejean (San Francisco, CA: Bent Pen Music, 2002), 30.

something greater and a sigh of peace.¹⁴⁵ The conflicting major and minor thirds found in all other movements are replaced by perfect fourths and expanded major thirds. By bending the pitch toward a Gb in *the call* variation, the minor interval is expanded to a major third, reflecting a sigh of contentment and peace.

The image shows a musical score for two instruments: Flute and Piano. The Flute part is written on a single staff in 3/2 time, with a tempo marking of quarter note = ca 42. It features two phrases of music, each starting with a dynamic marking of *p* (piano) and *pp* (pianissimo). The notes are connected by slurs, and there are two 'Bend' markings above the staff. The Piano part consists of two staves, both of which are empty, indicating that the piano is playing sustained open fifths and perfect fourths throughout the piece.

Figure 12: *Primary Colors*, mm. 1-2

The piano part is unadorned and exposed, playing sustained open fifths and perfect fourths throughout the piece.

This image shows a close-up of the musical score for measure 3. The Flute part is on the top staff, with a dynamic marking of *p* and a 'Bend' instruction. The Piano part is on the bottom two staves, with a dynamic marking of *p* and a 'Sea' marking. The piano part consists of sustained open fifths and perfect fourths.

Figure 13: *Primary Colors*, m. 3

¹⁴⁵ Jake Heggie, interview by author, 24 January 2008.

Emulating the quality of recitative, the text is set in rhythms reflective of natural speech and placed over sustained chords. “Primary colors” refers to leaving behind the trivial things in life, clinging only to what is essential. Sister Helen explains, “when you’re with someone being killed, and you’re there with death and life, everything gets very distilled.”¹⁴⁶ “I hold my soul in equanimity” is a direct reference to the *Tao Teh Ching* teaching of living in balance and harmony, or the *Tao of Equanimity*.¹⁴⁷ As is seen in moments of deep significance throughout the cycle, the flute and voice join in deliberate parallel movement for the words “when I pray.” The speaker is now unified with the flute, the voice of conscience, rather than fighting against it.



Figure 14: *Primary Colors*, m. 18

“At night, when I pray I catch on fire” reinforces the cyclical nature of the work, linking the fourth movement to the title, text, and subject matter of the second movement.

¹⁴⁶ Sister Helen Prejean, interview by author, 12 September 2008.

¹⁴⁷ Sister Helen Prejean, interview by author, 3 June 2008.

Because she followed the calling placed on her life, the speaker now falls “instantly to sleep.” In measure 23, the vocal line imitates the bending of pitch present in the flute part, making the last vocal phrase sound like a relaxed sigh. The inverted adaptation of *the call* motif is played twice more in its entirety by the flute. However, the final statement of *the call* is incomplete, ending the piece on a perfect fourth. The speaker has ascended to her purpose, and in this she has found perfect closure.¹⁴⁸

The image shows a musical score for three instruments: Flute (Fl.), Mezzo-soprano (Mezzo), and Piano (Pno.). The score is for measures 27, 28, and 29. Measure 27 begins with the flute playing a melodic line that includes a 'Bend' instruction. The mezzo-soprano part has a long rest in measure 27. The piano accompaniment features a complex texture with multiple voices. In measure 28, the flute continues its melodic line, and the mezzo-soprano part has a long rest. The piano accompaniment continues with a similar texture. In measure 29, the flute part ends with a note marked with an asterisk (*), indicating an incomplete statement of the motif. The mezzo-soprano part has a long rest. The piano accompaniment concludes with a final chord. The score is written in a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a common time signature (C).

Figure 15: *Primary Colors*, mm. 27-29

¹⁴⁸ Jake Heggie, interview by author, 14 March 2008.

CHAPTER 9

CONTINUING ASSOCIATION AND INSPIRATION

When hearing of a close friendship and spiritual connection shared between an atheist and a Catholic nun, there is understandable confusion. By all accounts, the vast cultural and religious differences would be expected to divide them, hindering meaningful communication and certainly prohibiting mutual admiration. However, the anticipated conflict surrounding differing theological views is utterly dismissed by Heggie and Sister Helen, as they choose to move beyond dogma and dwell on matters of the spirit.

By jointly rejecting the harsh and immediate judgment so often directed toward those living differing lifestyles, the imagined chasm separating them narrows. Each accepts the other completely, without precondition or ulterior motive. The influence of Sister Helen is strongly reflected in Heggie's ongoing spiritual journey and search for self-acceptance. Though the subject matter of spiritual and emotional struggle has continued to dominate his compositions, Heggie approaches them with increasing depth and understanding.

Sister Helen Prejean's story and influence continue to resonate with Jake Heggie, inspiring new compositions and arrangements. "*He will gather us around*," the original hymn tune composed by Heggie for *Dead Man Walking*, was arranged for a cappella chorus and premiered at Wichita State University in April 2003.¹⁴⁹ The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra commissioned an orchestration of *The Deepest Desire* and

¹⁴⁹ Jake Heggie, "The Official Website of Jake Heggie," <http://www.jakeheggie.com> (accessed 18 September 2008).

premiered it with mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato and conductor Patrick Summers on May 19, 2005.

April 30, 2006, almost one year after Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans, Sister Helen attended a concert given by the popular musician Bruce Springsteen. The last event of the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival 2006, Springsteen led the audience in songs that inspired emotional healing for the citizens of New Orleans.¹⁵⁰ People raised their hands and cried, singing songs like “Jacob’s Ladder,” “My Oklahoma Home,” and “O Mary Don’t You Weep.”¹⁵¹ Says Sister Helen, “...it just touched and bonded people very, very deeply...touched into the pain and, I believe, played a very significant part in healing our city.”¹⁵²

Excited about the concert, Sister Helen told Heggie about her experience and he asked her to write it down for him. From the multiple pages of ideas and notes sent by Sister Helen, Heggie assembled the text found in his composition for choir and orchestra, “*Seeking Higher Ground: Bruce Springsteen Rocks New Orleans, April 30, 2006.*”¹⁵³ The Pacific Chorale commissioned the work in celebration of its first performance in the newly built Segerstrom Concert Hall in Costa Mesa, California, first presenting the piece on October 22, 2006 with the Pacific Chorale and Pacific Symphony conducted by John Alexander.

Both Jake Heggie and Sister Helen Prejean are open to future artistic collaborations and maintain an ongoing friendship full of mutual admiration. Sister

¹⁵⁰ Sister Helen Prejean, CSJ, interview by author, 3 June 2008.

¹⁵¹ As featured on Bruce Springsteen’s 2006 album, “*We Shall Overcome- The Seeger Sessions*” released by Columbia Records.

¹⁵² Sister Helen Prejean, CSJ, interview by author, 3 June 2008.

¹⁵³ Jake Heggie, interview by author, 24 January 2008.

Helen anticipates that Heggie will have a deep interest in her upcoming spiritual memoir “River of Fire,” which she is currently writing. Sister Helen says, “He’s just gonna love this stuff. He’s just gonna eat it up. Lord knows what’ll come out of this!”¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ Sister Helen Prejean, CSJ, interview by author, 3 June 2008.

APPENDIX A

ORIGINAL TEXT WRITTEN BY SISTER HELEN PREJEAN

(Sent via e-mail by Jake Heggie, 31 January 2008)

First Meditation:

People sleep safely and soundly in their beds
at midnight
when it happens:

I watch a man die in the electric chair;
Put to death before my eyes.
I watch the death
But I do not die.

I catch on fire.

I walk out of the killing chamber
My mission as clear as the dark blue sky:
Wake up! Wake up all the people!
I will tell the world what I have seen
Until all the people wake up.

That night, I sleep the sleep of the just,
safely and soundly in my bed,
And I awake, my heart growing flowers.

Second Meditation:

I thought I knew my heart's desire: To love God
To be with God in heaven.

A bud unfolding
A dutiful and prayerful nun
I pleased God, I thought,
By being obedient.
It made me feel holy.

But getting to heaven takes a long, long time.
And dwelling far below all wants and whims and wishes was a Voice:
"Lose yourself!" it shouted.
"Lose yourself upon the deeper currents!"

Then I heard cries from the heart of the city.
I saw graffiti on red-brick walls: "Is there life before death?"
I heard little girls cooing to babies: "Now I have something of my very own."
I witnessed mothers wailing for lost sons.

I saw. I heard. I witnessed. I followed.

I made my way to prison cells.
I made my way to execution chambers.

A desire for justice awoke in me.
A fierce desire that will not let go.
A desire deeper than going to heaven.
The deepest desire of my heart.

"Come home!" the Voice says.
"Come home!"
"Come home!"

Third Meditation:

More is required than being swept along,
All the currents pulling me
Easy and wide in a long, slow drift.
Without rudder, floating backwards, now to the side.
What can one person do against a sucking tide?
I coil like a bow.
I gather like a fist.
I forge like a rudder. I lean
Into the wide, slow drift.
I tack and veer by God's pure will.

I raise my voice against the silence.
My voice alone.
Until a chorus joins.

Fourth Meditation:

Love is the energy of God;
Pray for it ardently.
Be grateful when it comes;
Give of it generously.
Lavish it on others,
Even the undeserving ones.
Cultivate friendship with care, like a garden;
It is the best love of all.

Fifth Meditation:

I live my life in primary colors.
I let praise or blame fall where they may.
I hold my soul in equanimity
And leave the fruits of my labors to God.

Better to live a primary life than a derived one.
A derived life knows only shades of gray,
Never savors the initiating spark of pure desire.
It rolls in the wake of other ships.

I have watched five human beings be put to death before my eyes.
I carry their faces in my soul.
I am on fire with their deaths.
I weep with victims' families
And rock them in my arms.
I carry their unquenchable sorrow in my soul.
Their great courage sustains me.

When I pray, I catch on fire.
And at night, when I put my head on the pillow,
I fall instantly to sleep.

APPENDIX B

THE DEEPEST DESIRE: FOUR MEDITATIONS ON LOVE, ADAPTED TEXTS

Music by Jake Heggie

Texts by Sister Helen Prejean, CSJ

Prelude: The Call (flute solo)

1. More is Required

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

1a) Love

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

2. I catch on fire

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

3. The deepest desire

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

But getting to heaven takes a long time,
And dwelling far below was a Voice, calling:
"Lose yourself!"
"Lose yourself upon the deeper currents!"

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

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

4. Primary colors

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

APPENDIX C

JAKE HEGGIE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION, 24 JANUARY 2008

Identification and Consent

Rebecca Beasley: First off, I'd love to hear about your first encounter with Sister Prejean and your first impressions.

Jake Heggie: My first encounter with Sister Helen was when she called me out of the blue when we decided to do *Dead Man Walking* for San Francisco opera. And she called me up- I didn't even know she was going to call- and this voice on the other end of the phone in this thick Louisiana accent said, "Is this Jake Heggie? Sister Helen Prejean. I got a call sayin' that San Francisco Opera wants to make an opera out of *Dead Man Walking*. And I said, 'Well of course we're going to do an opera of *Dead Man Walking*!' And she said, "But Jake, I don't know boot scat about opera, so you're gonna have to educate me." The other thing she said was, "Now, just to be clear- You don't write that atonal stuff, do you? I mean, people gonna be able to hum a tune, right?" So it started with a very friendly, upbeat, positive, supportive conversation, and she has been that way ever since. We became very good friends right away. Music is actually very, very important to her. She sings all the time. She's written little tunes herself, and she sent me a couple of tape recordings of herself just singing: when she's driving, when she's thinking about stuff. It was really wonderful. It's a little recording I cherish. But she was very involved and supportive right from the start. That was my first encounter with her. So that would have been like 19... it would either be late 1997 or early 1998. Probably late 1997 after we decided.

RB: So you were already familiar with her work before you decided to set it as an opera.

JH: Well, I was already familiar with the story. When Terrance McNally suggested the.... Well, that was my first encounter with her on a personal level. Before that, you know, I had heard of the movie when it came out and I actually was one of the people who didn't go to the movie because I was really afraid that I was going to start to feel sorry for someone who had done such a terrible, terrible thing. And I was worried that it would try to manipulate me, and I don't like movies like that. And I'd had it all wrong. And it was when Terrance McNally suggested the subject as an opera that I finally watched the movie. We rented it that weekend and watched it on a video. I hadn't seen it, but I knew exactly what

it was about because it is so famous and it had gotten so much press you couldn't help but read about it. And I have to say, I was so touched and moved by the film that I couldn't wait to dig into the book and read the real life story. So I had seen the film and read the book a couple of times by the time she called me. I had a familiarity with her work... I didn't have... with her life work and the way she talked about it, but I didn't have a familiarity with her personally until that moment.

RB: So did your learning about how she is personally change how you would have set her music?

JH: Oh yes, absolutely, because she is so human and so real. And she approaches everything with this appreciation for life and joy, and with great humor. And she's a storyteller. And the way she gets a point across is by telling stories really well. And she's also this remarkable facts machine. I mean, she remembers facts and figures like you cannot believe. If you want, I can put you in touch with her for this project. I don't remember if I've already given you her email, but she'd be happy to talk to you about it I know.

RB: I'd love that.

JH: It's been very interesting too, with the different singers who have portrayed Sister Helen in the opera. They have this idea of a nun that is this very pious, quiet person, who's got preset notions on the world. And it's just not Sister Helen at all. She's an activist, and she's down in the trenches doing the real work. And when they meet her, their entire concept of who that person really is changes.

RB: She seems pretty feisty.

JH: Oh, she's amazing. You know, I never got to hear or meet someone like Gandhi or Martin Luther King, but I've heard Sister Helen speak and I've met *her*. And I'm telling you it's right in the same category of people who are literally doing the work that they believe in and are willing to do anything to see it through. You know, her whole cause is fighting injustice. And she's used the death penalty as one of the biggest billboards for injustice. And she's devoted her life to it. And she's just a really remarkable person. I'll have to hook you up with her in person, because there is no real way to describe the kind of energy and beauty that she gives.

RB: Has she had an impact on your beliefs, either political or spiritual?

JH: You know, she confirmed some things, and she made me question other things. But the biggest thing is that if you believe in something, you devote your life and heart to it. That's where *The Deepest Desire* came from. I was talking with her and I said, "You know, I struggle with what my own sense of what spirituality is." And I said, "Tell me about your sense of what it is." And she said, "Well let me tell you Jake, I thought I knew. I thought I knew what it was supposed to be, and I thought because of what I'd been told all my life." And she said, "I had to go to through some of the most

desperate parts of humanity to realize that there's something so much more than what you are told you need; than what you are told you have to have; than what you are told you should believe." She goes, "You have to go to the deepest part of your being and find out what your deep desire is- what is the deepest desire of your heart. And then *that* is your calling. *That's* where your calling lies." And I think it solidified a bunch of things for me personally. But, I'll tell you one thing. I'm embarrassed to say that I was kind of ambivalent about the death penalty. Before working on it I was one of those people who said "Well yeah, I mean, they probably deserve to die. You know, they did something horrible." And it wasn't until I actually started working on it and I realized it's just a big political issue that gets used and pushed around for political gain. And it's so inequitably applied and it's filled with such prejudice that there is no way human beings can make decisions like that, you know, and not be prejudiced. So, it's just wrong. And I think I came to that through working with her and learning about what's really going on in the death penalty. So she definitely had a huge impact on my life. She's also one of those people who, her entire being suggests generosity. And to me, that is almost the highest plane of being on this earth...is to be generous. I've gotten that from Fredericka von Stade and from Terrance McNally too. This incredible sense of generosity of spirit and heart and soul. And it's something that I aspire to as well, 'cause those are my role models. She's a huge role model for me in that sense.

RB: When you commissioned these poems from her were you expecting something particular, or were these just what she presented to you?

JH: No, she basically talked to me about the different stories in her life that she had seen and heard. I actually... the poems in the cycle are whittled down from several pages of text, and I can send that to you.

RB: That would be wonderful.

JH: ... that she had originally sent to me. I don't have the *I Catch on Fire* thing...the original. It was... she wrote it down... I must have it somewhere... don't know where. And I can also send you if you are interested...I can have someone make photocopies of the original sketches and the actual original manuscript of the songs too.

RB: I would love that!

JH: There might be stuff in there that could be useful for you. But she basically told me, "You know I'm not a poet. What I do is, I'm just going to write down experiences." But she actually is very poetic in her writing. But she wrote down a bunch of different stories or thoughts that she had, meditations...and some of them were extremely dramatic, and some of them were, you know, very intimate, personal and funny. But all of them were touching because they were so connected to her heart. So she gave those to me. And I'm a pretty good editor in terms of knowing what will work for me musically and what will work for the music that I have in mind. And she gave me a free hand to do whatever I needed to do with them to make them work for the songs, so that's what I did.

RB: So you assembled the poetry out of her writings?

JH: Yes. Some of the stuff came directly from what she wrote, but some of it I just sort of picked and chose. And a couple of places I had to find a bridge or another word here or there, but you know, she was very happy with what happened.

RB: That's great.

JH: Yeah, that's kind of how I work. I have to work with writers who are extremely collaborative where they know that the words or the flow of it might change, but the spirit of it will be preserved throughout. And that's what they give me more than anything that inspires the music, is the spirit of the words. The spirit behind them and the emotion behind them. That connected...I know it will work.

RB: When you are working with someone like this that's still living, is your first priority to reflect the boundaries of their interpretation, or to make your own personal statement?

JH: Well there's no point in me setting words if I'm not going to bring what I have to bring to the table. You know, if I'm only going to honor what they've done, then you'll wind up with boring songs. The whole thing is, music changes everything. I did that a lot in my 20s when I'd set songs. I'd set them with such respect that they were dull. Or, like, there is not point in setting the poem if you're not going to do something to it. So, I want to preserve what they brought and honor it, but I want to enhance and add it. I want to show that music can take it to an even different level. You know? Because ultimately, if you're going to put music to it, the music has to lead in the end. At first the text leads because, you know, that's all there is. But through this process of setting it to music, ultimately the music has to be the thing that leads. They need to be tied closely together, but the music has to have a reason for being. And if it doesn't enhance and broaden, and bring the text to another level, there's no point in doing it.

RB: What was her reaction to your settings?

JH: Oh, she loved them! Really loved them. Oh yeah, ...And the thing was, we did the premier in Vale with Susie Graham and Genie Zukerman, and they gave me a recording right away. And I happened to be going to Cincinnati right then because they were doing *Dead Man Walking* in Cincinnati. So I flew to Cincinnati and I had the CD, and I gave it to Sister Helen. And she just listened and said "You know what, I couldn't understand all the words" because, you know, sometimes that happens, "I couldn't understand all the words, but the music told me everything I needed to know." And you know, that's what you hope for. And she was really happy, and she's been really proud of them since. And they've been championed a lot. So now there's two recordings of them, and they've been done all over the world. So I'm really, really proud of those songs. That's some of the best work I've ever done I think.

RB: Did you just feel the need to create the orchestration following it, or was it requested?

JH: Actually, I always think orchestrally, so I'm always thinking in those types of colors. But it was Patrick Summers' idea, the conductor. He's been a big champion of my work. And he said he had this concert in Saint Paul that he was doing with Joyce DiDonato and he said, "I really want you to orchestrate those songs for this concert." So it was an ideal opportunity to do that. And they were incredibly successful in that context. And Joyce DiDonato did them, and she had already sung the role of Sister Helen in New York, so she was very familiar ...she knew Sister Helen, she knew her work, and so she had a deep connection with those pieces even before we did that.

RB: Was this song cycle, at least musically, kind an extension of *Dead Man Walking* for you, or was this a different project all together?

JH: No, it was an extension of *Dead Man Walking*, because *Dead Man Walking* tells the physical journey and *some* of the spiritual journey. But opera is theatre. Things have to happen on stage. You can't get too introverted or reflective, or everything stops and dies. So that told more of her physical journey, and an emotional journey. But in a song you *can* talk completely about what's going on inside your life. And so to me the songs are more the actual spiritual journey... of becoming the activist that she is today. That was the purpose of writing the songs.

RB: I find *I Catch on Fire* particularly interesting. I laughed out loud the first time I heard it. Is that just part of her personality, blending the deep with the entertaining?

JH: Oh, yeah. She's so funny. She's a.. pardon the expression... she's a real smart ass too. She's very funny. She's very, very funny. And she, you know there's such...I think that's part of what's important to her... life is so fleeting, and so precious, and brief. And there's so much joy in the experience of life, that when we cheat people out of that, out of that joy... we are taking something enormous away. And she sees it all the time. People who have had that taken away or are cheated out of it. And I think it makes her appreciate it even more. But she loves humor. Loves it. She has a better sense of humor than just about anybody I know. She's a very special lady. But because there are those high highs with humor, there are those deep, deep serious lows, too, with the very serious part. And I asked her one time "What keeps you motivated to keep doing the work that you do?" because it's not easy work she does, you know. It's very hard and it's very demanding, and she says her anger is what keeps her motivated...her anger at the injustice in the world. Of what happens to poor people because they're poor, because they were born into difficult circumstances. How society... she says the sin in all of this is how people treat poor people. It's not *being* poor. She said the same thing one time about gay people. She said the sin is not *being* gay, it's how gay people are *treated*. You know? She feels that way very strongly. That it's very clear who the sinners are to her.

RB: I hope to meet her. She sounds wonderful.

JH: Yeah, well you know she lives in Louisiana, so she's not too far. And she's coming to the opening of my new opera, and she travels a lot. But you know you could get in touch with her by email really easily.

RB: That would be great. I do have a question about the flute part that you wrote. What inspired you to use the flute? It seems to work as a narrative and interpretive voice along with the text.

JH: It's also that internal meter. She talks about this thing inside that's calling her. And that's what the flute represents. That's why that Prelude is called *The Call*, because people talk about their calling, or something that is calling them to another purpose on earth. And to me that's what the flute represents all the way through. It's present with her at every moment. But it isn't until later that she realizes that it's there. And it's been there all along, and so in the last part it can finally sigh and relax with her, and breathe with her in a different way. But it was also Genie Zukerman who was the one who commissioned the piece for Vale, and she wanted to play in the piece. And I thought, well perfect, you know. It would be a mezzo and flute and a piano, because I have sort of the orchestral texture of the piano, I have that kind of powerful, clear sound of the flute. Plus, it's such a versatile instrument and it could easily represent the calling for the singer.

RB: So that interval that keeps appearing, is that supposed to be the...

JH: The fight of the major 3rd, minor 3rd, that's something I like a lot in music. And you'll find it all over my compositions. That particular motif appears throughout the piece. So yeah, that's the actual motif that the entire piece is built around- melodically and harmonically.

RB: So it embodies that pull that she feels towards repairing injustice?

JH: Right, because what it wants to do is pull back up, but it keeps falling down. Aspiring to something higher, and yet it keeps falling down. It represents to me everything that the piece is about. And so finally in the last movement, even though it's not an exact inversion of it, it's kind of an inversion of it because it can finally sigh and sleep and relax because it's having its effect. It's doing its work.

RB: Does your music take on a different sound when you set different poets, or is this something that you feel is your style?

JH: You know, I'd like to say that's my.. I think that's my style. You know, my style has evolved over time, too. And I think I do respond to different poems and different texts in different ways. I'm not a very good judge of that, you know, because I sort of just write what I hear.

RB: So you're not aware of a "Heggie sound"?

JH: It's for other people to figure that part out, you know. What represents my "style." You know, I think if you listen to major pieces of mine since then, you might get a sense of what remains and what, you know, changes. To me the connection with the words is sort of ultimately important... and the spirit of the words. So, you know, not just the words themselves, but the whole psychology and emotional world behind those words. *That's* where the music comes from. So if I write to something vastly different, then yeah, it probably would sound pretty different. But, hopefully it's consistent enough that it doesn't sound like a completely different composer wrote it! I think there's a consistency to my work. I can't say what it is, but there has to be.

RB: Well it all seems to be intensely dramatic.

JH: Theatrical. I'm a theatre composer.

RB: Even before you started writing opera it seemed to be very theatrical.

JH: Well, yeah, it's funny but I didn't even realize it until I wrote opera. It was when I was writing *Dead Man Walking* that I went, "Oh! I'm a theatre composer!" That's why I'm drawn to these texts and these stories, or these cycles or you know... and real human experiences fascinate me. Mythology doesn't interest me as much as sort of real human experiences. I find great poetry in the way people speak... just everyday. So I think my most successful pieces are about people of our time and the things they struggle with that bring great, huge emotion into their lives.

RB: Which makes Prejean an ideal topic.

JH: It's surprising and sometimes its not. But, that's why *Dead Man Walking* was actually very easy to write. I felt like I knew every single one of those people. And that's why *The Deepest Desire* was easy to write, because I felt like I knew Sister Helen and also so much of what she was talking about resonated with me personally.

RB: How long did it take you to write the opera and *The Deepest Desire*?

JH: Let's see, to write the opera it took.... Well, I mean we had our first discussion about it, we first mentioned the subject in June of '97. We didn't start the libretto until March of '98 and then I started writing. And I was done with the score by October of '99. So that would have been a little over a year and a half, in terms of writing the piano score, and then I took about 5 months to orchestrate it. It took us about 2 years. And then the songs actually... about a month.

RB: Really?

JH: Yeah, 3 or 4 weeks... something like that.

RB: Did Sister Helen have any input on the opera itself?

JH: Not really. The biggest thing she gave me was a sense of who she really is. And she told me lots of stories about experiences she had on death row or working with victims' families, or other things like that. And those kind of real life, real connection things made a difference to me a lot, because I could suddenly have empathy for every single one of the people involved in the story. They felt very real to me. And that something else I have to... Like I said, I don't do well with mythology. I don't do well with things that I don't personally connect with emotionally. And I connect very much with real people. I don't connect well with lies. I don't connect well with false things. Or things that are just made up for the sake of being made up. It has to have a real connection to me with a real person who feels that way.

RB: Since then you've set "He will gather us around" and her poem about Bruce Springsteen. Do you find yourself returning to her poetry or her personality?

JH: Well, "He will gather us around" is actually something I wrote. I wrote the hymn tune and the words, even though it is from that opera. And I actually came back to her for a couple of things and she was busy. The one for the chorus piece, she was so excited to have found something to do with the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, that she was really excited about it. And again, she sent me like, 6 pages of ideas and notes. And then I sort of assembled them into the text for the piece. And she was really excited about it. She was very happy.

RB: So it's kind of like poetry by collaboration.

JH: Yeah. You know, it's sort of like... I'm not good with like coming up with the initial words, but I know what inspires me. And I know how to sort of assemble it so that it will work for the music that I have in me. And luckily I've found writers who are, you know, willing to go along with it that way. But ultimately it is their text, it's just that I've assembled it based on what they sent me.

RB: Does she see herself as a poet or an artist at all?

JH: I think she views herself as a serious writer. I don't know if she sees herself as a poet. I don't think so. I think she sees herself as a writer. Her other book, *The Death of Innocents*, was also just a really powerful book. And it's being made into a documentary for HBO I think. Yeah, she's really something. Did you get a copy of that piece, *Seeking Higher Ground*?

RB: You know, I didn't, but I would love to.

JH: Ok, well let me put that on my list of things to send to you. Because I'm going to send you the original manuscript... and you want all the texts?

RB: Yes, if you've got them! Any information you've got would be very welcomed.

JH: Sure.

RB: Is there a reason why you tend to set things for mezzo?

JH: (*laughs*) Yeah, there is actually. First of all, for some reason, that's the voice type that I really respond to because the words are always really clear. It's in a range, and for some reason (it belongs to baritones too) you almost always get all the words. I also find that I really like, sort of, the earthiness of the sound from the low mezzo voice to... the lyric mezzo voice you've still got those really higher notes. I feel the same way about the lyric baritone voice. I write a lot for lyric baritone. But those two voice types- particularly mezzo. And also some of my closest friends are mezzos, so I enjoy writing for them. We're sort of in a golden age of lyric mezzos!

RB: Definitely! I noticed that there were lots of dedications to von Stade and Susan Graham, and you tend to gravitate toward...

JH: And I just wrote something for Joyce DiDonato last year too. I set something from Terrance McNally's *Masterclass*.

RB: Oh really?

JH: Yeah, and she recorded that too, so yeah. I definitely am drawn to the lyric mezzos.

RB: And the female poets, it seems.

JH: Yes.

RB: Is that just coincidence?

JH: Well, you know what were my first influences in terms of voice and music theatre were Julie Andrews and Barbra Streisand, and lots of really wonderful... my father was a jazz saxophonist, and he loved big band stuff, and it was always the girl singers. He liked Jo Stafford and Ella Fitzgerald, and you know... those people... and Peggy Lee. So I grew up listening to women singing. So it's the biggest influence on me early on too.

RB: So American jazz too, also played into it then.

JH: Oh, absolutely, yeah.

RB: Do you think you have a distinctly American sound?

JH: I hope so. I don't know! Patty LuPone told me she thinks I do.

RB: Oh! From *To Hell and Back*.

JH: She said that it's very American.

RB: Well I can imagine. It does seem to have that earthy jazz underlay to it. It's wonderful.

JH: Yeah, all those sounds are very important to me. And that's the funny thing... I'm not even aware of it.

RB: Really?

JH: Oh no. I just write what I hear and what feels right to me for the piece. It's that...when people point out to me "Oh, you know you did this in this other piece, and it sounds just like this." The worst is if... my biggest fear is when I write a big tune that I'm really happy with and someone says, "You know you stole that right from Kurt Weill!" and I'm like, "Oh, *man!*"

RB: Does that happen to you frequently?

JH: No, no, no. So far it hasn't happened at all. I've had people say that certain things sound like another composer, or they can hear the influence. But so far, as far as I know, I haven't actually repeated somebody. (*laughs*)

RB: I appreciate this so much! This has been so helpful.

JH: Sure, well thanks for being so interested in the piece. I'm really proud of that piece.

RB: Well it's just fantastic, and the first time I heard it I thought, "I've just *got* to do my dissertation on this."

JH: You are so sweet. I remember what you wrote. You said, "Well I got *The Deepest Desire*, and needless to say..." (*laughs*) So funny.

RB: Yeah, I pretty much... I got the Joyce DiDonato recording of it and put it in and started listening, and wound up sitting, staring, in front of the stereo thinking "I can't believe what I'm hearing!" It is so beautiful.

JH: Oh, that's so nice of you. Thank you. Joyce is remarkable, isn't she?

RB: Yeah she is. She's just amazing.

JH: She's one of those really, really deeply good people, who believes so much in what she sings and is so connected to it. She's an excellent Sister Helen, in terms of being connected to the role. Really knowing who that person is. And she's a really amazing person, Joyce is.

RB: Yeah, she's got that very generous, empathetic personality...Well, thanks again for everything.

JH: Sure, good luck with everything. Take care...I'll see you in Houston.

RB: Alright! Bye.

JH: Bye.

APPENDIX D

THE DEEPEST DESIRE NOTES FROM COACHING WITH JAKE HEGGIE

14 MARCH 2008

Rebecca Beasley: How should the stage be set up?

Jake Heggie [paraphrased]: The music stand for the flute player can be placed stage right of the piano, parallel with the singer. Be sure that all three members of the ensemble can comfortably communicate. When the piano enters at the end of the prelude, the flutist can move to the music stand for the remainder of the piece. Ideally, the flute prelude should be memorized for ease of movement between the piano and the music stand. However, if needed, the sheet music can be taped somewhere in the piano.

RB: Are there special instructions for the singer?

JH [paraphrased]: The singer can stand off to the side or wait to enter the stage until the flutist moves to the music stand. From this point, dramatic choices are based on personal interpretation. The opening vocal lines could be sung while walking into place, from a more traditional ensemble position in front of the piano, or from another location for dramatic effect. Due to the theatrical nature of the piece, memorized performance is always preferable, though not required. This piece would lend itself to special lighting or semi-staged performance. Creating different stations of light, or having the singer gradually move toward flute, creating an actual sense of journey. Working with a director for recitals is always recommended, as one step at the right moment can change everything.

RB: Are you happy with *The Deepest Desire* and would you change anything about it if you could?

JH [paraphrased]: I wouldn't change a thing. I think this cycle represents my finest work. After seeing the opera and reading her books, this is the perfect marriage. It works in many different countries with many different interpretations. I'm very happy with the orchestrations...pretty and effective. I put this up there with *Dead Man Walking*. I'm really proud I wrote that. It was successful in terms of what the intention was, and it comes out in the performances every time no matter who performs it.

RB: What suggestions do you have for preparation?

JH [paraphrased]: First read the text as a monologue to fully understand meaning and emphasize the flow of natural speech.

RB: What is your biggest pet peeve?

JH [portions paraphrased]: Dishonesty...dishonesty in performance. "When you don't know what you are singing about it's like signing a contract without reading it." Uninformed performances where the singer has not fully explored the text bother me a lot. If a singer only knows the words in the context of the song and is unable to say the poem without notes and rhythms it will be apparent in the performance. Also a concern is when a performer does not make the piece their own, trying to sound like someone

else. "Like they've listened to a recording and are trying to mimic it. I don't like dishonesty in anything."

RB: Tell me something about your style

JH [portions paraphrased]: I approach things from a lyrical perspective. "The tendency among singers when they want to be expressive is they start pounding. That's the exact opposite of what you should do. Color goes away, diction, meaning... If it's kept lyrical and you find expression within that it's much more effective." I always want a wide range of dynamic from very soft to very loud. The conductor Patrick Summers has remarked that I write "in a very Baroque manner in regards to the treatment of notes and tempi. I grew up playing Bach... but I also love Broadway. I think it's all in there."

RB: What sort of voice should sing your work, and how do you feel about straight tone?

JH [portions paraphrased]: I generally envision the voice of a classically trained singer when I write. In terms of vibrato, "As long as color is in the voice it's what feels right to the singer, though I generally prefer vibrato. Straight tone is good for effects, but not consistently."

RB: How should a singer approach the dramatic aspect of *The Deepest Desire*?

JH: "To me it's as much a scene as anything from an opera. It's a journey that you're taking everybody in the audience on...a very dramatic journey. It's an internal one, but it's a journey nonetheless. That's where it all begins. I'm a theatre composer so I'm interested in the theatre side of everything." For any cycle it's important to have clear arc in your head, both emotional and physical

RB: Your markings are not always specific. Are you concerned people may speculate in the future about what you really intended?

JH [paraphrased]: Music is not a theoretical exercise where everything lines up just so. Don't get stuck in that academic feeling. It should feel like it's coming to you on the spot. It's written organically. It shouldn't sound premeditated... like it's coming to you at the moment.

RB: How do you feel about the purely analytical approach to music so often found in academia?

JH: "It's important to have all of that knowledge and all of that awareness, but the actual act of making music is a very different thing. It's not academic. And...if it comes off as academic, it's boring. That's not why we go to concerts. We don't go for a theory lesson. I don't anyway. I go to be moved and excited and to have some kind of a transformative, meaningful experience."

RB: Tell me about Sister Helen's personality.

JH: "Sister Helen... she's a regular person. She's worked with desperately poor people. She's seen everything. She's about people. She's not about some sacred holier than thou attitude. She deals with people on a very grass roots level. She hears and sees everything. She goes to prisons. It's not pretty language in prison. She's used to hearing it. And I think because that part of it doesn't offend her... it's hypocrisy and those kind of attitudes that really offend her more than anything. Ignorance... willful ignorance."

1. *More is required:*

There should be a sense of rocking in the piano, with the vocal line commenting on the top of it, constantly being pulled by the call of the flute.

m. 41 singer really lean into first entrance to preserve forward motion

m. 46 take a little bit of time (stretch it)

m. 46 "pulling"- lean into "pul" as in spoken word

m. 71-78 starting with "I coil like a bow," each line of text should build with intensity and purpose until exploding into a very broad "And I lean into..."
Note the accent mark on m. 78 and provide appropriate weight to firmly establish the return to tempo.

m. 89 take care to Americanize vowels as in "tack" (æ)

m. 107 rit. continues to 111. Very free throughout rit.

1A. *Love:*

m. 123 glottal on "it" to make text clear

m. 134 get a nice blossom on the high G, even if the *pp* dynamic must be slightly compromised.

m. 134 "*take time*" marking is very important. Really stretch the line until "best" in the following measure.

m. 137 wait to place L of "all" until the last possible moment.

2. *I catch on fire:*

Be very matter of fact as though sharing a funny memory. Have fun with it.

m. 64 tempo given as “ca 88” so that the tempo would be flexible for interpretation. Heggie is open to it being sung either as quasi-recitative or following the rhythms strictly. The main focus is to bring out the humorous nature of the text.

m. 80 think playful rather than too solemn

m. 84 purposely left without specific notation so singer can make their own artistic decision. “Fire” can be sung with a sforzando followed by a crescendo all the way into measure 87 with the descending flute and piano line, accented followed by a quiet dynamic, or any other interpretive choice that serves the text.

m. 90 can be sung (a)men or (e l)men for a more “down home” sound. Heggie has no preference “as long as it is from the heart.”

m. 90 slide around and bend the pitch a bit.

3. *The Deepest Desire:*

This is the climax of the piece dramatically, but not emotionally. That comes in the last song, Primary Colors.

m. 1-4 Can be played evenly or freely, depending on the dramatic needs of the performance. Heggie suggests the interpretive image of a rocking like a boat on the “deeper currents” mentioned in the text.

m. 6- 27 keep 8th note very consistent to preserve a tight ensemble and avoid potential problems

m. 31 “But” should be treated as the upbeat to the next section. Think of it as one thought extending to the next measure.

m. 39 Piano should have same excited texture as seen in m. 121 of the first movement. They are intended to share the same dramatic energy.

m. 91 Piano should “go like the wind.” The way to help the flute find the entrance is to strongly emphasize the bass line in the 3/4 bar (m. 92).

m. 101 decide when instruments should enter based on how long singer wants to hold the G. Fermata rest could be stretched or shortened depending on needs and artistic choice.

m. 98- 99 Voice should be out of the way for the instrumental entrance with slight dove-tail on the M of “home”.

4. *Primary Colors*

Be sure not to start too slow. Should still be very conversational so you don't lose a sense of line. Singer should think of the whole song in a very relaxed recitative quality. Perfect fourths and fifths emphasize the perfect peace found in following the call. At the end the motive is inverted and incomplete, signaling she has ascended to her purpose.

m.1 Flute part written to relate to a Native American flute sound: woody, hollow and free. Bends intended to just fall away toward written note. Lower note doesn't necessarily have to be clearly played. Instead to changing fingering, roll the flute to produce the sighing affect.

m. 5 keep it like natural speech so the triplets don't stick out.

m. 9 lean into D to enjoy dissonance between flute and voice

m. 14-15 "to God" include a nice *portamento*

m. 22 avoid rushing through this measure- keep it very relaxed.

m. 23 optional breath

APPENDIX E

HELEN PREJEAN INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION, 3 JUNE 2008

Helen Prejean: One little question before you ask me your questions. Evidently it's not just singing any song that appeals to you. There was something about *Deepest Desire*. The music of it of course, but does content have anything to do with it?

Rebecca Beasley: Oh, of course. Absolutely.

HP: Where the music matches what the words and the content and the substance are, huh?

RB: Absolutely. It was just music and lyrics on a much deeper level than you get very often. I was just sitting in my living room in a puddle of tears by the end of it, and just knew I had to do it.

HP: Well, listen. How can I be of help? You ask me any question your little heart desires.

RB: Alright!

HP: Speaking of desires... (laughs)

RB: The basic gist of this dissertation, the project, is your influence on Jake's life and work. And I'm using *The Deepest Desire* as the center for that... To help center the paper rather than splitting off into a million different directions.

HP: Sure, that's a good gate to go through. A good prism if you will, because that's probably the link to everything.

RB: Really?

HP: Yes! Because I think what happened with me and Jake is... of course, when they tell me they're going to do an opera, I don't know boot scat about opera. But Jake is the one I really communicated with. Terrance McNally went and he did his own little artist writer thing. But Jake and I, as soon as we met... we met up at a Chase Manhattan Bank, where you almost had to do the breast stroke through the carpet it was so thick... And they had a press conference to announce the opera and the collaboration of the Chase Manhattan Bank with the San Francisco Opera. And I went to the press conference and that's the first.... I'd been talking to Jake on the phone. Immediately I sensed in him first of all a deep love and reverence for human rights, which the death penalty evoked. And he also had a tremendous sense of the strength and the conflict in the victims' families, and the way that he was going to approach that. And so when he was following the whole thing of desire from the point of view of the parents... Everyone desires that their children mature and marry, and you have grandchildren, and that's the normal arc of life. And here these people are shattered because their child has been killed. And so Jake was capable of getting inside that pain. And when he did that medley in the opera, you familiar with the opera? Murder victims families, and me, and the mother of Joseph

DeRocher are all singing together. And as Jake saw it we are all singing the same pain, in terms of the deepest desires have been thwarted. In the victims' families, the desire to see their children grow and flourish. And me, to try and be a reconciler and a person who's a spiritual source of strength and consolation. It's been thwarted because they're angry at me because I didn't reach out to them soon enough. And then of course the mother of Joseph DeRocher whose son has done this terrible crime. Her whole sense of failure as a mother or seeing her son slip from her. And he found a way to braid that into one medley of everyone singing the same pain. So as Jake was beginning to reveal the opera to me, sometimes he would play the songs, like this medley. He'd play them on the piano and he would sing them. And he knew how terribly inadequate it was, but that's when I knew that he really trusted me that I would catch the spirit of what he was getting in the music. Everyone's journey for healing and reconciliation. So it started with the opera.

And then I would periodically... he said "send me stuff, just send me stuff." And so I sent him my poems that time about deepest desire. We periodically talk. We meet at the opera. We've been to almost all, or plenty of the operas together. We'd meet, and our meetings were always special, you know. And he'd... "send me stuff, send me stuff." I don't even know how I told him about catching on fire and I'd started writing poetry about deepest desire. And you know, deepest desire comes from Ignation spirituality. You know anything about the different schools of Catholic spirituality?

RB: Not really.

HP: Ok. You know you have the Franciscan spirituality, which is to find God in nature. All things are revelatory of God. Ok? The Ignation, which is Ignatius of Loyola. If you want to look into it a little bit, he was a soldier in the 16th century, and a little dandy, and a canon ball shatters his leg and he's up in a castle recuperating and all they have to read are the lives of the saints and the gospels. So he has a conversion experience, like "What am I doing with my life? I'm fighting for these stupid nobles who get into these petty little wars. But what if I gave my life to Christ?" And he withdrew... after his leg healed and he came out of the castle, he knew he wanted to devote his life in a whole hearted way to Christ. And he went off to a place called Manresa in Spain. He was a Basque. A fiery little Basque guy. Goes for 30 days where he just reflects on the gospel and to get his life in alignment to continue the work of Jesus in the world, especially with poor people. And so he becomes... he simplifies his life greatly. Well, those 30 days of reflection and aligning your life with Christ he called the *spiritual exercises*. And they're really exercises. You can do them. You can go for 30 days to a retreat house, and you can go through these exercises. And at the back of them he gave rules for discerning which spirit is moving us. How do we know if it's a good and holy spirit, or if it's a spirit that's going to lead to hurt and violence and separation, and all the bad things that can happen in relationships? And in these rules for discerning spirits, the heart of it is that we have to be in touch with our *deepest desires*. That finding the spiritual path, or the following of Christ, or if we are Buddha living in the presence of reality... in the fullness of the now, you know...has to do with our even being able to be in touch with our *deepest desire*.

And see in our culture, we have imitative desires everywhere being thrown at us. You know, the whole consumer thing of “you’ve got to own this, you’ve got to take this trip, you’ve got to get this job, you’ve got to make this money, you’ve got to own the boat, you’ve got to...” All the... These are all imitative desires. And so we have to be in quiet and reflection long enough to let all these bubble off. We go, “What do I really desire with my life? What do I want to give my life for?” And that’s our *deepest desire*. And everyone has this spiritual core and everyone has this *deepest desire*. And because we can only follow duty so long, we can only follow the stimulus we’ve gotten from the outside... “You ought to do this..” Or what other people tell us to do. We can only really operate out of guilt so long. Finally, the deepest thrust of life, which is embodied in our desires, our *deepest desires*, are what we have to get in touch with. I think of it like a wave. Like our boat catches a wave. Like on the death penalty issue, I have caught a wave. I’m engulfed in a passion. That... it’s really me, it’s bigger than me. But you have this feeling of you moving in a current and you’ve tapped into it and the energy and the power of it flows through you. But yet you’re aware there’s a humility in it because you know you are a part of something bigger. And that’s what *Deepest Desire*... It was some of these reflections I was doing with poetry that gave birth to that. So as soon as Jake heard that, see because he has that same affinity of spirit. He’s a deeply, deeply spiritual person. Funny as all hell, too! So we share humor too. Humor is really important in everything I think. But as soon as I was even mentioning that to him, he said “Helen, send me that! Send me that.” And then he put it together beautifully with catching on fire in front of the kids from the candle that we were using for the prayer service. So he combines humor in it too.

And then the third way that I have had a direct relationship with him was “Seeking Higher Ground.” Our experience with Bruce Springsteen at the Jazz Fest the year after the Hurricane Katrina had come through New Orleans. And people in such grief and trauma. And Bruce Springsteen, Rebecca, really helped our city to pray. Helped heal our city. He was the last event of the jazz festival and he was doing Pete Seekers song. He had a 17 piece band up there, with the fiddle and the accordion and the drums and the, you know... And he lead us in “We are climbing Jacob’s ladder.” People were raising their hands up, you know. “Each rung, higher, higher. “Oh Mary, don’t you weep, don’t you mourn. Pharaoh’s army got drownded.” He did the Oklahoma thing. “My Oklahoma home is blown away.” And people were crying, and it just touched and bonded people very, very deeply...touched into the pain and I believe played a very significant part in healing our city. So I’m telling Jake about this. He had been trying to put together, I don’t know, these songs, and nothing was clicking for him. And I think when he hits these little dry spots, like, he calls me up. I’m gonna be some kind of oasis! And sometimes I am, but sometimes I’m not. But in this case, I started telling about that, and he said “Oh Helen, just write that up for me. Just write it.” And then he did this music. Have you heard it? “Seeking Higher Ground”?

RB: Yes, I have.

HP: Ok. So those have been the 3 ways. You know, *Dead Man Walking*, then *The Deepest Desire*, and *Seeking Higher Ground*- in which I directly, I think, fed some

sparks into Jake, who really built the fire, of course, with what he did with it. Does that help any?

RB: Oh, absolutely! (HP: Good) So, were you already working on *The Deepest Desire* poems, then? And you told him about them?

HP: It's an ongoing thing in my life. I've been keeping a journal, and I'm a writer, see? I wrote two books. *Dead Man Walking* and *Death of Innocents*, and now I'm working on my spiritual memoir, the road to death row. It's called *River of Fire*. And so I'm always writing and I'm always reflecting, and things always bubblin' up, you know? So it's not like I sat down to go write a poem to give to Jake. This is stuff coming up in my journal. It's just part of reflection and you know, daily spiritual reflection on life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and what's happening. See, because this discerning.... Always running our fingertips over the fabric, over the texture of our lives, what's happening. See, because in those rules for discernment, Ignatius also gives that when we are not where we are supposed to be, that there's more that's being asked of us. And we're in a state of confusion. Our darkness and anxiety and searching and restlessness- that's one of the signs that we're being called to something deeper or wider, and it's called, he calls it "desolation of spirit." Consolation is, when our boat is on the wave, when we are doing in a way that's in harmony with the *deepest desire* of the way we want to love, the way we want to serve, and what we want to give, there's great peacefulness in it. And you may get tired, but it's peaceful. Yet there's this feeling of being in harmony or balance. The *Tao Te Ching* would talk about it as balance, equanimity. That the energy of desire is matching the task and all these are rules for the discernment of spirit, where you know, that whole idea came from. Get in touch with your deepest desire.

RB: Well Jake places you in the same category as Gandhi and Martin Luther King, so obviously you've had a huge impact on him.

HP: Yeah well... we have a need for heroes. I watch that hero thing. I don't let it develop too much. People get too serious. I'll tell them a Cajun joke and knock the ground out from under them.

RB: What kind of influence do you hope that you've had on him through your collaborations or your friendship?

HP: No, I don't have any hopes. It just is what it is. I don't have any desire to shape him or hope that he does this or that. He's just so good and pure in his own being. And I trust his natural goodness. And I also trust his talent. Dang, is he talented! (RB: Yeah! (laughs)). I mean it's amazing what he did with that opera. He'd never written an opera before. And I think it's that thing of, there was a *deep desire* in him. He was waiting for a full sized piece of work. And I think the opera was it. It drew it forth from him, and then he saw. I think he discovered himself what he could do. So these things emerge in a very free spirited way. They don't follow any kind of schedule. And they're not even attached to certain desires or expectations or hopes that I have for

him, because he is who he is and I respect him for who he is. And I don't know that he has any hope for me either.... So to speak.

RB: Well, then, I wonder for those that are going to be listening to *The Deepest Desire*, do you have any hope that they will learn something or experience something specific?

HP: Sure. No, in the experiencing of any art...and I feel this way about the film of *Dead Man Walking*, the opera... Art takes us into an immediate spiritual experience of great intimacy. And it's a way of translating to people, experiences that we human beings have, from heart to heart and soul to soul. And music does it in a way nothing else can, really. Because you can only be so linear. You can only be so logical, and only put it in so many words. And so I have great hopes for the music and what it can do for people, because I believe I've experienced this power myself. And other people... you look for response. Jesus says you know a tree is a healthy tree and not if you got a lot of little red apples hanging from it. Or are they shriveled up little dried things? "By their fruits you know them." Sometimes you only know the power, or that you got something right from the response that comes back to you from it. I find that in all the talks I give. That it's the response in the audience that I know that in my own way, I have sung a song that they have really heard and resonate with. It's that deep resonance or vibration of spirit that we look for. And so Jake's music and ability to be evocative of the human heart is very, very... I see it as a vital and important part of just healing our society, and summoning us to deeper places in our hearts. So I have great hopes for the music and what it can do.

RB: So did you play any part in the musical development of it, suggesting anything? Or did you just turn over the poetry?

HP: No, I just gave him the fodder. (RB: Ok) HP: All the little sticks, and the kindling, and maybe a few twigs. And he takes it and he builds a bonfire with it.

RB: Well does his bonfire change the way that you write? Hearing your words and your thoughts put to music... Has it altered the way that you see your own writing?

HP: To the way I write, but it's what it does to my heart in terms of knowing first, oh these are true words. This is a true path at what this music calls you to. And then there's this whole context of love in it, you know? Same thing for getting out on the road and giving all these talks to people to help awaken them. It comes out of compassion for other people, that when we have discovered something true and good and it has inspired our own lives we want to share it with others. And so in a very special way then, Jake is a conduit or a mouthpiece, or another special kind of instrument to deliver over to people that special melody. And so it's... You know, when I've listened to it, it inspires *me*! It helps *me*. I'm like, experiencing it in its own right. Not like, "Oh, I wrote these words and he put the music to it. Oh yeah. Let me evaluate this." You know, you either get caught up in the experience or you don't. And you have to put your mind

down. And you have to just experience it at another level other than the logical, analyzing mind.

RB: Do you have any plans to do any further collaborations with him?

HP: If it sparks and it happens, it happens. I wouldn't be surprised if it did. See, I'm working on this spiritual memoir. He's gonna *love* this stuff. He's just gonna love it, because it's the story of my faith from the very beginning as a little Catholic kid, you know, following all the Catholic rubrics. And then... till it sparks into this very, very alive faith and following of the gospel of Jesus that leads me to poor people. And he records... he's gotten some of that. But he's just gonna love this stuff. He's just gonna eat it up. Lord knows what'll come out of this!

RB: When does that come out?

HP: When it's written!

RB: (laughs) Well alright!

HP: You see, really I'm going up in the sky like a balloon, because my speaking engagements are done for the year, and I'm heading to a Benedictine monastery at the foot of the big horn mountains in Wyoming to write all summer.

RB: How wonderful!

HP: Yeah, it sounds good, doesn't it? And it is. There's a little gazebo by the Little Tongue River where the water ripples over the rocks, and I've got a nice sized battery in my little computer and I take it out there and I write by the river.

RB: Well, I know that the movie was already made and everything by the time Jake contacted you and *Dead Man Walking* had already had a lot of notoriety, but has your involvement with the opera and the song cycle and all of that, had any impact on your cause or the way you are seen in the media?

HP: It's just been another avenue in which to reach people. See my whole mission is to awaken hearts and minds about the death penalty in particular because it's such a crystallization of violence, and using violence and coercion as a way of dealing with social problems, instead of love and caring and nurturing in a society. So it epitomizes a lot, you know? And so, the music... every time Jake does some music, it's like... and it's not just to bring people to the death penalty... really, in the opera it's a universal... Everybody's experienced hurt or loss, or grieving, or having to forgive and all of that. So it becomes through the prism or the gate of the death penalty all these other things come. But it's wider than that. I mean like, *Seeking Higher Ground* is not specifically the death penalty, *Deepest Desire* is not, but you know.... So, but every time... we only have in a culture three ways, basically, to wake people up. And one is the educational process, the other are the religious institutions. And more and more

people it seems are dropping away from mainstream religion, the institution of, even though they are moving toward spirituality. So we've got the educational system, we have the religions... or the religious institutions... and the other is the arts! Like if you take in the experience, like I was talking about the intimacy and immediacy of music in the human heart, and this conveying of a *deep desire*, which you caught immediately through the music. When you take something like the death penalty it's always based on a separation, that those people are not human the way we are, that they did a terrible crime, they deserve the consequences, and they ought to be killed. Now we are nowhere around when they do it, and we want other people to do the killing for us. Most people would not want to say, "oh yeah, I'll pull the switch, I'll do it, I'll kill them. They deserve to die." You know? They're backed up. The Supreme Court says it's ok, and all that. But see, the immediacy of art just strips away all those separations and brings them right into the heart of... like meeting Joe DeRocher's mother. Meeting his mother. Oh my goodness. The one to be killed has a mother. Oh look, he has little brothers. Oh look, they are meeting with him for the last time. They have to tell him goodbye. Their loved one is going to be killed. In breaking people into the immediacy of something that's a very removed, almost secret ritual in the United States. And so, I love the art for that. And I love for what the music can open up in the human heart around that or on any theme.

RB: Have you had mixed reviews from people about their opinion of the death penalty after seeing the opera? Do you find it changes their opinion?

HP: Most people are deeply touched. I think the opera, without exception, has always gotten a standing ovation and people are crying. You can hear the stillness in the audience when the opera is being performed. And that's like in Europe where they don't have the death penalty. It just means that we've hit a...that *Jake* has hit, a universal human theme here, in it. And so almost always that's the experience. Generally. There will always be exceptions. I heard of the opera held somewhere, you can see how vague I am, where somebody left after the first act. I've only heard one report, ever, where somebody left after the first act. I mean, I know there must be some people that go, "Oh, this is not for me." Or maybe they got dragged there by their wife or something, I don't know. But whatever it is. For the most part, that is not the experience.

RB: Well it's just beautiful. I really appreciate everything that you wrote.

HP: Well good, Rebecca. Look, am I going to get a copy of this?

RB: Oh, sure, if you'd like one!

HP: And you are in northern Texas?

RB: Yes, University of North Texas about an hour north of Dallas, in Denton. Have you spent much time in Texas?

HP: Oh yeah, I've been in and out of Texas a zillion times.

RB: Oh, of course! With the views on the death penalty I guess that's not always a positive experience.

HP: People are always a positive experience. You know, I know this now from talking to the American people. They're not wedded to the death penalty, they just haven't reflected on it very much. We don't have a deeply reflective culture in the United States. We are not a people who read books, go to lectures, do ongoing education. We get home at night and we look at TV. So getting the arts out there... You are doing an important piece of work, Rebecca. I mean you are exploring this like this, bringing it out there. It's like another little color coming out in this big mosaic. And it's about life and compassion and deepening of humanness. So I'm glad you are using your talents and your abilities to do that.

RB: I'm just so excited to do this. This work in particular had a huge impact on me, and I'm glad to get the chance to thank you for it.

HP: Yeah, so there is some deep note of resonance in your own desires that it struck. It couldn't have had this effect on you unless that soil were already tilled. So now you're growing some good little trees in that soil.

RB: And I have some new things to look up from our conversation! Thank you!

HP: Well, thank you!

APPENDIX F

HELEN PREJEAN INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION, 9 SEPTEMBER 2008

Rebecca Beasley: Jake mentioned that you sent him some tapes of you singing. Can you tell me a little bit about that? Was that something he asked for?

Helen Prejean: No, of course not. And he was so sweet about it. But there have been some tunes I had in my head and so I just sent them to him. And one of them was this... I mean, I hope Bach or nobody did this before me, 'cause sometimes I think I made things up completely and then I find out... Like one was "*The White Cliffs of Dover*." I thought I had made up "*The White Cliffs of Dover*," and then somebody said "Helen, that's '*The White Cliffs of Dover*'" and I went "Oh...". And that was the end of that! (laughs) But I think this may be an original little tune, and this is one of them that I sent Jake. It goes... (sings melody). And then it repeats. And that little tune came into my head, and then it stayed in my head, and so you can see I still have it. And I sent that to him. (laughs) He was so sweet!

RB: It's beautiful.

HP: He just was real tender.

RB: He says he really treasures that tape of you singing, and that music plays a big part in your life.

HP: I sing all the time. When I'm in equilibrium and things are right and I start moving through my day, song is part of who I am. It just is.

RB: So you sing quite a bit?

HP: (In a deep voice with mock solemnity) "I sing quite a bit" would be a good sort of statement.

RB: (laughs) What other part does music play in your life?

HP: When I'm really perplexed or when I'm thinking through something, or when I'm very sad I don't sing. So I know I'm getting my spirit back when I've started something out and then I notice that I'm beginning to sing. And there's a mystery in the singing too. 'Cause you know there's a way... I belonged to the glee club in high school and just loved... I still sing a lot of the songs. I learned them. I have a great capacity for learning songs and remembering the words and all that. So like when you go into the practice, and everyone's standing there in the group, and you know, your teacher/ leader summons it, and you warm up and all that. So that's... you *will* to sing then. You are *willing* it and you are doing it. It's a real exercise that you're doing. But I notice that sometimes in the morning, I'll get up and I'll be taking my shower... And it's like a song sings *you*. It's just given. You just start singing it. You don't know where it came from. It wasn't a conscious decision and you can't get rid of it right away. It just keeps, you know, weaving in through your morning or even throughout the day. And then it'll wear off. So, sometimes it's like you sing the song...you are willing it, doing it, evoking all the skills you have...but sometimes the song sings you. And maybe that's

the passion part. The part where we're caught up in something, that then it sings us. You know how people say, "That book wrote itself. I was just a scribe to it." I think there's a capacity in music to do that with us as well, and I'm sure it has to do with the way things resonate in our brain. I have a really good friend Maria that I go to write with in the summer. I go up to her little place at the mountains in Wyoming. She got a piano a couple of years ago and she keeps saying "My teacher, Ruby, teaches me that when you play the piano it's your brain and your fingers, because you..." Do you play an instrument?

RB: I play the flute.

HP: You play the flute. Beautiful. So anyway, there are these deep resonances in our being, our very brains where music resides. And I think it's so deep in us because we want... Basically this is the whole thing of, you know, zen and the tao... is "to live in harmony with." I mean, that is what we are meant to do.... Anyway, these are my philosophical reflections on music! (laughs)

RB: And actually, that leads me to another question. You mention Taoism and Buddhism. And you even have that phrase in *Deepest Desire*, "I hold my soul in equanimity," which I suppose is a reference to Buddhism. How does that work into your religious philosophy?

HP: Well you know, the source of all religions is one. I mean, all the spiritual traditions have that same common bass note in it (if we use a musical reference), and it is that we are all one...one with each other, but also one with every part of the universe. The more you learn of quantum physics and the story of the emerging universe coming out of a pinpoint of whatever mysterious being 13.1 billion years ago and unfurling in this, the oneness. Everything is one. And the differentiation that happens in us in interiority and interiorization that happen in us as conscious beings. And so consciousness can lead to alienation because we are conscious that we know, we are conscious that we suffer, we're conscious of loss, conscious of grief, conscious of death... conscious of a lot. And so thought and consciousness can create great pain and a great sense of alienation. But the deeper we go, when we get to that deep underground stream, it's then we come to the place where in Buddhism all thought ceases and it's just the oneness in being. The mystics in contemplation in Christianity, Teresa of Avila, and Catherine of Sienna and Julian of Norwich, and all the mystics point to that place that we get to where we are simply *one with*. And there is no kind of thought that spells consciousness that adds an extra layer to reality. Here I am playing tennis... here I am writing a book... here I am now wondering how my book will be received... here I am... And once you start adding the layers of consciousness on something, we leave the being of it itself. So Christianity at its heart is about learning to love in a way that we are still one with everything. That there is no one we call enemy. There is no one so foreign, so different, so evil, so hostile that I must kill that person. That compassion is the driving force. It was the driving force in the heart of Jesus. He had compassion for the crowd who had no one to teach them... Which I feel for the American people, like on the issue of the death penalty, because they don't reflect on

this issue. They're not brought into experiences with what's going on with all of our prisons or people being killed. And so, compassion...that come *with*, compassion *with*, that feeling *with*... is at the heart of what Jesus was about. It's been very, very perverted, almost from the beginning. Wasn't it Dante who says finally when you move into eternity, the eternity of love, and the music of the spheres, love is a force that can unite but yet preserve the selfhood within things. Because love doesn't have to merge things into itself, or subsume it into self. It is respectful of the self of another. So those are a few little things that come to my mind.

RB: That's very different than you often hear from religious leaders.

HP: What do you often hear?

RB: That God's nature is to seek out justice and vengeance. And somehow in order to find justice there must be death. That is often cited as the reason for the crucifixion. That the crucifixion had to happen in order for God to stay with his nature. There had to be a bloody sacrifice.

HP: That's right, boy. That's big time. It's really big time, yeah...and it's called the "theology of atonement." And it comes from Anselm, way back... the bloody sacrifice. And it leads you to ask the question, "What kind of God would want to have a bloody sacrifice of his own son, or a mother of her own child?" And that's our own projection of our own violence onto God, saying this is what it means.

RB: So in that vein, what do you see as the purpose of the crucifixion?

HP: It's the same thing as the assassination of Martin Luther King. Jesus went down a road in which he identified with poor people and the nobodies, and it threatened the temple cult, the religious hierarchy in Jerusalem. And they were the ones that turned him over to Roman authorities. And so it's not like God *willed* that. It's what people try to assume. It's what led to the "atonement theology", that it was so scandalous that Jesus was killed. But Oscar Ramero, Martin Luther King, the 6 Jesuit priests in El Salvador, the 4 church women in El Salvador, Gandhi... who were forces of love and non violence in the world in service. And those who use violence and exploit, cannot stand the presence of that. And so, they try to kill it and stomp it out. And that's why Jesus was killed. It's not some divine plan to go have your son killed to pay off my divine justice. That's an ogre.

RB: It's really interesting to hear that.

HP: Religion has also been manipulated and made into a huge banking system. And it's based on fear. Totally on fear. The fear of hell. You take that away out of religion, and religion... that kind of religion... will lose all its power. On the fear of being plunged into hell...and then explore hell. What kind of being would plunge people into eternal punishment over an over for all eternity? That there is no possibility of evolving or remorse, or being? Of change? That's a projection onto God too. I mean, I've

actually had some people, District Attorneys with the death penalty, they were Catholic, saying “Well, this is just temporary punishment. God punishes forever in hell. Then, if it’s a temporary punishment and if they’re really sorry for their sins, it can help them get to heaven.” So that then gives a theological reason that justifies and sanctifies the state participating in a state killing. And if you read Justice Scalia, I mean you know, he goes to mass every Sunday, he has a son who’s a priest... This is in my book, *“Death of Innocents,”* and you may just want to look up the part on Scalia where he says *“The more Christian a nation is, the freer it feels to use the death penalty because we know we should be punished for our sins, and this is the United States.”* And it’s really scary what he says.

RB: So how do you think Christians should react to or minister to people who don’t share their faith?

HP: The other big way...moving through the world, and it’s called human rights. So whether or not people have faith or don’t have faith we can all stand on a common ground that life must be respected. All of life must be respected, especially in those who are most vulnerable. And that’s what unites us with each other. And sometimes religion can actually get in the way of that. There was a time when we started working on the death penalty in the 80s that showed the more people went to church the more they agreed to the death penalty. That’s not too encouraging on the religious scene. So, whatever people’s faith... The essay, I don’t know if you’ve ever heard it on NPR, “This I believe?” They just invite people to just say what you believe. And they only give you one guideline. Don’t say what you don’t believe, you know, castigate other people for what they don’t... Just say what you believe. And people write all kinds of things. “I love barbeque, I love my wife...I love...you know...I believe in running. They’re doing marathons... And I thought, what in the world am I going to say, ‘cause you have an incredibly short period of time. And I thought, how could I take them to what I believe about Jesus and what Christianity is all about. But all sound like platitudes. “God is love”, “Jesus told us love your enemies,” you know. It just would not even resonate, so then I thought... I came up with it. And this was the theme of the whole thing. “Watch what I do to see what I really believe.” And then that takes belief out of the realm of dogma, and religious traditions that get into competition with each other, “we have the truth and you don’t”... “Watch what I do to see what I really believe.” And then I talk about going onto death row. Jesus said to love your enemies, so I went to where the enemy is. And then I talk about going to victims families, and how hard that was, and how insensitive I was at first, and then learning to accompany them. And so that’s what I mostly want to say about belief, is... “What’s the spiritual practice of our life? What kind of being does it lead us into, and what does it lead us to do?”

RB: I’m noticing the more I write, there are a lot of similarities between you and Jake.

HP: Yeah, I was just thinking of Jake right as I finished that sentence! So I was about to answer, that’s why when I met Jake Heggie, I went... I’ve been this guy’s friend

forever! We were so in harmony with each other. It was so refreshing. And we have wonderful times together. You know, the humor and the...oh, it's great.

RB: It's remarkable. Many times it's like you're saying exactly the same thing, and then other times there are just such huge differences that I have a hard time. When I'm writing I think... Do they share their spiritual connection, or is it completely divergent from each other? Like the fact he has said openly that he doesn't believe in God as a higher power. (HP: Yeah.) And then I struggle with how to relay that in conjunction with you... who, having grown up in the Catholic church and being a Catholic nun, obviously do believe in God. Even though much of what he says goes right along with traditional Christian beliefs as they should be presented...

HP: You see, the key is... "Who is the God you don't believe in, Jake? I don't believe in that God either." See, right away when you say "*higher power*" or "*supreme being*" right away you are in a concept of God as extrinsic to life, who's working strings or allows the suffering of children, because God knows everything and God allows all this suffering and so then I want to have no part of that kind of God. And so, atheism is "a"- the Latin prefix means against, is against the theism of the day. And the God that Jake doesn't believe in, I don't believe in either. See, in the God who's unfurling in us, and then the whole unfurling of the universe, you know... What if God created a universe that creates itself? What kind of God is that? And so a lot of these "God" discussions, though the words seem to put us on opposite ends of the spectrum... I mean, Jake is a person who has a great capacity for love and creativity. And to me, that's the definition of God. That's a little face of God in Jake Heggie. And *of course* he would have to reject this God that has been used against him, you know, as a gay man. Religion that forces the religion and the violence and the hostility and ...that causes self loathing is come a lot from religion about gay people. So I don't know how Jake in honestly in his life could say anything else. Because the God of the Christians and of the Bible has been so oppressive to him. Almost killed him. And so he's had to find, through love and creativity. And to me that is...if you want an image of God, that's it. It's one with a capacity for love and great creativity and to make beauty in the world. I think Jake's music comes out of his deep capacity and the suffering that he has gone through. And he's also an incredibly joyful person. He has a childlike kind of joy in him, and I mean that in a good way. He is *extremely* intelligent! He has a great mind. And I love that part of him too.

RB: That's so interesting. I've been trying to figure out how to put it together. He said in another interview that I read that he doesn't believe in God, but if he were going to believe in a God it would be love. It of course makes you think of I John 4. And then I go back to that same question of... 99.9 percent of Christians will tell you that if you don't embrace the idea of the external higher power, God as a person either sitting in judgment or in assistance, then somehow you are not a "spiritual" person.

HP: Yeah, knock down that 99 percent to about 40, because there have been great changes in the understanding. Vatican II in the Catholic church really changed a lot. And there's been a lot of adult education in people, and there is a great emergence

away from that now in people. But, you know, mostly the people who make the news are the “born again Christian” people, and George Bush with his ultimate version of almost everything. And that’s the religion that gets the press. Including this Sarah Palin person, you know. How she described the war in Iraq as “the task of God.” This is our “task of God” to do in the world, to go get them Muslims...But that’s not most people. There’s a great part in the epistle of John, I think it’s in the first epistle of John, it may be in the third epistle of John... but I think it’s in the first where St. John says, “No one has ever seen God.” That’s a big thing to say. “No one has ever seen God. But if we love our brother and sister, then we know God.” Jake made you think of the epistle of John, where he just says that God is love. But he also said “No one has ever seen God. But if we love our brother and sister...” And of course, love has to do with how wide our love is. We all want to love our own. The people who are like us, take care of ourselves, our own family. But the wider love is to love the ones in prison, to love immigrants, to love the marginated, to love the left out and to increase our sphere, our circle, of loving. For many of us we live in a tight little confined sphere. Like there’s one little track that goes around the Christmas tree, and the little train just goes along on its little track with a narrow gauge. And loving to expand to have a preferential option for poor people and those who have no voice...that’s the kind of love I think that is God-love.

RB: So do you see God as an external force?

HP: No. No more than I see the unfurling universe as an external force. Life unfurls from within. Life unfurls, love unfurls, the whole universe. If you know about the story of the universe and the way it unfurls and is self-creating... That’s why I said that statement, “What if God created the world that can create itself?” So what is God in this? So you don’t have to try to go find that pinpoint in the exterior, which then has to zap something to make it happen. That makes a puppeteer-God. Makes that very extrinsic... removing God makes God into an ogre and an idol. I mean it probably comes out of the mechanistic universe of Newton, where things are all mechanical. And if there’s an energy it has to be started by something, or the Aristotelian thing of the Prime Mover. What kind of God is it that can help you get up in the morning or go through something when you lose a loved one in death, if you’ve got to project out some exterior, independent, self-relying force? That’s really not the God that Jesus revealed.

RB: That’s really interesting. I’m trying to wrap my brain around it, and I’m thinking about the fundamentals in the Christian faith, of Christ as fully God and fully man, and being the same person... and how...

HP: Yeah, the theology, I mean, there was just scholasticism... from Thomas Aquinas. You know, of the three persons and one God and then they made the trinity into a mathematical puzzle: three in one and one in three. Just this huge... (laughs)... Maria’s in here with me and she’s laughing ‘cause... What does *that* do to love? Hey! Three in one and one in three, and the hypostatic union in Jesus, and he’s one person and two natures, and fully God and fully man. All of those are the theological playing around with or hypothesizing about in a certain mode of philosophical thinking. But

another whole approach, like Martin Buber, “I vow”, the dialogic mode of being, and relationship that being for us is to be with, and that’s why love is so important, because love is a way of being in which there can be union but respect for the personhood of each. And so, you can drown in all that kind of theological philosophical thinking. And finally you just have to get down to, you know, what is the ultimate meaning of life? And it’s to love and to give ourselves to one another in generous love. And where did that come from in us? It’s just who we are. It’s part of our being.

RB: Do you believe in the divinity of Christ?

HP: Yes! Look, I believe Christ is fully God and fully man, I can say yes to all of that in the creed. It’s just, what does it mean? Because I also believe that we are made in the image of God. And Jesus even said something- it’s in the gospels- These things I’ve done people were marveling at. “And greater things than this shall you do.” What does that mean, “greater things than this shall you do?” Well, we’re made in the image of God. We all are capable of infinite love and generosity. And we have those among us who have shown us, you know? We have Mother Teresa, and you have people who give their lives for other people every day. People who work in the inner city, people who have survived huge odds, and they do it with... they are capable of loving. So, I always look for the concrete expression of that. The more we try to use our mind and get it into a philosophical framework, we run into trouble. Things get tenuated. They get stale. They get antiseptic. They get almost like...mathematical or mechanistic.

RB: I know you mentioned some resources earlier. Are there any books along this line that you would recommend?

HP: Yeah, I do. One book is *Your God is Too Small*. That’s a really good book. But the first one I’d recommend is *Jesus Before Christianity* by Albert Nolan. And it’s the book I gave Tim Robbins to read before we did the movie of *Dead Man Walking*. And it just shows in the life of Jesus, the driving force. And if you want to get the closest to seeing God or feeling the power of God, it’s the power of compassion in us. And it’s just really a great book. It will open your eyes to so many things. Like, “Yes! This is true! Yes, of course!”

RB: You know, in our previous interview, when I asked how you hoped to influence Jake, you said that you didn’t want to influence him in any way. That really surprised me, because most Christians have the desire, or feel that they even have the obligation to remake people who don’t accept their beliefs, especially people who are openly homosexual or atheistic. And to have someone who is a Christian, religious leader, say “No, I don’t want to change him at all” really struck me.

HP: He teaches *me*. He changes *me*. I just so respect him because he’s so genuine, so authentic. You see, any ideologue or anybody who wants to proselytize always wants to remake people because they have a preconceived image of who God is. When you think of the arrogance in this, it’s stunning. It’s stunning arrogance to say

“I know what God wants people to be, and I’m going to set about to remake these people according to my image of what I think God has told us.” Anything that smacks of coercion and lack of respect for dignity of the person cannot be of God. And Lord, look at all that has been done throughout history when people, you know, set about this. The inquisition was about that. “In order to save your souls who are in error and heresy, we can even kill you so that you can reach God.” The death penalty is that as well. I mean, there are chaplains who bless the executions, religion an integral part of killing. To be respectful of the being of another is what love is about. And to say “I believe Jake Heggie is an image, in fact I believe he is the self-expression, of God in the world”, because he is truly a loving being. He’s a creative being. And he’s joyful. What in the world would I want to change in him? There’s an arrogance that has been part of religion for a long, long time.

RB: Do you think that goes back to the idea of hell and saving people from a “fate worse than death?”

HP: Yeah. Because if finally the ultimate driving force is fear, then for this person’s own sake I have to save them from hell. I have to do that. I mean people in psychotic extremes, there have been mothers who have killed their children to bring them to heaven and stuff. Or suicide martyrs who will blow them selves up in order to... So, take that fear that you have to do this for someone’s eternal salvation... that’s a big driving force. And even that has an arrogance in it. I’m going to speak, not just from who I am as a human being, but I know the mind of God, I know the will of God, I know the way God thinks, I know what God wants. When you think of that... that’s just a huge arrogance to proclaim. And there’s another way of looking at faith through the human experience, in which doubt and discovery, and making mistakes is all an integral part of the journey. We don’t start with absolute certitude about things. We’re always in a searching mode, which makes us humble. We’re humble because we don’t know! We’re all in this search together. Human beings in the search together. So let us love each other, and let us share what we have learned from our experience in life that has taught us what is true and good and noble. And let’s be willing to share that with each other and not to impose our view on another or to coerce them to change through fear.

RB: Do you believe in the theology of hell?

HP: The problem with hell... I think it’s so much a projection of what kind of... What does that reality mean, that you’re fixed for all eternity in being separated from God, and then fire and gnashing of teeth? And it is all throughout the Bible. The trouble is with the whole violence thing... is that it’s sprinkled all though the Bible and the New Testament, including the book of Revelation, which has Christ coming in the Second Coming with his “mouth like a sword” consuming the enemies. We have huge Biblical illiteracy in the country and the study of the Bible. There’s a thrust toward liberation of people, respect for people, love for people. And that book, *Jesus Before Christianity*, can really give you a sense of the heart and thrust within the life of Jesus. And that is incompatible with putting people in a big iron skillet and burning them for all eternity.

RB: I just have a couple of quick questions on your poetry. When you say you live your life in “primary colors,” is that supposed to be interpreted as you don’t accept shades of gray... things are as they are? Or...

HP: It means no pastel! (laughs) It’s a grayer part of life. You know what I mean by the primary colors is, and actually some of this I’ve learned in the death chamber... ‘Cause when you’re with someone being killed, and you’re there with death and life, everything gets very distilled. And you come out of there and you go...What am I going to do with my life? I am not going to spend my life on non-essential stuff. I’m not going to meetings that don’t matter about anything. I’m not going to engage in a lot of trivial conversations that are not about anything. I’m not going to develop in the close circle of my friends, people who have not given their lives over to something really big. I can’t abide much trivial conversation. I can’t abide it...where people say, “Well I bought this house or I’m going to get this” or just all that kind of stuff. “Primary colors” means to be about the essential things. That’s what “primary colors” means.

RB: And when you say “The deepest desire of my heart” and then “Come home, come home,” is that calling to your ministry or to draw closer to God, or...

HP: Everything, all of the above.

RB: All of the above.

HP: It just means a oneness in being where you go, “Wow, this is natural, this is me, this is right.”

RB: Where you are meant to be.

HP: Where the energies of your life can be engaged in something bigger than yourself is... You know, home doesn’t mean that safe, secure place where you go and bar the door and no one can get at you. Home means the most resonant part of your being, where you know this is quintessentially who I really am.

RB: Thank you so much for your time.

HP: It’s been a pleasure!

APPENDIX G

CORRESPONDENCE WITH JAKE HEGGIE, 12 SEPTEMBER 2008

Subject: clarification of conflicting dates and information in source materials

born March 31, 1961 in West Palm Beach, FL

moved to Torrance, CA in 1963 (brother Jason was born there in 1965)

moved to Bexley, OH in 1966

started piano lessons in 1968

Dad committed suicide March 21, 1972

moved to Martinez, CA summer 1977

first lessons with Ernst Bacon in 1977

Started studying full time with Bacon in April 1978

Graduated high school June 1979

moved to Paris to go to American College in Paris Sept 1979

moved back from Paris to go to UCLA June 1981

married Johana Harris Dec 18, 1982

graduated with bachelor's degree 1984

started grad school at UCLA 1986

noticed beginnings of focal dystonia in 1988

Stopped playing piano because of focal dystonia in 1989; began recovery therapy with Nina Skolnik at UC Irvine (Dorothy Taubman method)

Summer of 1989, got job as director of a private concert series at L'Ermitage Hotel in Beverly Hills; met Frederica von Stade in 1990 while trying to get her on the series; got to know many arts administrators and managers;

Fall of 1990, quit L'Ermitage and went to work for Pebbles Wadsworth at UCLA Center for the Arts to organize the 1991 conference of ISPAA (International Society of Performing Arts Administrators) in Los Angeles -- worked with and met major international arts administrators

1991, after conference, went to work full time at UCLA Center for the Arts as the staff writer, primarily working in Marketing & PR

1992, Johana diagnosed with cancer

November 18, 1993, moved to San Francisco; job as PR/Marketing writer at Cal Performances, UC Berkeley

April 1994, got job at San Francisco Opera as writer for the company, primarily in PR/Mrktg; reconnected with Frederica von Stade and met Renee Fleming, Thomas Hampson, conductor Patrick Summers ... Lotfi Mansouri was head of company then; in Fall of 1994, was inspired by von Stade to start writing and playing again ... set three folk songs for her and gave them to her as opening night gift at *The Dangerous Liaisons*. Much to my surprise, she came in early next performance and read through them, loved them, asked if I would do a recital with her sometime, and gave me addresses of Martin Katz, Marilyn Horne and others and told me to send songs around

February 1995, Flicka von Stade makes a demo tape with me for the Schirmer song competition. Also on the tape is Kristin Clayton, who was an Adler Fellow at SF Opera then

June 15, 1995, Johana Harris dies at home in West Los Angeles

June 1995, one of seven winners in G. Schirmer American Art Song Competition .. winning song is "If You Were Coming In The Fall" (Dickinson poem)

Oct 1995, accompany Frederica von Stade in AIDS benefit in Berkeley ... she sings only Heggie songs; this was our first appearance together

November 1995, Lotfi Mansouri asks me about writing an opera for SF Opera

May 1996, Lotfi sends me to NYC to meet Terrence McNally to see about a possible collaboration, discussion leads nowhere

May 1996, Renee Fleming sings "I shall not live in vain" at Alice Tully Hall recital

January 1997, Terrence calls and says he wants to meet again and talk more about an opera

June 1997, Terrence suggests DEAD MAN WALKING

January 1998, become SF Opera's CHASE Composer in Residence and start composing DEAD MAN WALKING

August 1999, workshop reading of Dead Man Walking

Sept 1999, release of THE FACES OF LOVE, recording of songs on RCA Red Seal

Sept 1999, Schirmer releases first book of published songs

Sept 1999, meet life partner Curt Branom

Feb/March 2000, Schirmer releases two more books of songs

May 1, 2000, Heggie songs featured in recital at Tully Hall NYC

July 2000, composer in residence period ends -- Jake on Unemployment!

Summer 2000, discussions with Opera Pacific about future production of Dead Man; Houston Grand Opera asks about next opera commission

Oct 7, 2000 - premiere of Dead Man Walking at SFOpera

Jan 2001 - 2002 - EOS Orchestra Composer in Residence

April 2002, DMW at Opera Pacific, July 2002 in Cincinnati, Sept 2002 at NYC Opera (for list of all DMW performances see website)

July 2002 premiere of The Deepest Desire w/Susan Graham

August 2003, first international production of DMW in South Australia

August 17, 2003, sister Joanne Smith dies instantly of a brain aneurysm in San Diego

March 2004, premiere of THE END OF THE AFFAIR

2005-06, Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship

May 2006, first European production of DMW in Dresden

Sept 10, 2005, premiere of AT THE STATUE OF VENUS (libretto by McNally)

Nov 2006, premiere of TO HELL AND BACK (libretto by Gene Scheer -- our first major collaboration)

Jan 2008 - announcement of commission of MOBY DICK by Dallas Opera (with SFOpera, San Diego Opera and Calgary Opera)

Feb 2008, premiere of THREE DECEMBERS (libretto by Scheer)

Oct 27, 2008 -- wedding of Jake Heggie & Curt Branom in San Francisco, CA

TO ANSWER QUESTIONS:

Did not know McNally prior to 1996 when I was sent to meet him by Lotfi Mansouri. Certainly knew his work and was thrilled and overwhelmed at the possibility of working with him.

Mom was a nurse. Judith Rohrbach Heggie was born 1932 and lives in San Diego. Never remarried after father's suicide. Sisters are Joanne Smith (1957-2003) and Jill Trolinger (b. 1959), also younger brother, Jason Heggie (b. 1965)

My father was NOT in WWII. John Francis Heggie was born Jan 21 1930 and died March 21 1972. My parents met when they were both at Columbia Univ in NYC - dad in med school and mom in nursing school. They married in 1955 and my father was drafted into the army (even though the Korean War was over). In 1956 he was sent to Texas for basic training, and then to San Francisco for 3 months to study psychology, then sent to Osaka, Japan to work in a field hospital and treat civilians. He was then sent to Korea where he did the same thing. During this time his father died. After he returned from the USA he requested going back to Japan, where my mother was still living in a housing base. Shortly after going back the housing base was closed and they were sent to live in Sagamihara, Japan where my sister Joanne was born in 1957. They left Japan in 1958 and moved to NYC where my father was in residency at Children's Presbyterian Hospital.

About Paris. In my Junior year of high school (I HATED high school) I decided I wanted to get as far away from home and Martinez as possible. I found out about the American College in Paris and that was the only college I applied to (my mom about killed me when she found out). The allure and romance of Paris was irresistible ... and it was the city of all my favorite composers: Chopin, Liszt, etc ...

Needless to say, my marriage to Johana was complicated. I met her when I was 20 in 1981 and very impressionable and incredibly scared --- I knew I was gay but was so ashamed and afraid of that. At that time it was still a very precarious issue -- and still is in much of our country. She expressed not only interest and understand and compassion, but real admiration and love for me ... and I certainly was in awe of her and loved her very much. She asked if we could get married and I decided (after much agonizing) to say yes ... so we did. At first it was very joyful and we made music together, traveled as a 2-piano team ... but personally, it was not easy. She loved me in a very heterosexual way, and that was just not the reality for me. We came to an understanding and decided to stay married and be great friends ... it was never easy and I was in my early 20s ... anyway, there was a sincere and abiding love, admiration and appreciation ... and timeless connection. I miss her very, very much ... she was the greatest. One of the finest and most natural musicians I've ever known. And she was the very first to believe in me as an artist.

Religious background. Father came from strict Catholic upbringing and mother from Presbyterian. I was raised sort of Presbyterian (my father broke big time from the Catholic church and his own family) ... we were never staunch church-goers but we stopped going to church at all after my dad died. And through the years I've struggled with issues of faith, spirit, existentialism, etc ... but after my sister died I became a confirmed atheist -- or rather, a secular humanist. Because I do believe in the human spirit -- the essential bond between us and all the natural world -- but I don't believe in God or a supreme being at all.

Whew!! That's enough for tonight.

Jake

APPENDIX H

CORRESPONDENCE WITH JAKE HEGGIE, 13 SEPTEMBER 2008

Heggie's response to the rough draft

Hi Rebecca,

OK, now I'll try to answer this email! You've done a very good job and you have a very fluid writing style ... I think some of the facts I sent in the email before this will probably help clear up factual matters, but I'll also add to it here:

I was actually named for my father and grandfather -- who died before I was born.

My father was ... my mother "is" (she's still alive in San Diego)

John did not work in Japan during WWII (he was 12 in WWII) ... he was stationed in Japan after the Korean War, serving as an M.D. Joanne was born in 1957. My mom and dad were in Japan from 1956-1958

My sister Jill was born in NYC in 1959. My brother Jason was born in Los Angeles in 1965. We moved to Bexley in 1966.

It was particularly my dad's love of music that ignited that excitement in me. He would play Earle Hagan's composition "Harlem Nocturne" and it haunted me. The big band sound was one he really loved, and Artie Shaw, etc.

I think Anne Swesty is spelled with a "y", not an "ie."

Immediately after my father's death, I decided not to play the piano any more. But my mother encouraged me to continue, so I stopped my studies with Joe Weisberg and started studying with Anna Mae Millard in Bexley. She pushed me a lot further.

And then after we moved to California, I studied piano with Doris Marliave. She's the one who wanted me to go to the Performing Arts Society composer's group.

Paris. I wanted to get far away from everything comfortable and familiar and immerse myself in a different culture where nobody knew me. I even decided to go by my name "JOHN" instead of Jake and see if I could become a different person -- one who either wasn't gay or was fine with being gay. I wanted to reinvent myself.

As far as finances go, I also got a lot of help from my mother for my studies in Europe. That in addition to the trust fund and social security and my job.

I threw out the box of music after I moved to San Francisco in Nov 1993. My first position was as a PR writer at Cal Performances ... the SF Opera job came in April 1994. And I had met Flicka von Stade in 1990 when I ran a private concert series in Beverly Hills. She remembered us meeting and was so friendly and kind. It was

watching her and listening to her perform that made me want to write again -- and to write specifically for her. I'd always loved writing songs (in my teens I wrote songs I thought Barbra Streisand would one day sing, of course) ... but now they were fresher and new because I decided to write what made me happy, not what made academia happy. To write songs that meant something from the heart and connected immediately.

The demo tape of 1995 had recordings by Von Stade and also by Kristin Clayton. It was the song sung by Kristin that won ("If you were coming in the fall") because the ones Flicka had sung were the folk-song arrangements. Also, I was one of seven composers who won the competition.

I found out I was a winner just days after Johana died (June 5, 1995).

Lotfi Mansouri first approached me about writing an opera in late 1995. In May 1996, he sent me to NYC to meet Terrence McNally. That didn't prove fruitful until Terrence called out of the blue in Jan 1997 and said he wanted to do this. We met in June 1997 and he said "Dead Man Walking." In Jan 1998, I was named the SF Opera's first CHASE Composer-in-Residence with a commission to write a major opera.

Oct 7, 2000 saw the 1998 (not 1997) commission of DMW.

The thing that bothers me most about man-made "organized" religion is hypocrisy. So much of the time it's a matter of choosing which brand of intolerance each religion promotes.

I didn't witness my sister collapse and die. She was shopping in San Diego when this happened. I flew down and she was gone, of course. She had died instantly. But, she was on life support at the hospital. My brother and I were there when we told the doctor they could pull the plug and harvest her organs. My mom was on a trip in Norway and couldn't get home fast enough and my sister was in Texas.

Eve-Song is based on poetry by Philip Littell.

Of Gods and Cats uses poetry of Gavin Geoffrey Dillard

Other specifically spiritual works: *The Deepest Desire* (Sister Helen Prejean), *For a Look or a Touch* (Gene Scheer), *Holy The Firm: Essay for Cello and Orchestra* ... although there are references to the human spirit throughout.

Another EXTREEMELY important subject in my operas and songs is parents & children. It's in just about everything I write ... in addition to individual spiritual crisis.

That's it!!
Jake

APPENDIX I
CORRESPONDENCE WITH JAKE HEGGIE, 21 SEPTEMBER 2008

Dear Jake,

The faculty has asked me to better explore the link between your previous life in the PR world and your composition commissions. It's clear that your connection as artist in residence for SFO financed the writing of *Dead Man Walking*. But after that, did you use your skills/ connections in PR to raise funds for your compositions or generate commissions? You had already met and worked with arts administrators on an international level. Did that make a difference in the development of your career, either through publicity or financial security? Thanks again for your help!

Yours,
Rebecca

Hi Rebecca,

I doubt there's a connection. The people I worked with in PR were writers, editors, etc, and the administrators at San Francisco Opera. The administrators I met previous to the PR jobs were all performing arts presenters, not opera company general directors.

I did meet and interview most of the big-named singers who came through SF Opera when I worked there, but it was Flicka that I first offered any music to. Then Patrick Summers, then Renee, etc. And the only reason the work got done after that was because singers and conductors thought it was good. The connection to PR had nothing to do with it --- and in fact it worked against me. Most people couldn't imagine that a PR writer for an opera company would have anything to say artistically -- and they were dead set against ever accepting that. Some of the reviewers and writers on the East Coast, in particular, have been consistently brutal to me, and I think in no small part because of that past job experience.

After the success of DMW, opera company general directors started to contact me about doing DMW and about future works. While DMW was in production, I was living on unemployment because my residency had ended in June 2000. Because of its success, other companies programmed it and I was given advances on royalties ... plus, I became composer in residence with EOS and all of this led to other commissions. Since 1998, when I became the SF Opera composer in residence, I've lived off of commissions, royalties, performance/concert fees and residency fees (when I teach or do master classes).

What I did learn as the company writer for SF Opera was how to do interviews and how to write and edit effectively. That has served me well. I also learned about how opera is put together from the ground up, because I had to interview and write about people at every level. I learned a lot about the art form, what makes it work and what makes it stop.

Let me know if you have any other questions!

APPENDIX J

CORRESPONDENCE WITH SISTER HELEN PREJEAN, 20 SEPTEMBER 2008

Dear Sister Helen,

I'm trying to assemble some biographical details about you, and wondered if you could fill in some of the holes for me.

What are the names and birth years of your parents/ siblings?

You say in *Dead Man Walking* that you had the opportunity to travel in your youth. Where? Were there noticeable cultural differences that made you more aware of the racism at home in Louisiana?

Why did you choose to become a nun when you certainly had other lifestyle/ career options? How did your family react?

What years did you serve as a Catholic school teacher?

What year did the episode depicted in "I catch on fire" happen?

What years were you the Religious Education Director at Saint Frances Cabrini Parish?

What years were you the Formation Director for your religious community?

Dear Hard-working R,

Here's bio info.

mom Gusta Mae Bourg, born 1911 in Grosse Tete, LA

dad Louis Sebastian Prejean, born 1893, Marks, LA

sister Mary Ann, born May 13, 1938

Louis Sebastian Jr, born March 16, 1944

Travels

In the summer we traveled in the family stationwagon throughout most of the 48 states and Canada, and in 1955 went on a six-week tour of Europe

Race

No, I was generally unaware of racial differences because I was hardly ever in the presence of minority people except as our servants.

Nun:

By the end of high school I decided to be a nun. We had great, alive, smart nun teachers with a great sense of humanness and humor. I wanted to be a teacher. I felt marriage and family was too confining. My Catholic family was very supportive of my

religious vocation. They were proud to have a nun in the family, though we all cried all the way to New Orleans when they brought me to the novitiate.

Teaching:

I taught in the classroom four years, then went to study theology to teach adults in the parish, which I did for 7 yrs. Loved both

I caught on fire on a candle burning during a prayer service in the classroom when I was teaching religion while still a novice. We were "let out" of the novitiate to try our hand at teaching for six weeks.

Director of Religious Ed

I did this from 1968 - 1975

Director of novices 1975 - 1981

Glad to help. Love, H

APPENDIX K

CORRESPONDENCE WITH JOYCE DIDONATO, 5 APRIL 2008

Rebecca Beasley: Please describe your experience with Sister Helen and Jake Heggie.

Joyce DiDonato: As I mentioned, my experiences are a bit individual, interacting with them mostly separately. But there is no doubt that they hold each other in GREAT esteem. Sister Helen talks so much about the power of Jake's music and his ability to bring forth the truly deep emotion of her story (although she would never call it "her" story - for her, I think it is the story of the victims - and all the players in Jake's opera are victims) and to truly touch people, helping them open their hearts to this horribly tragic situation of loss and helpless feeling. It must be said as well, that Jake's admiration of Sister Helen is apparent and vividly realized when they are together - they are most likely each other's biggest fans!

RB: How do the two interact together?

JD: LOTS OF HUMOR! They have a wonderful rapport of humor, kindness, admiration and respect. It's impossible to be near the two of them and not feel all is right with the world.

RB: Have they changed at all since meeting one another?

JD: This I can't really answer, since I didn't know the two of them at the start of their relationship - I met them after they had known each other for some time. But I can say that she continues to be tireless in her work and passion, and he has grown in confidence and assurance as a composer.

RB: From your perspective, in what ways are they similar in personality, beliefs, or ethics?

JD: I look at the two of them, and they both carry with them a raging passion for human dignity, which is why I think these two people - from vastly different backgrounds, leading vastly different lives - can have such a meeting of the minds and the hearts, because their vision of the right of each human being to have dignity and respect is inherent to our race, and they actually ACT on that fundamental belief. I've never met two more upright, direct and beautiful people.

RB: From your perspective, in what ways do they differ in personality, beliefs, or ethics?

JD: I don't see too many differences, actually - they both carry a profound spirituality deep within them, and in many ways that is the guiding force in their lives, but they are simply manifested differently.

RB: In your opinion, how closely did Heggie capture the true personality of Sister Prejean in his music?

JD: I think to a tee. He captured the passion, the questioning nature, the firm belief that she must do this work, but the fragile vulnerability of walking a path full of doubt and questions - certainly at the beginning of her journey in this life. Questions of faith, of humanity, of rights, of herself - it is all realized beautifully in Jake's music. I remember one time in the intensive rehearsal process, I was so emotionally wrought from this piece, and the huge prospect of having to finish the entire opera with a solo, unaccompanied piece scared the hell out of me. I didn't know where I would find the strength, let alone the voice to carry me through. I asked Jake why in the world he inserted this hymn at the end of the piece - one where I was expected to walk straight forward to the edge of the stage and sing this face to face to the audience. Seeing the fear in my eyes, he simply said to me, "Joyce - that is the Sister Helen that works tirelessly today. She sees these horrible things, lives these horrible deaths with the prisoners and the victim's families, and it devastates her, but then she must carry on and speak her mind so that people will hear their stories. It's the warrior that is Sister Helen today." And from that moment on, I GOT how to do that final passage - even through tears, and with shaking legs, I knew this HAD to be 'said' and that she has to "say" it to the people. So yes, he definitely captured her.

RB: Jake said he considered *The Deepest Desire* a continuation of *Dead Man Walking*, enabling him to take the time to really dwell on the inner struggle of Sister Helen that he could not do in the context of the opera. When singing the role of Sister Helen in *Dead Man Walking* and premiering the orchestral setting of *The Deepest Desire*, did you notice any similarities musically, vocally or otherwise?

JD: It certainly has the same sweeping and lyrical line that Jake wrote for Sister Helen in the opera - the same passion and immediacy of the text are both there as well. I found it VERY easy to step into this cycle - treating it like a long monologue, and it seemed to follow so easily from the opera - a supplement, if you will. There was no doubt in singing these pieces that he KNOWS this woman and loves her, for the care with which he treats her words is uncanny.

RB: Did working with both of them change you either personally or as an artist? If so, how?

JD: Without question. You don't meet Sr. Helen and leave unchanged. You can't speak with her and not feel better for having crossed her path. The same, absolutely, can be said for Jake - for they both are disarmingly direct and full of passion for the things they believe in. You will not find two more caring or compassionate people, which is why their artistic 'marriage' is so compelling. On another level, to SING the words of Sister Helen, and to play such an intense 'character' definitely challenged me to dig deeper than I had ever before as an artist/performer, and once you go that deep, you can't ever sit on the surface of any role any more, so it was undoubtedly a great gift to me to sing this role.

RB: What were the greatest challenges and joys you felt while preparing *The Deepest Desire*?

JD: The joy was reuniting with these 2 people - with Jake and his music, and Sister and her words. It was also a pure joy to offer this work to a rapt audience for the first time - they took the journey with me, and at the end, their response and affection was proof of the power of these pieces.

RB: What do you feel is unique about the piece?

JD: I think the scope of the journey is quite wonderful, and the unapologetic approach to spirituality and forthright love of one's faith is not something you encounter every day in this business!

RB: What advice (stylistic or otherwise) would you give to singers who are working on a piece by Jake Heggie?

JD: Follow his markings. He gives you everything on the page in musical terms to inform your performance. But perhaps even more vital and important? Recite the text. Every single marking that he makes, every accent, every melodic rise or fall of the line is derived DIRECTLY from the text. He has a huge love of plays and poetry, and I think that background contributes enormously into his love for setting words. He spends so much time contemplating each phrase, each sentence, and is never satisfied if someone is just 'singing' the words - he wants someone to get into the marrow of the words, to live with them, to decide what they mean to them as an individual, and then to sing it with all their heart. That's not too much to ask, I think!

APPENDIX L

CORRESPONDENCE WITH JAKE HEGGIE, 17 OCTOBER 2008

Dear Jake,

Thank you for your patience with all of my questions.

1. In the third piece of the cycle, "The Deepest Desire," the bass line starting in m. 5 sounds remarkably like the bass line in the first piece of Schoenberg's "Das Buch der Hangenden Garten." Is this merely a coincidence or was it an intentional reference?
2. Were both of your degrees strictly in composition?
3. I need some information about what you learned from your instructors (other than Johana) while at UCLA. The list I have is Jim Low (accompanying and art song), and composition with Paul DesMarais, David Raksin, Roger Bourland and Paul Reale. Were there specific stylistic things you took from your studies with them, or particular pieces they assigned you that shaped your development? Where there other instructors not on the list that played any significant role in your training/ development?

Thank you again!

Yours,
Rebecca

Hi Rebecca,

Don't worry about asking questions. I love being able to answer something correctly!

1. I had no idea there was a reference to Schoenberg, but how lovely. At least it's not the theme from the Mary Tyler Moore Show or something like that.
2. My undergrad degree was performance (piano) and composition; the masters was in composition
3. Jim Low taught me more about art song than anybody. I studied with him for several years and learned a vast amount of art song rep. One summer he even worked with me on all the great song cycles of Schubert and Schumann. I'd learn the piano parts and he'd sing (horribly) ... stopping regularly to point out wonders and innovations and ideas in the notes, the dynamics, the nuances with the words and the connections throughout. It was heaven.

Roger Bourland was good for me in terms of "big picture" thinking. Making sure I had the architecture of the entire piece in mind while working on the intimate details --- that is, not losing sight of the forest because of all those trees!

Paul DesMarais taught me to appreciate ALL kinds of music, including Sondheim! One class he would bring in Pendercki, the next one was the Chopin Preludes, the next one was Pacific Overtures. Amazing. He is also the one who told me I should get my ideas away from the piano so I don't limit myself to what my hands can do as a pianist.

Paul Reale helped me to think orchestrally.

David Raksin helped me think pragmatically and economically in terms of musical ideas and materials. This reinforced something I'd learned from Ernst Bacon many years before. Since David was a great film composer, he also encouraged me to think theatrically and motivically.

I was lucky!

ALL best,
Jake

APPENDIX M
CHRONOLOGY OF VOCAL WORKS

The following information was obtained from the official website of Jake Heggie:
www.jakeheggie.com, (accessed October 2, 2008).

Opera and Stage Works

Three Decembers (originally titled *Last Acts*) (2008)

Chamber opera in two acts for soprano, mezzo-soprano, and baritone. Libretto by Gene Scheer, based on Terrence McNally's play *Some Christmas Letters*.

For a Look or a Touch (2007)

35 minute music drama for one actor and lyric baritone, flute, clarinet, violin, cello and piano. Based on interviews from Rob Epstein's documentary film *Paragraph 175*.
Libretto by Gene Scheer.

To Hell and Back (2006)

Opera in one act. Soprano, Broadway soprano, and Baroque orchestra. Libretto by Gene Scheer, based on *The Rape of Persephone*.

At the Statue of Venus (2005)

Scene for soprano and piano. Libretto by Terrence McNally.

The End of the Affair (2003; rev. 2004-05)

Opera in two acts for 6 singers, one non-singing role, and orchestra. Libretto by Heather McDonald, based on the novel by Graham Greene.

Dead Man Walking (1998-2000)

Opera in two acts. Libretto by Terrence McNally, based on the book *Dead Man Walking* by Sister Helen Prejean, CSJ.

Again (2000)

Scene for four solo voices (SATB) and chamber orchestra. Libretto by Kevin Gregory.

Works with Chorus

Seeking Higher Ground: Bruce Springsteen Rocks New Orleans, April 30, 2006 (2006)
Text by Sister Helen Prejean, CSJ, for double SATB chorus and orchestra.

John Adams' Prayer (2004)
Chamber chorus (a cappella). Text by President John Adams.

He Will Gather Us Around (2003)
SATB chorus, A cappella arrangement of the hymn from the opera *Dead Man Walking*

My Grandmother's Love Letters (2000)
SATB chorus and orchestra, text by Hart Crane.

Anna Madrigal Remembers (1999)
Mezzo-soprano and male chamber choir. Text by Armistead Maupin, based on his character from *Tales of the City*.

I Shall Not Live in Vain (1995, rev. 1998)
Mezzo-soprano (revision includes girls chorus (SA), hand bells, and piano). Text by Emily Dickinson.

Patterns (1999)
Mezzo-soprano, female chorus (SSAA), and piano. Text by Amy Lowell.

Faith Disquiet (1987)
SATB chorus (a cappella). Three poems by Emily Dickinson.

Songs and Song Cycles

Facing Forward/Looking Back (2007)
Duets for soprano and mezzo-soprano with piano. Text by Charlene Baldridge, Eugenia Zukerman, Raymond Carver, Armistead Maupin and Jake Heggie.

1. Motherwit (Baldridge)
2. Grounded (Zukerman)
3. Hummingbird (Carver)
4. Mother in the Mirror (Maupin)
5. Facing Forward (Heggie)

Rise and Fall (2007)
Soprano and piano. Text by Gene Scheer. Composed for Constance Rock, soprano.

1. Water Stone (Noguchi)
2. Incantation Bowl
3. Angels Wings
4. The Shaman

Final Monologue from Master Class (2007)

Mezzo-soprano and piano. Text by Terrence McNally from his play, *Master Class*. Composed for Joyce DiDonato. A revised version in a higher key and with optional notes was created for Kiri Te Kanawa.

Here and Gone (2005)

Tenor and baritone with violin, viola, cello and piano. Text by A.E. Housman and Vachel Lindsay.

1. The Farms of Home (Housman)
2. In Praise of Songs That Die (Lindsay)
3. Stars (Housman)
4. The Factory Window Song (Lindsay)
5. In the Morning (Housman)
6. Because I Liked You Better (Housman)
7. The Half-Moon Westers Low (Housman)

Statuesque (2005)

Mezzo-soprano and piano, also with chamber accompaniment: flute, alto sax, clarinet (doubles on bass clarinet), violin, cello, bass and piano. Commissioned for Joyce Castle by University of Kansas at Lawrence.

1. Henry Moore: Reclining Figure of Elmwood
2. Pablo Picasso: Head of a Woman, 1932
3. Hapshetsut: The Divine Potter
4. Alberto Giacometti: Standing Woman #2
5. Winged Victory: We're Through

Grow Old Along With Me! (2004)

Baritone and piano. Text by Robert Browning. Composed as a gift for baritone Robert Orth.

Times of Day (2004)

Mezzo-soprano, violin, cello, piano.

1. The Minuet (Carver)
2. Simple (Carver)
3. The Best Time of the Day (Carver)

Vanity (Blah Blah Me) (2004)

Soprano, clarinet, cello, bass, piano and percussion (also arranged for piano). Text by Jake Heggie. Commissioned by Carnegie Hall for Audra McDonald as part of a new

cycle "The Seven Deadly Sins" (also featuring compositions contributed by Michael John La Chiusa, Stephen Flaherty, Ricky Ian Gordon and others).

Winter Roses (2004)

Mezzo-soprano, string quintet, wind quintet and piano.

Prologue: Winter Roses (Charlene Baldridge)

I. Two Birds

1. The Wren (Baldridge)
2. The Robin (Dickinson)

II. Three Shades (in memoriam C.v.S.)

3. A Hero (Frederica von Stade)
4. Sleeping (Raymond Carver)
5. To My Dad (von Stade)

III. Looking West

6. Sweet Light (Carver)

Epilogue: Late Fragement (Carver)

The Deepest Desire (2002, orchestration in 2005)

Mezzo-soprano, flute and piano, also arranged for chamber orchestra. Text by Sister Helen Prejean, CSJ.

1. The Call; More is required; Love
2. I catch on fire
3. The deepest desire
4. Primary colors

The Starry Night (2001)

Mezzo-soprano and piano. Poetry by Ann Sexton, Emily Dickinson, A.E. Housman, with texts by Vincent Van Gogh. Commissioned for Kristine Jepson

1. The Starry Night (Anne Sexton)
2. Celestial Locomotion (Van Gogh)
3. Go Thy Great Way (Dickinson)
4. Reflection (Van Gogh)
5. The sun kept setting (Dickinson)
6. Touch (Van Gogh)
7. I would not paint a picture (Dickinson)

A Great Home Fell: Songs from Civil War (2001)

Baritone and chamber orchestra. Texts by Maya Angelou, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Emily Dickinson and Stephen Foster

Prologue: Ships that Pass in the Night (Dunbar)

1. Africa (Angelou)
- 2a. When Johnny Comes Marching Home (Gilmore)
- 2b. Letter to President Lincoln from Annie Davis, 1864
- 2c. Was My Brother in the Battle? (Foster)
3. A great Hope fell (Dickinson)

- 4a. Glory (Howe)
- 4b. America (Angelou)

The Moon is a Mirror (2001)

Baritone and piano (three songs orchestrated for full orchestra). Text by Vachel Lindsay. Commissioned by Credit Suisse and Bryn Terfel.

- 1. The Strength of the Lonely (What the Mendicant Said)
- 2. What the Miner in the Desert Said
- 3. The Old Horse in the City
- 4. What the Forester Said
- 5. What the Snowman Said

How Well I Knew the Light (2000)

Soprano and piano. Text by Emily Dickinson

- 1. Ample Make This Bed
- 2. The Sun Kept Setting

Of Gods and Cats (2000)

Mezzo-soprano and piano. Poetry by Gavin Geoffrey Dillard. Commissioned by Vija Nadai.

- 1. In the beginning ...
- 2. Once upon a universe

From Emily's Garden (1999)

Soprano with flute, violin, cello and piano (first two songs from 1987 revised for this set). Text by Emily Dickinson.

- 1. Here, where the Daisies fit my Head
- 2. In lands I never saw
- 3. To make a prairie
- 4. It makes no difference abroad

Songs and Sonnets to Ophelia (1999)

Soprano and piano. Text by Heggie and Millay. Composed for Peggy Kriha-Dye.

- 1. The Spring is Arisen; Ophelia's Song (Heggie)
- 2. Women have loved before as I love now (Edna St. Vincent Millay)
- 3. Not in a silver casket cool with pearls (Millay)
- 4. Spring (Millay)

Songs to the Moon (1998)

Mezzo-soprano and piano. Composed for Frederica von Stade. Poetry by Vachel Lindsay.

- 1. Prologue: Once More - To Gloriana
- 2. Euclid
- 3. The Haughty Snail-King
- 4. What the Rattlesnake Said
- 5. The Moon's the North Wind's Cooky (What the little girl said)

6. What the Scarecrow Said
7. What the Gray-Winged Fairy Said
8. Yet Gentle Will the Griffin Be (What Grandpa told the children)

Before the Storm (1998)

Mezzo-soprano, cello and piano (three songs based on works written in 1986, revised.). Dedicated to Zheng Cao.

1. Before the Storm (Judyth Walker)
2. It sounded as if the streets were running (Emily Dickinson)
3. What lips my lips have kissed (Edna St. Vincent Millay)
4. The Thin Edge (Dorothy Parker)

Sophie's Song (1998)

Mezzo-soprano and piano. Text by Frederica von Stade; commissioned by Jennifer Larmore.

Everyone Sang (1998)

Bariton and piano. Text by Siegfried Sassoon. Commissioned by James Schwabacher.

Natural Selection (1997)

Soprano and piano. Text by Gini Savage. Music and poetry composed for Nicolle Foland, soprano.

1. Creation
2. Animal Passion
3. Alas! Alack!
4. Indian Summer - Blue
5. Connection

Paper Wings (1997, orchestration in 1999)

Mezzo-soprano and piano (also arranged for orchestra). Lyrics by Frederica von Stade. Commissioned by Frederica von Stade and dedicated to her daughter, Lisa Elkus.

1. Bedtime Story
2. Paper Wings
3. Mitten Smitten
4. A Route to the Sky

So Many Notes! (1997)

11 solo singers and orchestra. Text by Jake Heggie.

Dixie (1997)

Mezzo-soprano and piano. An arrangement of the traditional song. Commissioned by Jennifer Larmore.

Thoughts Unspoken (1996)

Baritone and piano. Text by John Hall. Commissioned by Earle Patriarco.

1. A learning experience over coffee...
2. You enter my thoughts
3. To speak of love
4. Unspoken thoughts at bedtime

My True Love Hath My Heart (1996)

Soprano, cello and piano (also arranged as a duet for soprano, mezzo, cello and piano).
Text by Sir Philip Sidney.

Eve-Song (1996)

Soprano and piano. Text by Philip Littell. (*Even, Listen* and *Snake* orchestrated for chamber orchestra, 2001)

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

On the Road to Christmas (1996)

Mezzo-soprano and string orchestra. Texts by Housman, von Stade, Niles, Dickinson, and Heggie.

1. The Night is Freezing Fast (A.E. Housman)
2. The Car Ride to Christmas (von Stade)
3. Good King Merrily on High (traditional)
4. I wonder as I wander (Niles)
5. The Road to Bethlehem (Dickinson)
6. And then the Setting Sun (von Stade)
7. Christmas Time of Year (Heggie)

Encountertenor (1995)

Countertenor and fortepiano. Text by John Hall. Commissioned by Brian Asawa, countertenor.

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

Three Folk Songs (1994, orchestrated 1997)

Medium voice and piano (also arranged for mezzo-soprano and orchestra), Dedicated to Frederica von Stade

1. Barb'ry Allen
2. He's Gone Away
3. The Leather-Winged Bat

White in the Moon (1990)

Mezzo-soprano and piano. Text by A.E. Housman

Trois Poemes Interieurs de Rainer Maria Rilke (1988)

Baritone and piano. Poetry by Rainer Maria Rilke.

1. Portrait intérieure
2. La porteuse de fleurs
3. Epilogue: C'est pour t'avoir vue...

To Say Before Going to Sleep (1988)

Mezzo-soprano and piano. Text by Rainer Maria Rilke, translated by Albert Ernest Flemming. Dedicated to Frederica von Stade.

Away in a Manger (1986) Traditional.

Mezzo-soprano and piano.

The Faces of Love (Selections)

Poems of Emily Dickinson

Ample make this bed (1999)

The sun kept setting (1999)

It makes no difference abroad (1998)

I shall not live in vain (1995)

As well as Jesus? (1995)

At last, to be identified! (1995)

If you were coming in the Fall (1987)

"Why do I love" You, Sir? (1987)

Here, where the Daisies fit my Head (1987)

In lands I never saw (1987)

She sweeps with many-colored Brooms (1987)

All that I do (1987)

APPENDIX N
DISCOGRAPHY

For a Look for a Touch (Naxos 8.559379), 2008. World premiere recording of the 35 minute music drama. Performed by Morgan Smith (baritone) and Julian Patrick (actor).

Flesh and Stone: The Songs of Jake Heggie (Americus Records- Classical Action 266), 2007. Mezzo-sopranos Frederica von Stade, Joyce Castle, Zheng Cao and Mary Phillips. Includes the complete cycles *Statuesque* and *The Deepest Desire*, plus selections from *Winter Roses* and *The Starry Night*. Eugenia Zukerman, flute; Carey Bell, clarinet; David Henderson, saxophone; Dawn Harms, violin; Emil Miland, cello; Richard Worn, bass; and Jake Heggie, piano.

Portrait- Susan Graham (Warner Classics and Jazz 2564 69879-8), 2007. Includes three tracks from *Dead Man Walking*, by Warner Classics.

To Hell and Back (Exclusively for download at magnatune.com), 2006. Live Recording of World Premiere □ November 2-6, 2006. Soprano Isabel Bayrakdarian (Stephanie), Broadway Soprano Patti LuPone (Anne), and Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra; Nicholas McGegan, conductor.

The Deepest Desire- Joyce DiDonato (Eloquencia EL 0504), 2005. Joyce DiDonato's first recital CD was released in Europe in November 2005 and received France's Diapason d'Or. Music by Bernstein, Copland and Jake Heggie. The title track is Heggie's cycle *The Deepest Desire: Four Meditations on Love* (texts by Sister Helen Prejean). Frances Shelly, flute; David Zobel, piano; Eloquencia Records.

Dead Man Walking (a complete recording of the world premier at San Francisco Opera, Erato 86238-2), 2000. Published by Erato. Production at San Francisco Opera in October 2000. Patrick Summers conducts the San Francisco Opera Orchestra and Chorus with soloists Susan Graham (Sister Helen), John Packard (Joseph de Rocher), Frederica von Stade (Joseph's Mother).

The Faces of Love: The Songs of Jake Heggie (BMG/ Red Seal 09026-63484-2), 1999. Sung by McNair, von Stade, Larmore, Foland, Cao, Clayton, Vaness, and Asawa; Jake Heggie, piano.

My Native Land: A Collection of American Songs.- Jennifer Larmore (WEA/ Atlantic/ Teldec 16069), 1997. Featuring works by Aborn, Copland, Heggie, Duke, Barber, and others. Antoine Palloc, piano.

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