The Mighty Casey: A Study of the Performances and Editions of William Schuman's One-Act Opera

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THE MIGHTY CASEY:
A STUDY OF THE PERFORMANCES AND EDITIONS
OF WILLIAM SCHUMAN’S ONE-ACT OPERA

By
Jeffrey Sandell Stern

A DOCTORAL ESSAY

Submitted to the Faculty
of the University of Miami
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts

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On May 4, 1953, William Schuman’s first opera *The Mighty Casey*, based on the Ernest Thayer poem *Casey at the Bat*, premiered at the Hartt School of Music in Hartford, Connecticut. While this debut performance and a subsequent portrayal of the work on the television program *Omnibus* in 1955 were critically unpopular, Schuman remained invested in the work’s success for decades to come. The composer consistently worked with individuals at G. Schirmer (the publisher of *Casey*), arrangers, editors, and conductors to rework the opera into: a four-hand piano arrangement of choral excerpts; a two-piano arrangement of the entire work; and a more critically successful cantata version of the opera (renamed *Casey at the Bat*), scored for symphonic instrumental forces. After discussing the relevant literature on *The Mighty Casey*, this essay examines the published editions, along with the work’s important premieres and recordings, and focuses on the unique aspects of each publication and performance. The document concludes with a discussion of suggested performance considerations for successful future productions. Ultimately, this paper aims to foster further study of the editions of *The Mighty Casey*, and to promote future performances of William Schuman’s unique composition.
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Though overlooked when compared with contemporaries and colleagues Aaron Copland, Leonard Bernstein, Gian Carlo Menotti, and Vincent Persichetti, William Schuman was undoubtedly one of the leading American composers, music educators, and administrators of the mid-twentieth century. Having grown up and developed his musical skills and affiliations in Manhattan, New York, Schuman was the quintessential New Yorker throughout his life, enjoying many of the artistic opportunities offered throughout the city. He maintained an equal affinity for non-musical passions, including the quintessential American pastime, baseball.

Following his first full-time teaching experience as a professor of composition at Sarah Lawrence College (1935-1945), Schuman began his tenure as President of the Juilliard School of Music (1945-1969), where he made his greatest impact in the fields of music education and composition. While working tirelessly as a leader of the developing music conservatory, Schuman set aside time on a daily basis to pursue his separate passion and career as a composer. Among his significant output during this period, including a variety of works for orchestra, band, and chorus, are compositions specifically for the stage, in the form of ballet and opera. It is not surprising, considering his passion for the game of baseball, that Schuman chose the Ernest L. Thayer poem *Casey at the Bat* as the subject for his first operatic composition, *The Mighty Casey*.

Despite its approachable subject and relative brevity (the opera is written in one act lasting less than ninety minutes), *The Mighty Casey* was relatively poorly reviewed
following initial performances in 1953 and throughout much of the decade following. The goals of a Broadway run and television fame eluded Schuman and lyricist Jeremy Gury. Despite its seeming lack of success and only being commercially recorded twice since its inception, Schuman reworked the one-act opera in 1976 to create *Casey at the Bat*, a cantata version of the work scored for soprano, baritone, and chorus, first performed by the National Symphony at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in honor of the country’s Bicentennial.

Though both the stage and cantata versions of *The Mighty Casey* (the latter including “minor adjustments to the score, enlarging the orchestra and eliminating the spoken dialogue”) continue to be performed on rare occasions, their infrequent presentation has led to little research of any depth on the works. As Schuman scholar and Dartmouth professor Steve Swayne succinctly states, “There isn't much written on *The Mighty Casey*.” Swayne’s own biography, published in 2011, provides a thorough documentation of Schuman’s interest in writing opera, the *Casey* writing process, and edits to the score, though it does not delve into the musical or textual content. In a biography by Joseph Polisi, current President of the Juilliard School, the author briefly describes the synthesis and initial reception of the work, focusing more closely on Schuman’s better-known band and orchestral compositions, along with his administrative accomplishments. Gary Adams’s Schuman bio-bibliography provides citations for a number of resources related to *The Mighty Casey*, though most are newspaper and journal articles that offer critical reviews for specific performances of the work. The few articles

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2 Steve Swayne, e-mail message to author, October 4, 2010.
that do characterize the musical content of the score provide only general style features, for example, “The composer’s imprint is evident in the athletic rhythms, leaping vocal lines, major-minor chords and use of ostinatos and semitonal clashes to produce tension.”

Many reviews of *Casey* performances are decidedly unfavorable, ranging from issues related to Jeremy Gury’s libretto to the opera’s length to the melodic content. Yet many of these critical comments provided editorial direction for future productions of *The Mighty Casey*. Others review the work more positively, describing specific productions as “generally successful,” a “grand-slam treatment…a celebration of small-town America,” “riotous,” and “somewhat banal but cheery.” These latter reviews, while providing a limited amount of specific information related to the content of the score, are particularly relevant based on their descriptions that suggest *The Mighty Casey* is a work worthy of further analysis and performance. These critical statements and the few lengthier descriptions of the work will be discussed in greater detail in the literature review that follows below.

William Schuman was determined for *The Mighty Casey* to succeed and find its place in the canon of American music, as illustrated by his reworking the piece time and time again in a manner unlike any other of his compositions. Along with the

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modification of the work from opera to cantata described above, Schuman also promoted a four-hand piano arrangement to the Casey choruses in 1959, and he participated in the creation of an abridged version of the work for Education Audio Visual’s “Music Appreciation Series” in 1980. These modifications illustrate Schuman’s concurrent fondness for Casey and struggle to find the most effective form in which to present the work.

Ultimately, The Mighty Casey belongs in the canon of American classical music. The discussion that follows aims to illuminate this argument by providing a more thorough historical account of the work’s editions, performances, and recordings, and by offering descriptions of the salient style features and challenges of the musical score. By understanding the work’s past, future performers can make informed editorial decisions and include creative theatrical elements to bring the score to life for performers and audiences alike.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Books and Recordings

The most valuable resource regarding both the opera and cantata versions of The Mighty Casey is K. Gary Adams’s bio-bibliography of the works of William Schuman. Organized by title and resource type, the references cited in this text form the basis of the research and the majority of the sources cited in this discussion. Adams provides the composition year, publisher, and approximate performance duration, along with a basic description of the performing forces for each Schuman composition. Adams further divides the resources related to The Mighty Casey and Casey at the Bat by specific production, noting the date, location, and participants of the performances for which any significant literature exists. Adams also provides a succinct yet valuable biography of the composer at the beginning of the book, divided according to Schuman’s most significant positions throughout his career. The descriptions of “The Juilliard Years: 1945-1962” provide context both in terms of activities and compositional output throughout the period in which Schuman wrote The Mighty Casey.8

The current president of the Juilliard School, Joseph W. Polisi, wrote the first postmortem biography on Schuman, titled American Muse: The Life and Times of William Schuman. This book is a fine resource, filled with discussions of Schuman’s academic and compositional career, descriptions of his educational ideas and attitudes,

his relationships with other top American composers of the day, and analysis of what
Polisi believes to be Schuman’s most important compositions. Polisi’s discussion of *The
Mighty Casey* provides insight into the compositional development of the work, Jeremy
Gury’s role as librettist, and the early struggles of the writing team to get the opera off the
ground and appealing to critics and audiences.⁹

Polisi’s biography also discusses the 1976 Kennedy Center concert for which
Schuman created the cantata, *Casey at the Bat*. The author describes the work’s
commission and content, its dedication, the brief rehearsal process and performers
engaged, and a review of the April sixth program.⁹ Polisi cites Schuman directly on the
subject of the composer’s affinity for and belief in *The Mighty Casey* in its multiple
forms: “I love that work [*Casey*] more than anybody else does…I still believe that one
day that work is going to find its mark.”¹¹ Though Polisi’s discussion of *Casey* is limited
in comparison with many of Schuman’s more popular compositions, his descriptions of
Schuman’s dedication to the work provide a further sense of confidence that the work is
worthy of further, more complete analysis.

Steve Swayne’s 2011 Schuman biography augments Polisi’s research by citing
mostly primary sources, including Schuman’s letters, speeches, and manuscripts, to
document the course of Schuman’s musical life. Swayne dedicates an entire chapter to
Schuman’s forays in opera, bullet-pointing the many ideas that never came to fruition in
the decade prior to *The Mighty Casey*. In this chapter, titled “Striking Out,” Swayne

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⁹ Joseph W. Polisi, *American Muse: The Life and Times of William Schuman* (New York:


describes the development of Schuman’s relationship with advertising executive Jeremy Gury, who would become the librettist for *Casey*. Swayne effectively documents early performances of the work, attempted professional performances, publication issues with G. Schirmer, and the *Omnibus* television performance of *Casey* in 1955.¹²

Swayne also devotes a chapter to Schuman’s compositional efforts for the country’s Bicentennial in 1976, which included the reworking of *The Mighty Casey* into the cantata *Casey at the Bat* for a program of William Schuman works at the Kennedy Center. The author carefully describes the process through which Schuman’s fervent patriotism led to his interest in revising *Casey*. The chapter includes descriptions of correspondences with publisher G. Schirmer and librettist Jeremy Gury, and it explains Schuman’s relationship with the Norlin Corporation, the organization that officially commissioned the cantata. Perhaps most interesting is Swayne’s indication that the surviving scores and materials of the revisions “give no clear indication on how much work Schuman himself did on reorchestrating the work.”¹³ Editor Thad Marciniak misunderstood the expectations of his role and in fact believed he was expected to create a new arrangement of the work. Though the two eventually came to an agreement on how Marciniak would proceed, the question of exactly which orchestration changes were at the hand of Schuman appears to be unresolved.¹⁴

Music critic Walter Simmons’s 2011 book *The Music of William Schuman, Vincent Persichetti, and Peter Mennin*, also provides a number of unique insights

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¹³ Swayne, *Orpheus in Manhattan*, 471-472.

regarding *The Mighty Casey*. Simmons characterizes the themes of *Casey* as “the hubris of overconfidence and the defeat of a heroic ideal via public humiliation” and ultimately portrays the work as “fundamentally pessimistic” and therefore unsuccessful with critics.\(^{15}\) Simmons describes the key performances of *Casey* over the past half century, including pertinent critical reviews throughout. Perhaps the most important recent addition to the literature on the subject is Simmons’s account of a 1980 recording of an abridged version of *Casey*. Educational publisher Educational Audio Visual (EAV) convinced Schuman to create a significantly shortened version of the work “to create a sound-filmstrip representation of *Casey* for use in schools.”\(^{16}\) While this recording has gone unacknowledged by Schuman biographers, Simmons claims that the recording “was well-received, and remained on the market until the sound-filmstrip medium was gradually supplanted by videotape and other more advanced media.”\(^{17}\)

*The New Grove Dictionary of Opera* entry for William Schuman, written by Harry Haskell, also provides background information regarding *The Mighty Casey*. The article cites the work’s 1953 premiere in Hartford, Connecticut, and uses the words of *The New York Times* contributor Harold Schonberg to describe its musical eclecticism. Haskell also defines some broad Schuman compositional trademarks that can be found in the score: “athletic rhythms, leaping vocal lines, major-minor chords and use of ostinatos and semitonal clashes to produce tension.”\(^{18}\)

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\(^{16}\) Simmons, *The Music of William Schuman*, 95.

\(^{17}\) Simmons, *The Music of William Schuman*, 95.

\(^{18}\) Harry Haskell, “Schuman, William (Howard),” 253.
opera’s reworking into its cantata form and notes the use of repetitive rhythmic motives and incorporation of jazz and parlour songs.

The liner notes provided in the two extant recordings of *The Mighty Casey* also contain valuable information on the work. The 1991 recording by the Gregg Smith Singers describes the work as “unique in that there are no major singing roles; the title role of Casey himself is mimed in performance.” The notes also describe the content of the specific recording, which includes all of the choral material, while omitting some solo and orchestral sections along with spoken passages that do not consistently advance the plot. William Schuman himself is also featured on this recording as the narrator, reading the final passages of the poem as part of the performance.

The notes from the December 1990 Juilliard School production of *The Mighty Casey*, released for public consumption in 1994, include discussions by Joseph W. Polisi, described above, and Tim Page, a music critic for *Newsday* and host of a New York-based radio program. Polisi briefly and warmly describes Schuman’s significant career achievements and describes *The Mighty Casey* as “one of America’s great morality plays presented on a tableau that is purely American and rich with mythological images – the baseball diamond.” Polisi discusses the relevance of *The Mighty Casey* beyond the stage, stating, “Expectations, anger, love and disappointment all live on this baseball diamond. … The touching image of Casey attempting to re-live his last at bat – this time

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with a homer as a result – reflects the hopes in all of us that the next time at bat might be the best of all.”

Tim Page’s description of the work provides further insight into Schuman’s role in the American music scene in the twentieth century. Page describes *The Mighty Casey* as having melodies that could be imagined on the Broadway stage, with a score that is “clever and light-weight, as befits the vernacular text, [calling] to mind the early theater works of Leonard Bernstein.” Yet Page argues that the comparison between Bernstein and Schuman is not entirely accurate, as Schuman “eschews the younger man’s pulsing sentimentality for an attractive, neo-Classical formalism and a vitality that is all his own.” Page also praises librettist Jeremy Gury for his work on the original Thayer poem, and specifically notes the character of the Watchman, a Gury invention, for his role as “an omniscient narrator.”

**Articles and Reviews**

A chronological consideration of various journal and newspaper articles provides a timeline for significant productions of *The Mighty Casey*, and offers insight into the work’s critical reception. On May 13, 1951, an article in *The New York Times* by Ross Parmenter announced that William Schuman was in the process of writing his first opera based on the Ernest Thayer poem “Casey at the Bat.” The author noted the lone musical

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21 Polisi in *The Mighty Casey* (CD), 3.


23 Page in *The Mighty Casey* (CD), 10.

24 Page in *The Mighty Casey* (CD), 10.
precedent in such an extended form specifically on the subject of baseball: a George
Kleinsinger cantata about the Brooklyn Dodgers completed nine years earlier. Parmenter
also described Schuman’s familiarity with Jeremy Gury’s libretto of the children’s opera
*The Hither and Thither of Johnny Dither* prior to their collaboration on *Casey.*

The following year, the New Rochelle Standard-Star ran an article on Schuman’s
career and the current composition. Writer Virginia Clair quoted Schuman regarding his
choice of baseball as the subject for his first opera: “I asked myself what I had loved most
in my life. It was music and baseball, excluding my personal relationships, of course.”
Describing the yet-to-be-completed work as “destined for theater production,” Clair
emphasized Schuman’s consistent work schedule, musical background, and his belief in
the importance of music education.

The day before the May 4, 1953 premiere, *New York Herald Tribune* music critic
Jay S. Harrison wrote of the latest work from a man “whose enthusiasms are painfully
torn between the baseball diamond and the operatic stage.” Schuman explained to
Harrison that he had promised himself that he would write an opera by the age of forty,
leading to his pursuit of this new musical genre. The composer also complimented
librettist Jeremy Gury, noting the two original stanzas that Gury added to Ernest Thayer’s
original poem. Regarding the musical content of *The Mighty Casey,* Schuman described
the work as simpler than his symphonies and quartets, intended for baseball lovers as


much as for musicians. Schuman specifically pointed out the relationship between the
drama in music and baseball, linked musically in the score through the secret pitcher’s
conference, the rhubarb fight, and the Requiem sung by the choir following Casey’s
inevitable strikeout. Following the premiere, the Herald Tribune ran another short article
describing the reception of the opera. The unattributed author stated that the “outfield
opus seem[ed] to have won the approval of the discerning fans who were at the opener.”

Harold C. Schonberg’s more extensive review of the work’s Hartford,
Connecticut premiere suggested that the Schuman/Gury opera answered many of the
enduring questions that Ernest Thayer left up for interpretation in his 1888 poem.
Schonberg described Schuman’s score in more technical terms, stating that the music,
“carries suggestions of Prokofiev’s ‘Scythian Suite,’ Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony,
Times Square on a Saturday evening, and the Queen Mary coming into dock, all rolled
into one … [Schuman’s] dry, often jerky melodic line, with all of its major sevenths and
ninths, his austere harmonies and his rhythmic intensity somehow do not fit this pleasant
little fable.” Schonberg believed that Schuman’s inexperience in the operatic genre was
responsible for the inconsistent nature of the score.

A brief 1953 article in Time magazine also announced the premiere of The Mighty
Casey. The author commented on the poetic stanzas and storyline added by Jeremy Gury
to Thayer’s original eleven-stanza poem, the tableaux that highlight the end of each
stanza in performance, and the various characters introduced throughout, including Casey,
the silent protagonist. While the opera was criticized as being “about 20 minutes too

29 Harold C. Schonberg, “Casey Bats Again with Same Result,” The New York Times, May 5,
1953.
long,” Schuman’s music was praised as being “ingenious.” Reference was also made to the creative team’s plans to bring the work to Broadway.

Christine Barter’s and Allen Hughes’s mixed review of the premiere of the work provides valuable information for consideration of future productions of the opera. The authors described the pace as too slow, the duration too long, and the characters as “fairly bloodless.” Barter and Hughes chastised Schuman’s aria writing, stating, “paradoxically, the music is least interesting when Mr. Schuman eschews the Broadway format completely to compose straight arias such as those for Merry.” However, they praised many portions of Schuman’s score, highlighting specific songs in which the Broadway and jazz idioms were most prevalent.

On the other hand, W.Y. Vance’s review of the premiere was glowing from all angles. Vance described the performance, featuring students at the Hartt College of Music, as being of “professional calibre.” Regarding the score, Vance praised the presence of a variety of styles, including solos, choral pieces, and orchestral elements. Despite Schuman’s intention to write “semi-serious music … with nothing resembling a popular hit tune … there are singable melodies, good patter songs, and vivid choral writing by a master in this field.” Schuman’s use of strong percussion, brass, and various effects from the orchestra were also considered strengths that heighten the drama.

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Gury’s libretto was similarly praised for the dramatic use of freezes, creating tableaux of various characters throughout the opera.

An August 1953 article in The Music Review by Richard RePass described eight operatic productions in the New York area in the first half of the calendar year, specifically four premieres and four revivals. RePass characterized Schuman’s composition of The Mighty Casey as “a significant step in the recognition of the operatic genre by a noted composer who up to now has devoted the better part of his craft to the symphonic and ballet repertoires.”35 In a review of the May fourth premiere in Hartford, Connecticut, RePass stated, “despite some clever scoring and a few interesting harmonic and rhythmic ideas The Mighty Casey never really came to life until the game – and the opera – were nearly over.”36 RePass praised the most dramatic point in the score and poem when Casey struck out “to an array of percussion and pizzicato effects…” RePass also argued that the work introduced far too many characters in such a short period of time, emphasizing “its fragmentary and … rather superficial nature.”37

Shortly following the premiere, Schuman travelled to Cincinnati to receive an honorary doctorate from the College of Music at the University of Cincinnati. During the trip, Schuman was interviewed by Charles Ludwig of the Cincinnati Times-Star regarding his background and most recently completed work. Schuman described his intentions with The Mighty Casey: “I tried to put in music the thrill and atmosphere of a

ballgame.”\textsuperscript{38} The song “You’re Doin’ Fine Kid,” which lets the audience in on the secretive conference that frequently occurs on the pitcher’s mound between pitcher and catcher in the course of a baseball game, exemplifies this goal.

On March 6, 1955, \textit{The Mighty Casey} was shown on the CBS television program \textit{Omnibus}. Harold C. Schonberg’s review was especially critical of both the production and Schuman’s musical content. Schonberg perceived the performances of the singers to be unbelievable, with costumes and batting stances that in no way resembled a realistic baseball game. Schonberg also used the review as an opportunity to continue his criticism of \textit{The Mighty Casey}, originally stated in a review of the work’s premiere two years earlier. The critic described the score as “essentially unfitting to Thayer’s immortal, resounding lines. It is essentially unvocal, at times plays hob with the normal accentuations of the English language. Thematically it is composed in a quasi-modern style that is lacking in charm.”\textsuperscript{39} Notably, Schonberg addressed the title of the opera, and questioned the logic behind changing Ernest Thayer’s original title, \textit{Casey at the Bat}. Perhaps this comment influenced Schuman’s choice to rename the cantata version of the work two decades later.

Irving Kolodin’s \textit{Saturday Review} account of the \textit{Omnibus} performance of \textit{The Mighty Casey} is described by K. Gary Adams as “carping.”\textsuperscript{40} Kolodin admitted to generally not liking the music of Schuman before offering his reaction to the specific performance. He described the work as far too long, deviating too far from the basic plot,


\textsuperscript{40} Adams, \textit{William Schuman}, 222.
and including characters that are more cliché caricatures than realistic figures. Notably, Kolodin stated that the musical performances were strong, and he compared the beginning of Schuman’s score to a Prokofiev march.41

Others reviewed the Omnibus presentation more positively. Writing in the New York Herald Tribune, Jay S. Harrison described the performance as “first class all around.”42 Harrison specifically praised the choral numbers, Schuman’s orchestral timbres, and the good humor with which the work poked fun of the game of baseball. In The Baltimore Sun, Donald Kirkley lauded the subject of the work, which “brought opera back to the people, where it belongs.”43 Kirkley described the musical content as “modern but not extremely so” with music that made “no concession to the popular bad taste which is encouraged by incessant plugging of transient hits.”44 The article closed by praising Jeremy Gury’s ability to “captur[e] the shifting moods, melodramatic and mock-solemn”45 of Ernest Thayer’s original poem.

A brief 1955 article in Musical Opinion titled “Reviews of New Music” promoted the newly published G. Schirmer score of The Mighty Casey, and noted the work’s approximate length, instrumentation (flute, oboe, two clarinets, bassoon, two trumpets, three trombones, percussion, piano, and strings), cast requirements, and the importance of the chorus. The unidentified author defined the work based on its subject matter of

44 Kirkley, “Look and Listen with Donald Kirkley.”
45 Kirkley, “Look and Listen with Donald Kirkley.”
baseball, stating, “Audiences here … are unlikely to appreciate the finer points of the libretto and action. But they could hardly fail to respond to the tremendous urge and vitality of the work, or to the vigorous, direct and clever music of William Schuman.”

Paul Hume’s review of the newly published G. Schirmer vocal score characterized the work as exceedingly difficult to perform, featuring virtuosic choral writing and tricky instrumental parts. Hume believed the work to be far too long, and suggested that the optional dances be removed in order to advance the plot more consistently. Similarly, the extensive music separating each of the three strikes in Casey’s culminating at-bat was also criticized as “get[ting] into the realm of music too much for the good of its subject.”

On February 1, 1960, the New York-based Composers Showcase presented several works by William Schuman, including four choruses from *The Mighty Casey*. The choruses, performed by the Camerata Singers under the direction of Abraham Kaplan, featured a newly created four-hand piano accompaniment, adapted specifically for the occasion. The concert was also reviewed in *Musical America*, where editor Richard Lewis described Schuman as “one of the most original, honest, and penetrating composers in our country today.” Regarding the *Casey* choruses in particular, Lewis praised their all-American feeling, stating, “they have a rugged sincerity that makes them as compelling as anything from the pen of Mark Twain or Charles Ives.”

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writing in *The New York Times*, also briefly reviewed this performance, and similarly praised the Camerata Singers and their conductor. Salzman described the choruses as “amusing and rousing … all thoroughly tonal music, written with a flair for the chorus and a great deal of charm.”

In 1961, New York’s Museum of Modern Art housed the New York premiere performance of the full opera. The lone article referencing the event was included in the “Scorecard” section of *Sports Illustrated*. The concise editorial described the three-scene structure of *The Mighty Casey* and Gury’s addition of Merry, Casey’s love interest, to Thayer’s original poem. While not providing a critique of its own, the article concluded by stating, “The opinion of the majority of music critics was that *The Mighty Casey* struck out.”

That same year, Schuman’s works were also featured in an evening of contemporary music in Chicago. Thomas Willis described Schuman’s choral music, which included excerpts from *The Mighty Casey*, as the most important and interesting material performed. Willis called attention to Schuman’s use of text repetition and “overdrawn close harmony of the barbershop quartet.” Don Henahan of the *Chicago Daily News* responded similarly to the performance, and stated that Schuman has “a marvelous ear for vocal writing.” Yet as much as the concert was spirited and fun,

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Henahan argued that the *Casey* choruses were “too difficult for musical comedy singers, who would be its most likely customers.”

On August 30, 1967, *The Mighty Casey* was once again performed in New York City, featuring a cast of fifty boys and girls between the ages of seven and twenty. Leading up to the performance, Schuman participated in a rehearsal, working on choral excerpts with the students. In an otherwise favorable review of the production, author Allen Hughes described the work as “not altogether satisfying as opera … the subject does not lend itself to the kind of musical commentary and enrichment that gives opera its identification and appeal.” Hughes related the music to a Broadway score, and stated that Schuman and Gury got “a fair amount of entertainment out of a rather slender story idea.”

This 1967 performance was also reviewed by Jerry Tallmer in the *New York Post*. Tallmer credited director Gordon Duffey for his creative staging in a work that “drags out too long, particularly at the climax.” The article stressed the humanity displayed in the work, as Casey overcame his fateful strikeout through the help of an adoring fan and his small-town girlfriend, Merry.

The 1976 Kennedy Center premiere of the cantata version of the work, *Casey at the Bat*, was also reviewed in a number of sources. Schuman claimed to have gotten the

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54 Henahan, “Concert Spotlights Strengths, Flaws of William Schuman.”


57 Hughes, “Opera: ‘Mighty Casey.’”

idea to rework the opera into a concert piece for chorus, baritone, soprano, and symphonic orchestra from friend and fellow composer Leonard Bernstein.\(^\text{59}\) An article in *The Music Trades* announced the cantata, described the occasion and location of its premiere, and provided a very brief biography of Schuman. This announcement focused on the commission of the work by Norlin Corporation. Schuman was the Chairman of the Board of The Norlin Foundation, “established in 1975 to recognize, encourage and reward exceptional achievement in music.”\(^\text{60}\) The corporation was further described as “the leading manufacturer and distributor of musical instruments in the United States with worldwide sales in 66 foreign countries.”\(^\text{61}\)

Robert Paris also described the commission of *Casey at the Bat* by the Norlin Corporation, and reviewed the Bicentennial concert by the National Symphony Orchestra. He characterized the work as “uncommunicative … too blunt. Its language was that of the music hall, not the concert hall.”\(^\text{62}\) He criticized the performance of the reader, Robert Merrill, and ultimately defined the work as a “boring monument to the clichés of Broadway.”\(^\text{63}\)

A *BMI* article titled “76 Bicentennial Report” relayed information on new compositions by a number of American composers, including Schuman’s works


\(^{61}\) “National Symphony Premiers,” 126.


presented on the April sixth and seventh Kennedy Center program. "Casey at the Bat" is described simply as “a riotous cantata setting…”

Paul Hume also reviewed the Kennedy Center program in The Washington Post, and described the National Symphony Orchestra’s performance of three Schuman works on one program as “honoring Schuman as it has no other composer.” Hume characterized Schuman’s music as being “firmly grounded in formal disciplines of the past, but always alert to the possibilities of imaginative innovation,” exemplified by the incorporation of a passacaglia and fugue, along with a chorale and toccata in his Third Symphony.

Only a month after the cantata premiere, the Gregg Smith Singers performed the opera version in at Alice Tully Hall in Lincoln Center to benefit the Pro Musicis Foundation. In a New York Times review, Allen Hughes stated that the score “inclines toward a Broadway musical style, [and] is catchy and always listenable. It is not an opera one would expect major companies to take up, but it certainly qualifies as authentic Americana.” Like many critics Hughes believed the work to be too long, though he praised the production as highly energized and poignant.

In a High Fidelity article, author Patrick J. Smith reviewed the same Gregg Smith Singers performance. He suggested that though the score “contains some expert writing


66 Hume, “Honoring Schuman the Composer With Three World Premieres.”

and is a generally successful attempt to blend Broadway and opera … [it] is finally struck out by the libretto of Jeremy Gury." Smith specifically criticized Gury’s decision to add verses to the original Thayer poem, and to slow the drama by momentarily focusing on secondary characters. Like Allen Hughes above, Smith praised the ensemble’s performance as well as the scenery and stage direction.

On October 10 and 11, 1980, the Detroit Symphony, under the direction of Antal Dorati, the conductor who premiered Casey at the Bat with the National Symphony four years earlier, performed the cantata on the occasion of the Schuman’s seventieth birthday. The Symphony Magazine article in which the performance was announced described “a unifying theme of this season’s orchestral programming [through] the celebration of milestone birthdays.”

The one-act opera version was next performed and reviewed on July 23, 1986 in Cooperstown, New York, home of the National Baseball Hall of Fame. Notably, in 2011, biographer Steve Swayne described this performance as the “first bona fide professional production” of The Mighty Casey, though it was performed in a local high school auditorium. B.A. Nilsson’s article in Opera News characterized the full-scale production by Glimmerglass Opera as receiving “a grand-slam treatment” in a performance that honored the bicentennial of the founding of Cooperstown, the fiftieth anniversary of the Hall of Fame, as well as Schuman’s seventy-fifth birthday. Schuman was present at the

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70 Steve Swayne, e-mail message to author, October 4, 2010.

performance, which Nilsson further described as “a celebration of small-town America and its turn-of-the-century characters…”

Tim Page’s review in *The New York Times* was equally glowing, and called the performance “a near total success, and one of the most engaging and unpretentious evenings of music theater I’ve attended in a long time.” While some critics view Gury’s expansion of Thayer’s text in a negative light, Page believed the added verses enriched the poem by expanding the message beyond the baseball diamond. Page stated, “[Casey] is no longer the story of a strutting boor whose arrogance loses the day for town and teammates, but a vivid portrait of small-town America. It is about the fall of a small-town hero … and his redemption through love.”

Page characterized Schuman’s score as clever and reminiscent of the Broadway output of the composer’s contemporaries, including Leonard Bernstein. Its relationship to musical theater was influenced by early experience working with Broadway legend Frank Loesser. The author especially praised Schuman’s musical setting of the final two stanzas of Thayer’s poem, which he called “a mournful chromatic chorale, followed by the hushed admission ‘Mighty Casey has struck out.’”

On November 24, 1986, The Juilliard School produced the New York premiere of the cantata version of *Casey* in honor of Schuman’s seventy-fifth birthday. An article in *Opera Digest* described the work as “an ideal student work … [but] a musical oddity and

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74 Page, “Opera: Schuman’s ‘Mighty Casey.’”

75 Page, “Opera: Schuman’s ‘Mighty Casey.’”
slender as a composition.” Regarding the specific production, the author praised the orchestra, stage direction, and choreography, but stated that the performance was poorly attended.

On June 24, 1989, Glimmerglass Opera once again performed *The Mighty Casey* in Cooperstown, New York, this time alongside Schuman’s new one-act opera, *A Question of Taste* in the company’s new theater. Heidi Waleson’s article in *The New York Times* discussed Schuman’s creation of *A Question of Taste* specifically for this Glimmerglass performance. Describing some basic differences between the two operas, Glimmerglass music director Stewart Robertson stated, “‘Casey’ is robust and folksy, with squarish, symmetrical rhythms.”

Bernard Holland believed *Casey* to be a stronger work than *A Question of Taste* due to Schuman’s obvious passion for the subject matter of baseball. Holland praised Schuman’s use of strong rhythms, clear harmonic language, and buoyant orchestrations, featuring “wind- and brass-heavy [sonorities], like a Broadway pit band.” While Holland described the on-the-field baseball sequence as “an utter delight – imaginatively tongue-in-cheek but never descending into self-parody,” he believed the individual introduction of the players and the closing section between Casey and Merry to be weaker portions of the libretto.

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79 Holland, “‘Casey,’ New Schuman Work, as Glimmerlass Opens.”
In her article about the 1989 Glimmerglass double-bill, Leslie Kandell described *The Mighty Casey* as “endearing … The work looks and sounds something like a golden-age Broadway musical: villainy (which in this happy hamlet consists of the catcher informing the pitcher that Casey can’t resist the high-insider) is spiced with snatches of the whole-tone scale.” Kandell described Schuman’s emphasis on melody as potentially providing an impetus for his inclusion of the character of Merry in *The Mighty Casey*, a plot line that Kandell believed should be deemphasized in the work.

Willard Spiegelman, writing for the *Wall Street Journal*, also critiqued the 1989 Glimmerglass performance. Spiegelman described *Casey* as “all-American and foursquare[,] filled with the spirit of small-town pleasures.” The author praised the work’s dramatic and musical content, specifically the use of tableaux and “the rhythms and harmonies of 19th-century speeches, anthems and waltzes.” The evening’s performance was described as being appropriately intimate and well-sung.

In 1990, the Juilliard School mounted productions of both of the composer’s one-act operas, *The Mighty Casey* and *A Question of Taste*, in honor of Schuman’s eightieth birthday. Ruth Berges described *Casey*, conducted by Gerard Schwarz, as “a charmingly staged performance of … the somewhat banal but cheery [opera].” The *Juilliard Journal* also announced this honorary performance. The article stressed director Ed

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82 Spiegelman, “Schuman at Glimmerglass.”

Berkeley’s goal to relate the messages “of baseball, passion, failure, [and] love” through poignant reflections by the Watchman and the fans, who act much like a Greek chorus in ancient theater.

A similar announcement was offered in *The New York Times* “For Children” section. Writer Dulcie Leimbach suggests that the Juilliard opera twin bill “offer[ed] an excellent chance to acquaint older children with this musical form.” Leimbach asserted that the theme of graciousness in the face of defeat was a worthwhile message for children. *The Mighty Casey* was specifically characterized as “a lively tour de force of baseball at its best, with riveting narrative, a pulsating chorus of adults and young rascals, some balletic leaps and the almighty Casey as the embodiment of hope and triumph.”

Two days later, the Juilliard performance was reviewed in *The New York Times*. The article’s author, John Rockwell, stated that the work was “downright annoying, suggesting that Mr. Schuman has little real theatrical instinct.” Rockwell added that librettist Jeremy Gury must share the responsibility of the work’s flaws; the creative team “add[ed] far too much: they impose[d] themselves insistently and intrusively onto the flow of Ernest Lawrence Thayer’s beloved poem.” As a result, the work lost its identity as representing rural America through its simple, tongue-in-cheek style. Rockwell

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86 Leimbach, “For Children.”


88 Rockwell, “Juilliard Demonstrates Its Up-to-Dateness.”
praised the production itself, specifically noting the work of director Ed Berkeley and the lighting effects created by John Gleason.

The *New York Daily News* also reviewed the 1990 performance, offering a more positive response to the work. Though Bill Zakariasen argued that the end of *The Mighty Casey* was far too drawn out, he claimed that the production was first-rate, particularly noting Ed Berkeley’s originality in staging of the baseball game “like a slow-motion silent movie.”

Walter Simmons’s review of the 1990 Juilliard School performance offered nothing but praise for *The Mighty Casey*. Simmons believed the work to be very effective and appealing to audiences, though he linked the piece more to musical theater than to opera. Simmons praised those aspects of the score that were easily recognizable as Schuman’s style, namely the “virile, aggressive, and nervously syncopated treatment of rhythm, rooted in American speech patterns, … pretty melodies, … catchy tunes, exciting rhythms, consonant harmony, and a robust flow of energy … despite some chromaticism and free atonality.” Simmons described the cantata version of the work, “reducing the number of characters and staging requirements and tightening the musical structure somewhat,” as being more effective and commercially successful than the original opera.

On August 10, 1991, the Cleveland Orchestra and Blossom Festival Chorus performed the cantata version of the work under the direction of Leonard Slatkin. On a

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program celebrating American composers, *Casey at the Bat* was “the big piece of the evening.” Elaine Guregian complimented Schuman’s rhythmic score and praised the enthusiasm of the performers, who wore baseball jerseys and caps. The *Dayton Daily News* also reviewed the production, and noted the walk-on performance by Major League Baseball pitching great Bob Feller, as well as the inclusion of television sports commentator Bob Costas as the narrator. Author Betty Dietz Krebs argued that the closing choral requiem proved to be a climactic high point of the work, though the production “placed far too much emphasis on the cuteness of the occasion … [in a work that] Schuman considered a ‘straight, serious piece’ in spite of its sports world setting.”

On February 11, 1994, the Chicago-based William Ferris Chorale performed the cantata *Casey at the Bat* with piano accompaniment. John von Rhein’s brief review praised Schuman’s choral writing as being “more lyrical than his symphonic music, but with much the same optimistic charm and rhythmic punch.”

In 1995, Lancaster, Pennsylvania was home to the most creative setting for the *The Mighty Casey*, a real baseball diamond. Marty Crisp reviewed the Lancaster Opera Company performance, and focused his article on the diverse demographics of the audience, which consisted of long-time opera fans and first-time attendees based on the

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In \textit{The Opera Quarterly}, J.D. McClatchy, librettist for Schuman’s second opera, \textit{A Question of Taste}, provided insight into his experiences working with Schuman leading up to the 1989 Glimmerglass performance of both operas. The article, published in 1994, two years after Schuman’s death, was intended to be a tribute to and reflection of Schuman the man and composer. McClatchy described \textit{The Mighty Casey} as Schuman’s “most elaborate mix of melody and imagination,”\footnote{J.D. McClatchy, “William Schuman: A Reminiscence,” \textit{The Opera Quarterly} 10, no. 4 (1994): 21.} featuring a unique combination of light opera and more popular, concert hall music. In recorded conversations with Schuman, the composer offered insight into his operatic musical language, as he described his love of early musical theater, while freely admitting “I’ve never been an opera buff.”\footnote{J.D. McClatchy, “William Schuman: A Reminiscence,” 25.} Schuman also described his belief in the importance of natural syllabic stress and his distaste for writing recitative. Finally, Schuman briefly discussed his relationship with \textit{Casey} librettist Jeremy Gury and the challenge of reviving the work following its relatively poor critical reception in 1953.

Other journals briefly announce upcoming or recently past performances of \textit{The Mighty Casey}, but provide no further information related to the content of the work or the quality of these productions. These articles are cited in the bibliography, but will not be discussed further in the Literature Review.
Additional Schuman Sources

Though not directly related to *The Mighty Casey*, William Schuman’s introductory contribution to composer Aaron Copland’s book *What to Listen for in Music* provides valuable insight into Schuman’s perspective related to his desired effects of music on a listener. With the ultimate goal of inspiring the reader (and listener) to become as knowledgeable as possible about music in order to fully appreciate its subtleties, Schuman demands that the listener play an equal role as a participant in the performance of a work, comparing “the actions of theater audiences to those of symphonic audiences … knowing that if important lines are missed understanding can be diminished…”  

Schuman expects listeners to appreciate lighter, more popular forms of music through little effort beyond allowing oneself to be entertained, while he also expects them to be equally entertained by so-called serious music through more careful study and analytical listening.

Though the 1954 biography of William Schuman by Flora Rheta Schreiber and Vincent Persichetti does little more than record *The Mighty Casey* in a list of compositions to date, Persichetti’s analysis of Schuman’s compositional style through the mid-1950s is very helpful in identifying basic characteristics and salient style features in much of Schuman’s output. Persichetti describes Schuman’s melodic ideals and harmonic sensibilities, specifically related to his use of tonality to provide structure, his unique use of rhythm and form, along with some broad descriptions of his stylistic

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99 Schuman, intro to *What to Listen for in Music*, vii-xviii.
tendencies with orchestras and voices, using examples from some of Schuman’s most popular works to date to illuminate his points. Such descriptions provide a means of understanding Schuman’s compositional development and style that inform the writing in his first one-act opera from 1951 to 1953.\footnote{Flora Rheta Schreiber and Vincent Persichetti, \textit{William Schuman} (New York: G. Schirmer, 1954), 49-85.}

In the chapter titled “The Grand Tradition” in Gilbert Chase’s \textit{American’s Music: From the Pilgrims to the Present}, the author contrasts Schuman’s compositional style with some of his contemporaries, including Roy Harris and Samuel Barber. Though \textit{The Mighty Casey} is not directly referenced in this brief discussion, Chase describes Schuman’s dominant use of melody over harmony and defines Schuman’s compositional output as distinctly American. Chase also cites the \textit{New Grove Dictionary of Music} in his description of Roy Harris’s compositional influence on Schuman’s works, stating, “From Harris he [Schuman] inherited a broad, nonrepetitive cantilena, non-functional triadic and polytonal harmony, and expansive gestures.”\footnote{Gilbert Chase, \textit{America’s Music: From the Pilgrims to the Present}, 3\textsuperscript{rd} ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1987), 572.} Interestingly, the previous chapter, “Toward an American Opera,” describes some of the most popular and enduring operatic compositions by many of Schuman’s contemporaries, providing background into the compositional aspects that may have separated these more successful works by the likes of Marc Blitzstein, Leonard Bernstein, and Aaron Copland from \textit{The Mighty Casey}.\footnote{Chase, \textit{America’s Music}, 543-561.}

Malcolm Joseph Griffin’s 1972 doctoral dissertation, “Style and Dimension in the Choral Works of William Schuman,” also provides a detailed analysis of Schuman’s
compositional style, specifically focusing on his choral output. Though the choruses from *The Mighty Casey* are not included in Griffin’s discussion, salient features of Schuman’s preexisting choral music provide a starting point for discussion of *Casey* choruses and a means of drawing comparisons to the rest of his choral output. Griffin’s introductory chapter describes Schuman’s prominence as a choral composer, specifically highlighting Schuman’s 1942 secular cantata, *A Free Song*, which led to the composer’s winning the first-ever Pulitzer Prize in music. In the chapters following, Griffin provides more detailed analysis of individual choral works, “examining both the music and the text and their interrelation in an attempt to describe his [Schuman’s] choral style.”

“*Casey at the Bat*” Sources

A number of resources describe the evolution of the original Ernest Thayer poem along with early performances by orators and stage performers. Some of these sources even mention William Schuman’s 1953 opera version of the work. Though Martin Gardner’s compilation of “ballads about the mighty Casey” is limited, by and large, to poetic texts that follow up on Ernest Thayer’s 1888 poem *Casey at the Bat* with notes by the editor on each text, the introductory chapter offers a description of a number of musical works that were inspired by the Thayer poem. Gardner specifically discusses Schuman’s one-act opera, and states that the work “expand[s] the Casey myth with such loving insight, such full appreciation of the nuances in Thayer’s ballad, that no Casey fan

need hesitate to add the opera to the *Casey* canon.

Gardner describes the plot as developed by Gury, specifically noting the title character’s silence and the dramatic climax of the work. Finally, Gardner provides basic information related to the work’s early performances and critical reception.

*Mighty Casey: All-American* similarly provides an in-depth account of the historical development of the Casey story. The first part of the book focuses on the poem’s debut in 1888, early trouble attributing the work to a specific author, and the true location of the fictional town of Mudville and to whom the name Casey refers. In the second part of Eugene C. Murdock’s text, titled “The Literary Record,” a chapter is devoted to the Schuman/Gury one-act opera version of *The Mighty Casey*. The chapter describes the composer’s and lyricist’s passion for the game of baseball and includes a basic description of Jeremy Gury’s profession at the time of the work’s inception, for which little information is provided in other resources. Describing the opera, Murdock states, “Writers had long pondered the unanswered questions posed by ‘Casey at the Bat.’ … for example, wonder[ing] who the opposition and pitcher were, and what ‘Casey,’ the man, was like … *The Mighty Casey* settled many of the unresolved questions. It put meat on the literary skeleton left by Thayer.”

Murdock describes in some detail the subplots, actions, and additional poetic verses created for the stage by Jeremy Gury, and provides a basic summary of the course of events, most notably focusing on the characters of Merry, Casey’s love interest, Umpire Buttenheiser, and the Watchman, who acts as a narrator on

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occasion. Murdock closes with a paragraph describing the work’s limited performance history and critical response.\textsuperscript{107}

*The Night Casey Was Born* by John Evangelist Walsh follows the career of DeWolf Hopper, who, following the publication of Ernest Thayer’s poem *Casey at the Bat*, became the face of the work, dramatically depicting the poem on stage for over forty years across the United States. Walsh states of Hopper’s interpretation, “he didn’t docilely ‘recite’ the poem. He dramatized it vocally, almost ‘performed’ it.”\textsuperscript{108} The author describes the forms in which the popular poem has been performed and interpreted, including songs, radio recitation, movies, visual art, picture books, ballet and finally the one-act opera by William Schuman. The work provides little specific information on the opera itself, but includes descriptions of the earliest dramatic performances of Thayer’s poem.

\textsuperscript{107} Murdock, *Mighty Casey*, 129-132.

CHAPTER 3

THE MIGHTY CASEY: A BASEBALL OPERA

The Premiere: May 4, 1953

William Schuman made a promise to himself that by the age of forty he would write an opera. In February 1951, eight months past his self-determined deadline, Schuman sat on a train from Ann Arbor, Michigan, to New York and forced himself to choose a subject for his first opera. In the composer’s own words, “I asked myself—What beside my family and friends do I love most? Immediately, the word baseball flew into my head.” Thus began Schuman’s baseball opera, The Mighty Casey.

Schuman quickly chose Jeremy Gury, an advertising executive, as librettist for the new work. While the two were not close friends, Schuman was familiar with Gury’s libretto for a 1949 Alex North children’s opera, The Hither and Thither of Johnny Dither. Correspondence indicates that Schuman had Gury in mind as a potential librettist after seeing a production of the opera. Gury provided Schuman some of his writings: “Here are a couple copies of my lullaby—one of four I want to bring together in a book. … If you see anything musically in the verses it would be very nice, but please don’t think I expect you to.” Schuman biographer Steve Swayne succinctly describes the relationship between Schuman and Gury, stating that “their collaboration wasn’t always smooth. Gury once apologized for yelling at Schuman on the phone while at the same time

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110 Harrison, “‘Casey at the Bat,’ A Baseball Opera.”

111 Jeremy Gury to William Schuman, March 28, 1949, William Schuman Papers and Records, JPB 87-33, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts (NYPL), New York, NY, Box 18/ Folder 18. (In all subsequent citations of this collection, the numbers ‘x/y’ refer to Box x and Folder y of the collection of Schuman papers and records in the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.)
indicating that Schuman’s volume had matched his own.”112 While their relationship may have been tumultuous, the limited correspondence that survives between the writers indicates that throughout the writing process, each took the other’s suggestions seriously. For example, in 1952 Gury suggested adding timpani exclamations following the introduction of each Mudville player in “The Mighty Casey,” stating, “I thought maybe there could be a tymp booming after each verse; pitcher (boomp) … catcher (boomp-boomp) 1st baseman (boomp-boomp-boomp). Could be delightful as each player’s turn rolled around – specially with some percussive patterns to be worked out for the six, seven and eight boomsps.”113 This feature appears in Schuman’s score exactly as suggested by Gury, as illustrated in Figure 3.1.

As the creative team settled on Ernest Thayer’s Casey at the Bat as the source for the opera’s story, writing began without a commission or a determined date and location of the work’s premiere. Working with Hans Heinsheimer, Director of the Dramatic and Symphonic Repertory Department at G. Schirmer, Schuman’s publisher at the time, the writers sought an appropriate venue for the first performance, which all parties agreed should be outside New York City. Such an out-of-town production would allow for the opera to be perfected before reaching New York audiences and critics. Primary source documents indicate that negotiations began more than two years prior to the work’s ultimate premiere in May 1953.

In 1951, Schuman contacted the Louisville Symphony Orchestra, which had commissioned Schuman to write the music to the ballet Judith, premiered by Martha

112 Swayne, Orpheus in Manhattan, 261.

113 Gury to Schuman, February 4, 1952, NYPL 145/2.
Graham on January 4, 1950. Unfortunately, the Louisville Philharmonic Society could not find ample funding for the project, leading to their contacting the Commissioner of Major League Baseball as a last-ditch effort to underwrite the project. Ultimately, Schuman and Gury agreed to abandon the Louisville plan, at the suggestion of Heinsheimer at G. Schirmer.

Figure 3.1. “The Mighty Casey,” measures 70-72.
In the summer of 1952 Schuman looked to the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, where Walter Hendl, a former colleague from Sarah Lawrence, was the new Musical Director. Once again negotiations fell apart within a matter of months, though Hendl did suggest that the creative team consider premiering the work semi-professionally with a collegiate institution.\textsuperscript{115} At the end of the year, the University of Michigan looked to be the suitor for a \textit{Casey} premiere. Once again, negotiations quickly fizzled due to the University’s inability to commit to a production “because of the ever-changing college set-up.”\textsuperscript{116} Ultimately the work was premiered “in less grand circumstances” by the Hartford Opera Guild at the Hartt School of Music in Hartford, Connecticut, under the direction of Moshe Paranov on May 4, 1953.\textsuperscript{117}

Though recordings from the premiere are not available, insight can be gained from the words of critics and Schuman’s edits to the score before its publication by G. Schirmer in 1954. Harold Schonberg’s review in \textit{The New York Times} is critical of Schuman’s musical depiction of the story, arguing that the work lacks “folkish flavor” and “relaxed melody.”\textsuperscript{118} He praises the staging and describes how Schuman and Gury answer questions about Thayer’s Casey by providing a more complete picture of the character through the inclusion of Merry, Casey’s girlfriend, and important statistical information about Casey the player. Such mixed sentiments are echoed in other reviews, as some writers describe the work as far too long, while others note the effective use of

\textsuperscript{115}Walter Hendl to Schuman, Undated [June-July 1952], NYPL 20/7.

\textsuperscript{116}Frederick Dorian to Schuman, December 31, 1952, NYPL 13/2.

\textsuperscript{117}Polisi, \textit{American Muse}, 194.

\textsuperscript{118}Schonberg, “Casey Bats Again with Same Result.”
freeze tableaux throughout the performance, the strong impact of the orchestrations, and the extremely positive reaction of the audience.

Immediately following the premiere, Schuman got to work on revisions to the score, though the extent to which these changes were directly influenced by the words of critics is unknown. It is clear, though, that Schuman had several modifications in mind even on the night of the premiere. In a letter written only two days after the opening to Douglas Moore, a professor of music at Columbia University whose opera The Devil and Daniel Webster was also on the May 4 program, Schuman states,

It seems to me that Casey needs work on the first and last scenes and I am already teaming up with ideas for this. At the moment I plan to cut fifteen minutes from its length, so that it comes to not more than fifty-five minutes to an hour; to delete the girl's song in the first scene and write another one in its place, and to make certain changes in the end which I trust will prove to be judicious.119

Many of the changes indicated were implemented prior to the work’s publication the following year.

A cursory glance at the musical sequence from the Hartt School premiere (see Table 1) shows a number of significant differences from the readily available opera score for modern performers. As Schuman indicated to Douglas Moore, the majority of these changes are to the beginning and ending of the work, the portions that extend beyond Ernest Thayer’s original portrayal of the baseball game itself.

119 Schuman to Douglas Moore, May 6, 1953, NYPL 30/6.
Table 3.1. Musical sequence of *The Mighty Casey* at the May 4, 1953 premiere compared to the 1954 published score.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene</th>
<th>May 4, 1953 Performance</th>
<th><em>The Mighty Casey</em> score (1954)</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1. The Championship of the State</td>
<td>1. Noon of the Big Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Three Umpires</td>
<td>2. The Championship of the State</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Case on Casey</td>
<td>5. Dance of the Hawkers <em>(Optional)</em></td>
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<tr>
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<td>6. Abner Doubleday</td>
<td>6. The Mighty Casey</td>
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<td></td>
<td>7. Autograph</td>
<td>7. Autograph</td>
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<td>8. Merry, You Look So Sweet Today</td>
<td>8. You Look So Sweet Today</td>
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<td>10. Last Half of the Ninth (Opening Music)</td>
<td>10. Last Half of the Ninth</td>
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<td>11. Two Out</td>
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<td>12. If Only Casey</td>
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<td>15. The Hand of Fate</td>
<td>15. This Gladdened Multitude</td>
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<td>17. Rhubarb</td>
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<td>a. ‘Ya Blind?</td>
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<td>b. I’m Fed to the Teeth (Manager’s Song)</td>
<td>b. I’m Fed to the Teeth (Manager’s Song)</td>
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<td>c. Gentlemen, Gentlemen! (Umpire’s Song)</td>
<td>c. A Strike’s a Strike (Umpire’s Song)</td>
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<td>18. History Hangs on a Slender Thread (Pitcher’s Song)</td>
<td>18. History Hangs on a Slender Thread (Pitcher’s Song)</td>
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<td>19. Oh, Somewhere in this Favored Land</td>
<td>19. Oh, Somewhere</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>20. I Know How You Feel (End Music)</td>
<td>20. Twilight of the Big Day</td>
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In the first scene, the second, fifth, and sixth numbers were cut and replaced with new material prior to publication. Note also that “Strategy” was performed following “Peanuts, Popcorn, Soda, Crackerjack” at the premiere, which is reversed in the published score. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Schuman stayed true to his word and eliminated “A Man,” Merry’s song to end the first scene, replacing it with “Kiss Me Not Goodbye,” which has since become the most popular song from *Casey*. This love song, with its soaring soprano range, is frequently excerpted by concert performers and is

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120 See Appendix C for the piano-vocal score to “A Man.”
included in a number of anthologies published by G. Schirmer, including *American Arias for Soprano: A Diverse Selection of Arias from Operas* and *American Aria Anthology*.

While the musical content of “Kiss Me Not Goodbye” will be discussed in a later chapter, this edit is particularly noteworthy due to the survival of both versions of Merry’s song. Schuman’s original scores to *The Mighty Casey* are all housed in the Library of Congress, donated in early 1959. Yet Schuman did not include many of his sketches, choosing to provide only his copy of the score and supporting materials used to create the 1954 publication. The handwritten piano-vocal score of “A Man” is one of the only sketches eventually cut from the score that was provided to the Library of Congress. Since so few sketches are available, it is not possible to draw comparisons between much of the musical content that changed from the premiere to the published score, an element that would be particularly interesting in better understanding whether the changes to the first full scene shortened the work as Schuman intended. These sketches would be equally insightful in better understanding the changes made by Schuman to the final scene of the opera.

**Omnibus: March 6, 1955**

An important element of *The Mighty Casey* noted by many critics following the 1953 premiere and in years thereafter is its relationship to musical theatre. In an early review, Allen Hughes and Christie Barter argue that the work’s “musical, as well as dramatic, idiom is closely akin to that of Broadway.”[121] While the completed work would ultimately be categorized as an opera, Gury and Schuman agreed that opera in the

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[121] Barter and Hughes, “William Schuman’s Opera The Mighty Casey Given First Performance.”
classical sense was not their goal. A letter from Gury to Schuman early in the writing process illuminates this point, as Gury states, “Casey gives promise of reaching out far beyond the chic [Gian Carlo] Menotti audiences and recreating opera as a mass medium.” Schuman clarifies his similar goal of simply telling a baseball story even if the music is simpler than most of his compositional output. He states, “To listen to my opera I think it is more important that you know baseball more than music. After all, Casey is a theater piece.”

Biographer Steve Swayne argues that the musical theatre elements in the score are in large part the responsibility of librettist Jeremy Gury, who pushed Schuman not to be afraid of writing something that might end up being as popular as a Sousa march. … Broadway clearly was the destination Gury had in mind for The Mighty Casey, as he imagined the kinds of aural and visual reinforcement of the story that would have been out of place at the Met in the 1950s.

Ultimately, Gury got his wish as Schuman produced elements of a popular musical score to support Gury’s dramatic ideas. A Sousa-esque march is written directly into the opening number, “The Day of the Big Game,” as a marching band makes its way down Main Street on the way to the baseball stadium.

A number of other elements in the score more closely resemble musical theatre than opera. The inclusion of the Watchman as narrator offers a perspective not frequently associated with opera. It is the Watchman who is assigned the task of reciting the original Ernest Thayer poem, introducing the dramatic element of monologue. The decision to present the original text of Casey at the Bat (along with two newly written

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122 Gury to Schuman, August 1, 1951, NYPL 145/2.
123 Harrison, “Casey at the Bat,” A Baseball Opera.”
124 Swayne, Orpheus in Manhattan, 261.
verses by Jeremy Gury “in order to fill certain dramatic requirements”\textsuperscript{125} through
dramatic monologue was not an original idea. In fact, the very year the poem was
published (1888), comic opera performer DeWolf Hopper recited \textit{Casey at the Bat} for the
first time. Over the next forty years, Hopper performed the work throughout the United
States thousands of times. As author John Evangelist Walsh explains, Hopper did not
recite the poem, but dramatically performed it: “For him the poem was not a mere literary
text, it was an actual script for a one-act comedy with action and dialogue all neatly laid
out.”\textsuperscript{126} Gury’s and Schuman’s Watchman follows in this tradition with the added
element of dispersing the poetic verses throughout the opera.

Another element of \textit{The Mighty Casey} typical of musical theatre is the use of
unison, syllabic melodies in the choral voices. This is the case during the introduction of
the Mudville players in “The Mighty Casey.” Figure 3.2 shows the unison melody in
measures 63-70. The choir sings a repeated sequence that features octave leaps in C
Major, a gesture more closely associated with musical theatre than opera. Schuman
employs similar techniques in “This Gladdened Multitude” and “You’re Doin’ Fine Kid,”
as the chorus dramatically declaims syllabic texts at brisk paces.

Yet it is the incorporation of pantomime and dance to depict the drama that most
closely links \textit{The Mighty Casey} to musical theatre. As described above, Schuman had
significant experience writing for dance by 1951, the year he began writing \textit{Casey}. In all,
he had already completed three ballet scores: \textit{Undertow} (1945), \textit{Night Journey} (1947),
and \textit{Judith} (1949). Moreover, the collection of Playbill programs in Schuman’s personal

\textsuperscript{125} Murdock, \textit{Mighty Casey: All-American}, 129.

\textsuperscript{126} Walsh, \textit{The Night Casey Was Born}, 14
files in the New York Public Library indicates that Schuman frequently attended Broadway shows and likely understood the trends of modern musical theatre.

Figure 3.2. “The Mighty Casey” choral melody, measures 63-70.

By 1951, the musicals of Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II were popular and groundbreaking both for their subject matter and musical structure. Two of their earliest works, Oklahoma! and Carousel, opened on Broadway in 1943 and 1945 respectively. Each featured an extensive ballet sequence that was crucial to the plot, an innovative element first presented in a Broadway show in the 1936 Rodgers and Hart musical, On Your Toes.\(^{127}\) Though two of Schuman’s three dance and pantomime sequences in The Mighty Casey (“Dance of the Hawkers” and “The Rhubarb Dance”) are

optional (based on the performing forces of individual productions), the decision to depict the drama in such a manner is closely connected to Schuman’s musical theatre predecessors.

The final scene of *The Mighty Casey*, “Twilight of the Big Day,” is most closely associated with ballet sequences recently created by Rodgers and Hammerstein. The finale of *Casey* is an extended pantomime sequence of approximately three and a half minutes in which the drama and music that has unfolded in the opera to this point is rehashed in short excerpts. Thematic musical material from nearly every noteworthy moment in the opera is represented, most touchingly the material from “Autograph” and “Kiss Me Not Goodbye,” which warmly depict Casey the mortal rather than Casey the hero. Ultimately, through this repetition of musical material and dramatic pantomime, Casey comes to terms with his disappointing strikeout, and the final morals of the importance of love, humanity, and grace are established. Like the dream ballets of Rodgers and Hammerstein, “Twilight of the Big Game” serves a climactic, plot-driving function that is seminal to the work.

Though some of the score certainly does not fit the mold of musical theatre, G. Schirmer’s Hans Heinsheimer was well aware “that the idea of an opera on Broadway was not a new one. Several of Menotti’s operas had realized success on both Broadway and on television.”

Works by other contemporary composers that bridged the gap between opera and musical theatre were also successful in the middle of the century,

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including compositions by Kurt Weill, Villa-Lobos, and Britten. Even the operas of Verdi, Bizet, and Borodin made it to the Great White Way.\footnote{Swayne, Orpheus in Manhattan, 262.}

The opportunity to present a new opera by the eminent William Schuman on the all-American subject of baseball provided Heinsheimer the impetus to contact a number of Broadway producers, most notably Alfred de Liagre, Jr. As early as November 8, 1951, Heinsheimer wrote to Liagre about the potential for Schuman to audition “his new musical.”\footnote{Hans Heinsheimer to Alfred de Liagre, Jr., November 8, 1951, NYPL 145/2.} Schuman became so convinced that \textit{Casey} was destined for Broadway that he attempted to persuade Walter Hendl of the Dallas Symphony to premiere the work by offering him a position in a future Broadway run, stating, “My thought is that if all goes well, we might be able to schedule the time for the New York run (hopefully) when you could be here to conduct.”\footnote{Schuman to Walter Hendl, July 18, 1952, NYPL 145/2.} As previously noted, Hendl ended up passing on the project.

Following \textit{Casey}’s Hartford premiere, the creative team continued to pursue a Broadway run. Reviews indicate that a production was imminent; a \textit{Time} magazine review of the premiere states, “de Liagre, Jr. expects to give it [\textit{Casey}] its Broadway innings next season.”\footnote{“Baseball in Cold Blood,” Time.} In September 1953, Hans Heinsheimer wrote to Schuman, stating,

I am pleased to tell you that the negotiations with the producers have been concluded and that we are drafting the contract today. They will be obligated to produce \textit{The Mighty Casey} by March 1, 1954, and they will pay us an advance of $600 to hold the rights for the six months beginning September 1.\footnote{Heinsheimer to Schuman, September 8, 1953, NYPL 145/2.}
Unfortunately this contract was never signed and the production never materialized.

While Gury and Schuman were ultimately more concerned with creating a work that met their artistic and dramatic goals than placing it in a clearly defined musical category, producers, critics, and audiences struggled to determine the work’s proper place. Music critic and biographer Walter Simmons explores this issue, stating, “The general musical style is lightweight and accessible, although it doesn’t quite reach into the language of the Broadway musical to the extent that Leonard Bernstein, for example, did in his musical shows.” With a Broadway run nowhere in sight, Schuman focused his efforts on completing the vocal score and orchestrations for publication with G. Schirmer.

In 1955, only one year later, *The Mighty Casey* was presented for a live television audience on the Ford Foundation’s *Omnibus* television program. Schuman viewed the broadcast as an opportunity to introduce the work to and to woo potential Broadway producers. Despite his building frustration with the medium of television, the rehearsal process, and the tense relationship that developed with the production team, Schuman worked tirelessly to promote the March 6 performance to a variety of contacts and colleagues as the date approached. Along with notifications to Sid Keener, Director of the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Moshe Paranov, conductor of the work’s Hartford premiere, Douglas Moore, whose opera was also on the 1953 Hartt School program, and Walter Hendl of the Dallas Symphony, Schuman wrote letters to several Broadway personalities. To producer Alfred de Liagre, Jr., Schuman wrote, “I still think it [*Casey*] should go on the stage. Why not consider this a full dress audition

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135 Schuman wrote a letter of thanks and apology to Paul Feigay of the Ford Foundation the day after the *Omnibus* performance for the “unpleasantness had to creep into the period of preparation.” Schuman to Paul Feigay, March 7, 1955, NYPL 16/7.
and have your money boys alerted.”136 Schuman also wrote to famed Broadway composer Richard Rodgers, humbly stating, “I should greatly value your judgment as to the potential performance possibilities for such a work. Although it is already published it is too difficult to get many performances, and I happen personally to think that it belongs in the professional theatre. Maybe I should stick to my symphonies.”137

What began as a venture full of promise for the future turned to disaster. While Donald Kirkley of The Baltimore Sun viewed the production as “a diverting show which brought opera back to the people, where it belongs,”138 most high-profile reviews were not nearly so positive. Well-known music critic Irving Kolodin argued, “the whole affair was academic. … the clichés of crowd action, umpirical behavior, etc., which were called upon to impart authenticity to the action … merely caricatur[ed] itself.”139 de Liagre was even more blunt in a letter to Schuman the day after the performance:

Wholesale, premeditated massacre – that’s what it was. I can’t remember, on screen or off, ever having seen a first rate work so completely horsed up and loused up in every department as yours and Jerry’s was yesterday afternoon. … If you decide to launch litigation against the Omnibus people, which I hope you will, you can count on me as a full time witness.140

Ultimately, the problems of the Omnibus performance can be largely attributed to the late casting of the work141 and the limitations of performing live music on television. Video recordings of the Omnibus performance are housed at both the Library of Congress and

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136 Schuman to de Liagre, Jr., February 25, 1955, NYPL 145/2.
139 Kolodin, “‘Casey’ Strikes Out – Again.”
140 de Liagre, Jr. to Schuman, March 7, 1955, NYPL 145/2.
141 Schuman mentions that as late as February 21, 1955, casting had not been completed for the March 6 live broadcast. Schuman to Louis Gesenway, February 21, 1955, NYPL 17/3.
the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. While it is difficult to evaluate the quality of the costumes, set pieces, and lighting through today’s modern lens, there are two elements of the performance that can fairly be assessed, and stand out as particularly problematic.

First, Irving Kolodin’s description of the clichéd, static characters is evident throughout the work. From the “baseballers” on the field to the fans in the stands, the actors use mannerisms and movements that are exaggerated in an unrealistic, caricatured manner. Such over-the-top performances, which might be effective in a theatrical setting, are particularly ineffective on television, where cameras frequently focus on individuals, highlighting the exaggerated actions.

Second, a number of technical and musical problems occur throughout the performance. For example, following the introduction of shortstop Scooter Cooney in “The Mighty Casey” (measure 54) and in the parallel moments after the monologues by Roughhouse Flynn (measure 63) and Benny Rabensky (measure 73), the chorus and orchestra reentries are noticeably disjointed. The singers mumble as they individually find their way in line with the orchestra, leading to three very unpolished moments in the performance. Similar technical issues related to sound also plague the Omnibus performance. In “You’re Doin’ Fine Kid” the soloist’s microphone cuts out on occasion, while in “Last Half of the Ninth,” the energetic outbursts from the fans become so loud that they overwhelm the music entirely. These issues are largely responsible for the failure of the Omnibus television performance of The Mighty Casey.

While the performance was not a critical success, one should consider the edits made by Schuman for the televised version of the opera. The Omnibus program ran
ninety minutes in length in its entirety, and on March 6, 1955 *Casey* made up the second part of the program, following a story titled “All About Diamonds.” As a result, Schuman was forced to make a number of modifications and cuts to the score to accommodate the limited time frame. Two specific changes for *Omnibus* are noteworthy.

First is the modified placement of “Strategy” within the score. In the published score, this song, featuring the Centerville pitcher and catcher in a discussion of how to pitch to Casey, is the first action that takes place related to the baseball game itself. The previous two numbers are introductory in nature and focus more on the town of Mudville and the baseball fans entering the stadium. “Strategy” suddenly changes that focus by immediately introducing the opera’s antagonists. The reader will recall that the first production of *Casey* placed “Strategy” slightly later in the performance, after “Peanuts, Popcorn, Soda, Crackerjacks.” In the television version of the opera, Schuman modifies the placement of “Strategy” yet again, this time moving it even later in the opera, between “Autograph” and “You Look So Sweet Today.” Schuman was clearly trying to find the most dramatically appropriate moment to place “Strategy,” an issue that Schuman would reconsider again in the 1970s. Also worth noting is the presence of “Kiss Me Not Goodbye” in the *Omnibus* performance. While Schuman indicated that Merry’s aria would be changed following the Hartford premiere, the *Omnibus* broadcast appears to be the first performance of this new song.

It must be noted that Schuman specifically states in a letter to Moshe Paranov that the changes made for the *Omnibus* performance are not intended to supersede the newly published score: “The changes and cuts you will see on Sunday are for this performance
only.” Yet Schuman ultimately endorsed these amendments for a live television performance viewed by countless individuals, including those individuals Schuman specifically invited to watch the special broadcast. While he may not have wanted these edits to represent the final version of the opera, Schuman clearly believed they would be effective enough to positively represent the work to potential supporters. Consequently, it is in the interest of future performers of *The Mighty Casey* to consider the modifications made to the score for *Omnibus* program when presenting the opera to modern audiences.

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CHAPTER 4

CASEY AT THE BAT: A BASEBALL CANTATA

Through the early 1970s, Schuman continued to be invested in *The Mighty Casey*, adding a four-hand piano arrangement to the choral portions of the score and corresponding with individuals involved with regional productions of the opera. While the lesser-known four-hand arrangement will be discussed in chapter six, it was not until the country’s Bicentennial that the opportunity arose for Schuman to breathe new life into *Casey*.

For this historical occasion, the National Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of conductor Antal Doráti, honored Schuman in an unprecedented manner “by presenting on a single program the world premieres of three of his works.”\(^{143}\) Schuman jumped at the opportunity to compose for the Bicentennial, an occasion that he clearly held in high esteem. As early as 1966, Schuman wrote to the President of the Theodore Presser Company, Schuman’s publisher since late 1955, of his plans to write a work for 1976, stating, “To celebrate the 200 [*sic*] anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, I envision music for soloists, mixed chorus (children's chorus may also be used), and orchestra. The length of the work will be the normal running time of a concert. It will be my plan to use as texts words of American authors.”\(^{144}\)

Schuman’s fervent patriotism influenced his compositional output throughout his career, and he frequently chose earlier works of American composers as the basis of his

\(^{143}\) Hume, “Honoring Schuman the Composer with Three World Premieres.” Doráti had previously programmed Schuman’s third symphony in a National Symphony Orchestra concert in October 1974 to critical acclaim.

\(^{144}\) Schuman to Arthur A. Hauser, June 3, 1966, NYPL 147/10.
compositions. For example, *New England Triptych* uses as its source the melodies of one of America’s great nineteenth-century composers, William Billings, while *Variations on “America,”* written in 1963, is an arrangement of organ pieces by American Charles Ives, who had died only nine years earlier. Schuman also chose favorite American subjects and iconic images for his works, including the pastime of baseball in *The Mighty Casey* and the George Washington Bridge in his composition for band of the same title, clearly depicting the physical structure through the work’s imposing ABA form. Steve Swayne adds that it was “Schuman’s indefatigable patriotism [that] resulted in the propaganda works of the early 1940s,” for example *Prayer in Time of War* (1943).\(^{145}\)

In early 1972, Schuman pursued a commission for such a patriotic project in a manner similar to the early 1950s when the creative team of *The Mighty Casey* sought a premiere location for the opera. This time Schuman had the support of a different potential backer, Martin E. Segal. While Schuman contacted music organizations such as Wolf Trap Opera, Segal sought funding through a corporate route, writing to leaders at the American Can Company and Helena Rubenstein, Inc. A mere eleven days after Segal wrote to Schuman describing Segal’s determination to secure funding for a Bicentennial project,\(^{146}\) Schuman received a letter from the National Symphony Orchestra commissioning him for the 1976 project to be performed at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

\(^{145}\) Swayne, *Orpheus in Manhattan*, 464.

\(^{146}\) “Sometime next week I'll be seeing Oscar Kolin and will discuss the exciting possibility with him insofar as Helena Rubenstein, Inc. - corporation or foundation - might be involved. And, if that effort isn't successful, I'll proceed with Xerox, and then work backward through the whole alphabet!” Martin E. Segal to Schuman, August 4, 1972, NYPL 147/10.
Based on the occasion of the commission, Schuman, who was determined to include works for orchestra and chorus on the program, quickly reconsidered the all-American subject of baseball and his one-act opera *The Mighty Casey*. In September 1973, Schuman wrote to Hans Heinsheimer at G. Schirmer, who still owned (and continue to own to this day) the rights to the opera. In the letter, Schuman acknowledged the shortcomings of the work, most notably its tediousness, length, and the seriousness of the music considering the relatively light subject matter of baseball. Yet he also likened *Casey* to his *William Billings Overture*, which, by Schuman’s own admission, was poorly received by audiences. Schuman states,

One day I realized the material was cast in the wrong form. Instead of the single overture, I extended the material into three separate movements and published them under the title *New England Triptych*. … It could be that *Casey*, reworked as a vehicle for narrator, chorus and orchestra, would have a [similar] new life.

Shortly thereafter, Heinsheimer and Schuman met with Mario di Bonaventura, Director of Publications at G. Schirmer, along with George Sturm from the Performance Department to begin the process of reworking *Casey* as a cantata.

In order to revise the score, Schuman needed permission from librettist Jeremy Gury. The correspondence that followed among Schuman, Gury, and Heinsheimer illuminates the deterioration and, realistically, the end of the professional relationship between the composer and librettist. In October 1973, Schuman wrote to Gury of his plans to turn *Casey* into a cantata, stating that he needed Gury’s written consent to allow him “to carry forward [his] thoughts on which material to use, which to delete, and what

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148 Schuman to Heinsheimer, September 17, 1973, NYPL 147/10.
needs to be created.”\textsuperscript{149} Four days later, Gury gave full authorization for Schuman to go ahead with the project in a letter addressed not to Schuman, but to Hans Heinsheimer at G. Schirmer.\textsuperscript{150} To the composer, Gury instead wrote a lengthy letter describing his frustration with their relationship, specifically reacting to Schuman’s cancellation of lunch meetings on two consecutive occasions. Gury’s response – “Now, my brother, I do not wish to play lackey any longer. … I have spent thirty years compromising and I shall do so no longer”\textsuperscript{151} – led Schuman to question the librettist’s mental state in a letter to Heinsheimer the following month.\textsuperscript{152} Despite this unfortunate turn of events, Gury granted permission for Schuman to revise \textit{Casey} for the Bicentennial performance.

Schuman’s search for funding to rewrite \textit{Casey} as a cantata did not end following the Bicentennial commission by the National Symphony Orchestra. Upon commissioning Schuman, the NSO informed Schuman “the Orchestra's financial condition is such that the maximum fee it could pay would be $15,000, or $20,000 including the score and parts.”\textsuperscript{153} Aside from the fee, which Schuman considered to be far too little to take on a new orchestral piece and revise \textit{Casey}, the Orchestra determined that an edited version of a previously released work would not be appropriate as part of its commission.\textsuperscript{154} Yet, Antal Doráti made clear that the Bicentennial performance at the Kennedy Center would be a perfect opportunity to premiere the new cantata version of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{149} Schuman to Gury, October 11, 1973, NYPL 147/10.
\item \textsuperscript{150} Gury to Heinsheimer, October 15, 1973, NYPL 145/3.
\item \textsuperscript{151} Gury to Schuman, October 17, 1973, NYPL 147/10.
\item \textsuperscript{152} Schuman to Heinsheimer, November 20, 1973, NYPL 147/10.
\item \textsuperscript{153} David Lloyd Kreeger to Schuman, August 15, 1972, NYPL 147/10.
\item \textsuperscript{154} “The Board which has commissioned you on an unprecedented scale would expect a new piece of yours rather than a new edition of an old one.” Antal Doráti to Schuman, April 3, 1974, NYPL 147/10.
\end{itemize}
Casey. As a result, Schuman continued to work with Martin E. Segal in hopes of securing the necessary co-commissioner to allow Schuman to devote the necessary time to reworking Casey and composing a new work.

Segal made contact with a number of corporations in hopes of securing a commissioner of the Bicentennial project. In the fall of 1972, Segal wrote to Schuman regarding his negotiations with the Helena Rubenstein Foundation, stating that the likelihood for Schuman to receive the funding for the desired $50,000 “looks so promising at the moment that I am not pursuing other prospects.” However, in June of the following year, Rubenstein declined the commission, citing a lack of financial resources to fund such an extensive project. In 1974, Segal and Schuman contacted the Phillip Morris Corporation. The requested funding was reduced to $25,000 solely for the purpose of editing Casey, and Schuman believed that the baseball cantata would be “a wonderful work for Philip Morris to exploit, since it will be much more popular in nature than my other efforts for the Bicentennial.”

Later that summer, when Phillip Morris was no longer in the equation, Segal informed Schuman that the Martin E. Segal Company would commission the new cantata. While Schuman was appreciative of the offer, he turned it down, stating, “I hope you'll understand my reluctance to accept your generosity. I can only view it as an act of personal friendship, for I cannot imagine that it was a professional decision that your company would normally make.”

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155 Segal to Schuman, October 24, 1972, NYPL 147/10.
156 Schuman to Segal, May 14, 1974, NYPL 145/3.
157 Schuman to Segal, August 13, 1974, NYPL 147/10.
The funding for Schuman’s efforts on *Casey* was officially secured on November 21, 1974 through the Norlin Corporation, “the leading manufacturer and distributor of musical instruments in the United States with worldwide sales in 66 foreign countries.” On this date, the president of Norlin Corporation, Norton Stevens, wrote three separate letters to Schuman. One describes “Norlin’s commitment to establishing the Norlin Foundation to do good and desirable things in the world of music,” and nominates Schuman as its first Chairman; another requests Schuman’s assistance as a consultant on a short-term record project; the third officially offers Schuman a commission of $25,000 to write *Casey at the Bat* for the Bicentennial performance at the Kennedy Center. As had undoubtedly been discussed between Stevens and Schuman prior to these consecutive letters, Schuman accepted both positions with the Norlin Corporation along with the commission.

The cantata premiered on April 6, 1976 on the second half of the National Symphony Orchestra’s program, “The Music of William Schuman,” featuring baritone Robert Merrill, soprano Rosalind Rees, and the Westminster Symphonic Choir. When paired with the newly composed works on the first half of the program, *The Young Dead Soldiers* (also featuring Rosalind Rees) and *Symphony no. 10: American Muse*, Schuman attained a much desired goal that he laid out in the first program of his radio series “American Muse”:

> The Bicentennial is a celebration, and what I intend to do here is really to **celebrate** our music. I'll be presenting a spectrum of American music - music composed for the theater as well as the concert hall, the opera house and recital hall. … I intend to share my own enthusiasms, calling your attention to some

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158 “National Symphony Premiers ‘Casey at the Bat’ Cantata Commissioned by Norlin Corp.,” *The Music Trades*.

159 Norton Stevens to Schuman, November 21, 1974, NYPL 147/9.
profoundly significant works together with some lighter fare - works I happen to enjoy and admire, and which I feel serve to define what we mean when we speak of “American” music.\(^{160}\)

The cantata, the vocal and orchestral scores of which are published by Associated Music Publishers, a subsidiary of G. Schirmer, features a number of changes from the original opera, which are important to consider when choosing which version to perform. Most notably, the work is scored for considerably larger orchestral forces. While Schuman conceived the original opera for flute, oboe, two clarinets, bassoon, two trumpets, three trombones, percussion, piano, and strings, the cantata is scored for the entire National Symphony Orchestra. The orchestration includes a wind section of two flutes, piccolo, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons; brass consisting of four horns, three trumpets, and tuba; percussion requiring three players and a timpanist; along with piano and a full string section. While musicologist and critic Walter Simmons is correct in stating, “with only two soloists and optional staging suggestions, this [cantata] version [is] obviously more practical to perform,”\(^{161}\) the sizeable instrumental forces required for performance of the cantata limit this so-called practicality.

It must be noted that Schuman was not the only person who had a hand in rearranging The Mighty Casey to create the new cantata version. In recent years, Schuman had suffered a number of maladies, including a heart attack in 1968 that led to his resigning from his position as President of the new Lincoln Center. Leading up to the Bicentennial, smaller chronic health problems also came to the forefront, including a bad

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\(^{161}\) Simmons, The Music of William Schuman, Vincent Persichetti, and Peter Mennin, 95.
hip.\textsuperscript{162} Due to his physically slowing down and the scope of the Bicentennial project, Thad Marciniak was brought on to edit the score.

The few correspondences that survive on this matter illuminate the extent of the miscommunication among Schuman, Marciniak, and Doràti, who would be conducting the premiere. In a letter from Doràti to Schuman, the conductor describes his satisfaction at the first orchestrations made by Marciniak. Doràti goes on to take responsibility for the scope of many of Marciniak’s changes, stating,

I gave Marciniak instructions (encouragement, really) to indulge his imagination, saying that you would ‘red-pencil’ anything you didn't like. It will be up to you to restrain his efforts if that is your pleasure. It seems to me that, since we are talking now about a ‘new’ work for symphonic ensemble, the ‘transfer’ should be noticeable.\textsuperscript{163}

Three months later, Schuman makes clear, in a letter to the Director of Publications at G. Schirmer, that such large-scale edits were not his intention at all:

In the material that Mr. Marciniak prepared for the opening music, he added things which I had not anticipated or wanted. In other words, my original score was to be followed and the new opportunities were to be used to fill out but in no way to change the music. Mr. Marciniak and I are now in agreement as to the nature of the job, and I anticipate that the entire work will be ready for my review the second week of October. I should say that I respect Mr. Marciniak as a musician and the trouble arose because he thought I wanted an “orchestration” rather than an expanded transcription.\textsuperscript{164}

While little is found in Schuman’s records that indicates the specific changes made by Marciniak, it is clear that Schuman’s intent was to expand the orchestration to meet the

\textsuperscript{162} Swayne, \textit{Orpheus in Manhattan}, 476.

\textsuperscript{163} Doràti to Schuman, June 4, 1975, NYPL 145/3.

\textsuperscript{164} Schuman to Mario di Bonaventura, September 16, 1975, NYPL 99/4.
needs of a full symphonic ensemble, while maintaining the character and integrity of the original opera score.\textsuperscript{165}

The edits employed by Schuman to create \textit{Casey at the Bat} illuminate the value placed by the composer on shortening the piece considerably and focusing on the dramatic portions of the score, namely the baseball game itself as told in the original Ernest Thayer poem. As Table 4.1 indicates, the first scene, titled “Before the Game” in the cantata, is shortened considerably, eliminating the on-the-field discourse between the Centerville pitcher and catcher (no. 3 – “Strategy”). The two numbers following are also removed, as Schuman chooses not to introduce the Hawkers, who are secondary characters that do not appear again in the opera. The dance following their introductory number is likewise removed, as would be expected in the context of the more stationary staging of a cantata.

While Schuman keeps the number “The Mighty Casey” in the first scene, which serves to introduce the fans along with the entire Mudville team (most notably Casey), he specifically eliminates the lengthy introduction of the individual Mudville players in “The Mighty Casey,” discussed in the previous chapter. In its place, Schuman introduces the players consecutively and without pause, first sung by the Watchman and repeated immediately thereafter in octaves by the chorus. While this amendment serves a practical purpose with only a single baritone soloist present, it should be noted that the repeated tympani strikes and subsequent repetition of the players previously introduced was librettist Jeremy Gury’s idea. Gury enthusiastically pitched this plan to Schuman, who incorporated it in the collaborative opera score. Now free to make his own choices with

\textsuperscript{165} See Swayne, \textit{Orpheus in Manhattan}, 472 for the most thorough discussion regarding Marciniak’s role as editor of \textit{Casey at the Bat}.
regard to the music and libretto, Schuman did not hesitate to remove this Gury-inspired element of the score.

Table 4.1: Comparative chart of the musical sequences in the opera and cantata versions of *Casey*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene</th>
<th><em>The Mighty Casey</em> (opera)</th>
<th><em>Casey at the Bat</em> (cantata)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Noon of the Big Day</td>
<td>Noon of the Big Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The Championship of the State</td>
<td>The Championship of the State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Peanuts, Popcorn, Soda, Crackerjack</td>
<td>Autograph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Dance of the Hawkers <em>(Optional)</em></td>
<td>You Look So Sweet Today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The Mighty Casey</td>
<td>The Mighty Casey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Autograph</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>You Look So Sweet Today</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Kiss Me Not Goodbye</td>
<td>Kiss Me Not Goodbye</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Last Half of the Ninth</td>
<td>Last Half of the Ninth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Two Out</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>If Only Casey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>A Prayer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Surprise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>This Gladdened Multitude</td>
<td>This Gladdened Multitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>You’re Doin’ Fine Kid</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Rhubarb</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. ‘Ya Blind?</td>
<td>a. ‘Ya Blind?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. I’m Fed to the Teeth</td>
<td>b. I’m Fed to the Teeth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Manager’s Song)</td>
<td>(Manager’s Song)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. A Strike’s a Strike</td>
<td>c. A Strike’s a Strike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Umpire’s Song)</td>
<td>(Umpire’s Song)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d. The Rhubarb Dance</td>
<td>d. The Rhubarb Dance <em>(Optional)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>(Optional)</em></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>History Hangs on a Slender Thread</td>
<td>History Hangs on a Slender Thread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Oh, Somewhere</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Twilight of the Big Day</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While Schuman makes a number of edits in the opening scene, he removes very little from the game itself, even maintaining “Rhubarb Music,” which was originally conceived as a dance in the opera. Most numbers include minor cuts from the opera, which help to maintain the drama throughout and shorten the duration of the work.
These changes have little effect on the overall structure of the work. Similarly, Schuman retains all of the recited portions of the Thayer poem, including the stanzas written and added by Jeremy Gury. Schuman’s choice to keep these verses is not surprising based on the manner in which he lauded these additions when the opera first premiered in 1953 – “he [Gury] added two stanzas to Casey, and I defy anyone to tell the Thayer from the Gury.”

A cursory look at the musical sequence of the cantata seems to indicate that Schuman has added material to the middle scene as compared with the opera. The added numbers – “It Looked Extremely Rocky,” “That Ain’t My Style,” With a Smile of Christian Charity,” and “The Sneer Has Gone From Casey’s Lips” – are all underscoring over which the Watchman recites the original poem. In the case of three of the four numbers listed above, the musical material in each is exactly the same (with new orchestrations) as in the original opera. Schuman simply gives the sections that include spoken text an individual title (labeled based on the first line of text spoken by the Watchman) to identify a shift of character and musical content from what came before. Only in the case of “It Looked Extremely Rocky” has Schuman modified the placement of the Thayer poetry and musical material from the original setting in the opera.

In the opera, Schuman includes the spoken Thayer verses intermittently throughout the work, placing each verse alongside its musical representation in the musical score. Schuman changes this in the cantata with “It Looked Extremely Rocky.” The beginning of the Thayer poem, which begins with the line “It looked extremely rocky for the Mudville nine that day,” was placed in the opera between “Last Half of the

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166 Harrison, “‘Casey at the Bat.’ A Baseball Opera”.

Ninth” and “Two Out.” However in the cantata, this initial poetic stanza, along with seven stanzas following it, are placed considerably later, following “This Gladdened Multitude.” In essence, Schuman has chosen to let the drama unfold through the music alone, and then summarizes the action in poetic terms approximately halfway through the scene. The logic behind this change is not discussed in any literature or primary source documents. Yet this modification required Schuman to creatively link the music underscoring eight verses of poetry to create a through-composed musical number. Schuman accomplished this by excerpting the musical material from the opera that underscores each verse, merely composing or revising individual measures as necessary to connect the musical themes to one another to create a complete musical number that connects multiple stanzas of poetry.

Figure 4.1. Piano reductions of the underscoring at the end of the first stanza of Thayer poetry in Schuman’s opera and revised cantata scores.

**OPERA:** Final four measures of “Last Half of the Ninth.”

**CANTATA:** Three measures before Circle 2 of “It Looked Extremely Rocky.”

Figure 4.1 illustrates such a modification, as the musical material used for the first stanza in the opera connected directly from “Last Half of the Ninth” to “Two Out.” In the cantata, Schuman removed one measure, changed note durations, and removed a
crescendo in order to connect the stanza to the musical material from the second stanza, which was originally included in the opera at the end of “Two Out.” Schuman proceeded in a similar manner with the remaining verses of “It Looked Extremely Rocky” in order to create a complete musical number.

The other significant cut made by Schuman while creating the cantata was the removal of the entire final scene of the opera, “Twilight of the Big Game.” The elimination of this musical material is logical when considering that the action that takes place on stage throughout this number is entirely pantomime, which would be ineffective in the context of a cantata with limited choreography. Discarding this material allows Schuman to end the work with his self-labeled requiem, “Oh, Somewhere.” Yet in the opera, “Oh, Somewhere” ends rather subtly; after the climactic moment when the Watchman announces Casey’s strikeout, the music settles and turns to underscoring as the crowd disperses and the Watchman reenters to link the number to the final scene. In order to create a more fulfilling, dramatic ending in the cantata, Schuman composed what Steve Swayne describes as a choral “wail” in E♭ Minor.\textsuperscript{167} As Figure 4.2 shows, in the final fifteen measures, Schuman uses repeated orchestral rhythmic motives, a consistently growing dynamic, and dissonant choral cries in high registers to create the desired drama.

\textsuperscript{167} Swayne, Orpheus in Manhattan, 472.
Figure 4.2. Final fifteen measures of “Oh, Somewhere” in *Casey at the Bat*, newly composed by Schuman for the 1976 premiere of the cantata (continues on the following page).
Also noteworthy is the difference between the endings of the opera and the cantata not only in musical, but also in dramatic terms. While the opera ends depicting themes of love and mortality as the hero exits the stage hand in hand with his girlfriend
Merry, the cantata, now ending with choral cries stating “But there is no joy,” leaves the concertgoer with a completely different message. *Casey at the Bat* ends instead with themes of grief and disappointment from the choir and failure from the hero. One might argue that such a shift in viewpoint suggests a growing pessimism and negativity in the composer over the approximately twenty years between the two editions of the work. However, it is more likely that Schuman’s new ending responds directly to critics from past performances.

Famed New York critic Irving Kolodin describes the main flaw with *Casey* in his review of the 1955 Omnibus television performance: “There were digressions and elaborations, amplifications and adumbrations; there was, in fact, everything but a straightforward concentration on the business at hand.”\(^{168}\) Aside from the obvious issue of length, which Schuman addressed by removing the final scene and many other sections of the opera score, Kolodin is referring to the action on the baseball field itself. In other words, many critics agreed that the best moments of the score were those that directly depicted the action of the original Ernest Thayer poem. By revising the end of *Casey at the Bat*, Schuman has aligned the musical setting more closely with the dramatic nature and thematic messages of the epic poem. One could argue that faithfully representing such a classic piece of baseball history would be of paramount importance to the man who had once admitted, “Had I been a better catcher, I might never have been a musician.”\(^{169}\)

\(^{168}\) Kolodin, “‘Casey’ Strikes Out – Again.”

\(^{169}\) “Music: Casey at the Baton,” *Time.*
The final difference to be discussed between *Casey and the Bat* and *The Mighty Casey* is the use of only two soloists to represent the various characters throughout the story. This change, which is logical in the context of a cantata as opposed to a fully staged opera, led Schuman to alter a number of musical aspects of the score for the soloists and orchestra. As in the opera, the female soloist continues to represent only the character of Merry, Casey’s girlfriend. Yet the amount of musical material she is expected to sing is considerably greater in the cantata than in the opera. While Merry retains her solo musical numbers, “Kiss Me Not Goodbye” and “A Prayer,” she also sings in “Two Out,” “If Only Casey,” and “Oh, Somewhere.” In each of these three numbers, Merry has short solo excerpts in the context of a choral work. In “Two Out,” Merry’s solo replaces that of a female fan in the opera; in “If Only Casey” Merry sings an extended duet with the Watchman in an excerpt that was originally sung as a solo by a male fan (measures 22-41 in the opera). In the finale, Schuman adds Merry and the Watchman to a piece that was originally conceived as completely choral. The soloists begin the phrase leading up to rehearsal letter B and then join with the applicable voice parts for the rest of number, allowing all singers to participate as the cantata dramatically comes to a close (see Figure 4.3).

The baritone soloist has even more responsibility, playing the roles of the Watchman (both singing his solo material and reciting the Thayer poem), the Centerville pitcher and catcher, the Mudville manager, and the game’s umpire. While the cantata specifically calls for a baritone soloist, the vocal ranges of the characters that the soloist

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170 On page 27 of the cantata vocal score, Schuman notes that either a member of the choir (man, woman, or boy soprano) or the woman singing the role of Merry may sing “Autograph,” though if Merry sings the role, “she needs some visual prop to disguise her.”
must represent are significantly different from one another in the opera version of the score. Thatcher, the Centerville catcher, and Buttenheiser the umpire have material in the bass range, while Fireball Snedeker, the Centerville pitcher, and the Mudville manager have much higher baritone ranges (Snedeker is expected to sing a high G in “Hist’ry Hangs on a Slender Thread”). In order to equalize these parts for a single baritone, Schuman changed the keys within the Rhubarb sequence, moving “I’m Fed to the Teeth” and “A Strike’s a Strike” up a whole step from C Major to D Major.

Figure 4.3. “Oh, Somewhere,” measures 24-26 (three measures before rehearsal letter B) from *Casey at the Bat*.

At its premiere the new cantata was performed in approximately forty-five minutes, a significant cut from the original eighty-minute opera. Few critics appear to have covered the concert – “The *New York Times* did not bother sending down a critic. Schuman’s major creative efforts to honor and celebrate the nation he loved were being ignored.”\(^\text{171}\) While the work did not gain significant recognition, its premiere “led, in

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\(^{171}\) Swayne, *Orpheus in Manhattan*, 471.
some cases, to stagings of the original opera.”\textsuperscript{172} As this comment indicates, though the cantata may be more practical than its predecessor in length and stage forces, its requisite large orchestral forces (unless one performs the work with piano, using the reduction in the vocal score) have resulted in few noteworthy performances and have earned the work “the dubious distinction of not having ever been commercially recorded.”\textsuperscript{173}

\textsuperscript{172} Simmons, \textit{The Music of William Schuman, Vincent Persichetti, and Peter Mennin}, 95.

\textsuperscript{173} Steve Swayne, \textit{Orpheus in Manhattan}, 520.
CHAPTER 5
SCHUMAN’S COMPOSITIONAL STYLE IN CASEY

While an entire chapter of this document has been devoted to the unique characteristics of and differences between The Mighty Casey and Casey at the Bat, the musical content of the cantata consists nearly entirely of musical material previously conceived for and included in the opera. Considering the extent of the similarities between the scores, it is necessary to discuss the musical elements within each that are both noteworthy and reflective of William Schuman’s writing style.

In his description of Schuman’s compositional style, Vincent Persichetti describes an anecdotal account of a discussion between Schuman and a conductor. When faced with a demand for more melodic writing, Schuman retorted by saying, “It is all melody. If you can’t sing my music it is because you can’t sing.”\(^{174}\) Over twenty years later, Schuman offered a similar statement regarding his approach to composition: “When you mention the melodic line, you’re getting to the heart of my own approach to composition. Everything I do is melody.”\(^{175}\) This dedication to melodic line is readily apparent throughout both versions of Casey and in fact becomes a unifying characteristic of the overall work.

In the choral movements, melody is almost always easy to locate. In “The Mighty Casey,” “This Gladdened Multitude,” “Hist’ry Hangs on a Slender Thread,” and “Oh, Somewhere,” Schuman is so dedicated to clear melodic writing that the chorus sings in

\(^{174}\) Schreiber and Persichetti, William Schuman, 51.

\(^{175}\) Freedman, “Schuman at the Bat.”
octaves for portions of each, with only the orchestra providing harmonic underpinning. 

In cases where the ensemble splits into harmony, the melody almost always lies in the soprano line, easily audible above the lower three voices, which provide harmonic context. The refrain of “Hist’ry Hangs on a Slender Thread” illuminates this concept as the homophonic choral voices fill out the chordal structure below the soprano melody (see Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1. Choral refrain from “Hist’ry Hangs on a Slender Thread” (Casey at the Bat).

Schuman is similarly devoted to melody in the solo musical numbers in Casey. Merry’s aria, “Kiss Me Not Goodbye,” which was added to the opera score following the work’s 1953 premiere, did not come to Schuman randomly when he decided to replace
“A Man” after the Hartford premiere. Instead he reconsidered the melodic material in “Championship of the State,” sung by the Watchman and Merry. When one compares the opening vocal phrases of each song, it quickly becomes clear that Schuman has lifted the “Championship of the State” melodic line exactly and reused it as Merry’s melody in “Kiss Me Not Goodbye” (see Figure 5.2). Yet Schuman’s compositional adroitness masks the similarities between the two numbers; the rhythmic and harmonic contents are completely unique in each number, as are the meters. As a result, while the melodic content of each melody links the two works, the differences of instrumentation and affect create entirely unique songs that bear only a subtle resemblance.

Such attention to melody in both the choral and solo writing makes much of the score seem “deceptively simple.” Yet Washington Post music editor Paul Hume warns the potential performer that “in no sense is this an easy opera to produce, sing, or play.” He specifies that “the work demands a virtuoso chorus.” Specifically with regard to melody, the challenges for the chorus are significant. In “The Mighty Casey,” for example, the ensemble is expected to implement repeated octave leaps when introducing each of the ballplayers. While this creates an energetic sense of consonant melodic displacement to the audience, such athletic vocal jumps are difficult to accomplish accurately for a choral ensemble.

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176 A review of the 1953 opera premiere specifically comments that “A Man” is not successful because it “eschews the Broadway format completely to compose [a] straight aria. … Here [Schuman] is given to writing lines singularly devoid of lyric impulse, full of awkward vocal leaps that evoke little more than sympathy for the singer.” Barter and Hughes, “William Schuman’s Opera The Mighty Casey Given First Performance.”

177 Lewis, “Composers Showcase: William Schuman.”

Figure 5.2. Similar melodic content of “Championship of the State” and “Kiss Me Not Goodbye” (Casey at the Bat).

“Championship of the State”

Watchman

What a day to sing and celebrate! Ever see a bluer sky?

“Kiss Me Not Goodbye”

Merry

Time has a way of flowing, fleeting. Time has a way of cheating lovers.

Voice leading is an equally challenging aspect of the score for the chorus of Mudville fans. In his review of a recording of The Mighty Casey, Walter Simmons praises the work for its accessibility in its “catchy tunes, exciting rhythms, consonant harmony, and a robust, vigorous flow of energy.” Yet he also notes Schuman’s incorporation of “virile, aggressive, and nervously syncopated treatment of rhythm, rooted in American speech patterns … [and] some chromaticism and free atonality.”

While rhythm will be discussed shortly, the use of chromaticism and unusual harmonic

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movement leads to several demanding moments for the chorus. Perhaps nowhere in the
score is this clearer than at the choral entrance of “Oh, Somewhere.”

Figure 5.3. Piano reduction and choral parts to “Oh, Somewhere,” beginning at the
pickup to measure 6 (Casey at the Bat).
Here the chorus begins in octaves with an immediate upward leap of a minor seventh, followed in short order by chromatic ascents and descents. Such challenging intervallic content continues throughout the choral phrase, as the harmonic motion, while tonal, moves too rapidly for the singers to gain a true sense of a key center throughout the phrase.

Voice leading is especially challenging throughout the work for the altos, tenors, and basses. As previously stated, in the majority of the *Casey* choral excerpts, the melody lies in the soprano line. In most cases, the lowest three parts move homophonically beneath, declaiming the text syllabically. In “This Gladdened Multitude,” one can see the challenge.

Figure 5.4: Initial choral phrases in “This Gladdened Multitude” (*Casey at the Bat*).

In the cantata vocal score, the tenor A# on the final syllable of the word ‘greater’ above is erroneously printed as an A♮. The opera vocal score, along with the full scores to both the opera and cantata, correctly mark this pitch as an A♯.
While the chorus begins in D Major, Schuman quickly shifts the tonal center to G Major by the first cadence and continues to F# Major by the cadence thereafter. Aside from the quick movement between keys, the harmonic movement between chords is relatively unorthodox. Schuman uses only major chords throughout this section, leading to unexpected leaps and chromaticism for those without the melody.

Undoubtedly the most challenging portion of the score for the chorus (specifically related to voice leading) occurs at rehearsal letter B of “Oh, Somewhere.” While the sopranos and tenors continue the melody presented earlier in the number (the tenors break off into a harmony of their own six measures after B), the altos and basses are assigned the difficult task of providing the harmonic underpinning through more active, yet secondary eighth note motion. The result is a tritone leap for the altos, several leaps of a sixth or more in both voice parts, and vocal lines that are unnatural to sing due to harmonic shifts with each passing measure (see Figure 5.5).

While voice leading provides a significant challenge, rhythm presents another hurdle to the choral singers. Schuman’s idiomatic style produces fast, syllabic treatment of texts. Schuman adds to these elements when depicting excitement in the chorus by repeating texts. For example, in the number “Surprise,” when the Mudville fans announce that the two batters ahead of Casey have come through in the clutch by reaching base, the chorus repeats the word ‘surprise’ nine times in a row at its first entrance. As the crowd becomes hushed and the drama builds through a momentarily lowered dynamic, Schuman combines the elements of phrase repetition, offbeat entrances, and rhythmic syncopation to create a challenge for the singers as illustrated in Figure 5.6.
Figure 5.5. “Oh, Somewhere” at rehearsal letter B (Casey at the Bat).
Schuman uses an equally effective orchestral device to create energy and drama in *Casey*, namely polychords. The strongest example of this is in “Ya Blind.” In this short number, the fans shout unpitched insults at the umpire, between which the orchestra responds with representative shouts of its own. To create a heightened sense of drama and aggression, every chord played by the orchestra is a polychord, consisting of overlapping major chords. By combining such clashing, closely voiced chords with the requested articulation, Schuman produces the desired effect of shouting and disorder in orchestral terms.

The score of *Casey* also shows the influence of older musical forms and styles on Schuman. As previously discussed, much of the choral writing throughout *Casey* is characterized by syllabic treatment of texts, and homophonic voicing with the melody given to the sopranos, illustrated earlier in this chapter by the “Hist’ry Hangs on a Slender Thread” refrain and the opening phrases of “This Gladdened Multitude.” This voicing is broadly reminiscent of choral compositional styles throughout the Classical
period, characterized by melody often given to the sopranos, and homophonic voicings that allow for clarity of text. Schuman includes this Classical style in his choral writing in order to achieve the similar goals of producing a clear melody that comes out of the choral texture, and making the colloquial texts easily understood throughout.

The opening phrases of “This Gladdened Multitude” also show the influence of a more specific musical form on Schuman. In addition to the syllabic treatment of the text with the lowest three voices moving homophonically below the soprano melody, one also notices the relatively simple and consistent rhythmic nature of the phrases (almost entirely made up of quarter notes), and the use of even, short phrases that come to clearly defined cadences. Such choral writing is reminiscent of hymns dating as far back as the Baroque period.

Not surprisingly, the text provides the clue to understanding Schuman’s inclusion of a hymn in *The Mighty Casey*. As the piece begins, the fans describe “the hand of fate” choosing Casey and calling him to step up to the plate at the biggest moment of the championship game. These words, written by Ernest Thayer and left unedited by Gury and Schuman in the musical score, suggest a higher power having a hand in bringing Casey to bat in this fateful moment. Lauded by his adoring fans, the crowd describes its hero as an idol-like figure in a strikingly similar manner to the descriptions of Jesus Christ in the Christian faith, as Casey “stands in kingly calm” and is “most plainly great.”

In essence, the crowd reveres Casey in a manner similar to a congregation worshiping a deity in a religious context. With such a text before him, Schuman connects the music to the words through the composition of a hymn to support Thayer’s poetry.
When the text changes its subject from Casey to the fans themselves, Schuman too changes his compositional style, returning to fast, colloquial writing in octaves among all voices and instruments. Yet when the attention turns once more to Casey (rehearsal letter C in the cantata score), Schuman recaptures the four-part hymn style, further broadening the harmonic motion and note values to glorify Casey one final time (see Figure 5.7).

Figure 5.7. Four measures after rehearsal letter C in “This Gladdened Multitude” (*Casey at the Bat*).

Schuman is also influenced by secular musical styles from the past. In a review of the opera’s 1953 premiere, critic W.Y. Vance praises Schuman’s inclusion of “patter songs”\(^{181}\) in the *Casey* score. The strongest examples of patter, where one would expect fast tempos and syllabic treatment of texts, are in “Surprise.” Throughout this song, Schuman depicts the excitement of the fans through what Steve Swayne describes as “rhythmic propulsion and the seemingly endless repetition of a few syllables.”\(^{182}\) In fact, 


\(^{182}\) Swayne, *Orpheus in Manhattan*, 306.
the pace at which the words and notes fly by is so extreme that Schuman invites the
singers to forego the written harmonies in the lowest three voices and instead to sing the
soprano melody in octaves, as depicted by brackets in Figure 5.8.  

While patter songs date back to opera buffo of the Classical period in works such
as Mozart’s Le nozze di Figaro (Bartolo’s aria, “La vendetta”), this style of comic song is
now most commonly associated with the operettas of the 18th century English lyricist
William Gilbert and composer Arthur Sullivan. It is interesting to consider the
relationship between the works of Gilbert and Sullivan and The Mighty Casey. The
Grove Dictionary of Music defines operetta as, “a light opera with spoken dialogue,
songs and dances. Emphasizing music rich in melody, … during the 20th century it
evolved into and was largely superseded by the musical comedy.” Though the first
edition of The Mighty Casey is subtitled “A Baseball Opera,” perhaps it would be best
defined as an operetta based on the inclusion of dialogue, highly melodic songs, and even
dance. As musicologist Walter Simmons points out regarding the difficulty of neatly
categorizing Casey, “The general musical style is lightweight and accessible, … to the
point where the term ‘opera’ raises the questions of genre as prompted by works like
Porgy and Bess and West Side Story.” Schuman appears to recognize the
commonalities between the structure of his 20th century composition and the operettas of
the 18th century, a likeness that he highlights through the incorporation of patter in Casey.

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183 The chorus sings this section in octaves in the commercial recording by the Gregg Smith
Singers.

184 Andrew Lamb, “Operetta,” in Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online,

185 Simmons, The Music of William Schuman, Vincent Persichetti, and Peter Mennin, 93.
Figure 5.8. Example of choral patter in “Surprise” (Casey at the Bat).

Schuman also includes his unique version of a Requiem in Casey. In an interview leading up to the premiere of the opera in 1953, Schuman proudly characterized “Oh, Somewhere” in such terms, stating, “Think of the moment when Casey strikes out. It’s a perfect place for a Requiem and that’s what the chorus sings.” While the musical content of a Requiem setting differs significantly based upon the specific composer and time period of composition, one expects specific texts to be included in any setting.

Based on Schuman’s use of Ernest Thayer’s poetry in lieu of the Christian texts, it is

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186 Harrison, “‘Casey at the Bat,’ A Baseball Opera.”
clear that the composer’s classification of “Oh, Somewhere” as a Requiem is meant somewhat tongue-in-cheek. As librettist Jeremy Gury commented during the initial writing process, “Your idea of the Requiem for the ending of Scene II expresses this harmony between form and content to perfection – and the Requiem will be a delightful sarcasm.”187 In the final choral number, the Mudville fans essentially mourn the downfall of their hero and their team’s loss in the championship game. While the chorus does not sing the literal Requiem text in “Oh, Somewhere,” the song serves a purpose similar to that of a mass for the dead. Yet Schuman never loses sight of the irony of comparing a climactic strikeout to a funeral mass. He states, “I’ve treated my opera just as every one treats the sport. I mean you’re serious about it and kid it at the same time. Look at Brooklyn. Every time they lose, a million people cut their throats but there are no deaths.”188

While the characterization of Schuman’s compositional style in *Casey* has focused squarely on musical influences, theatrical devices that date back to ancient Greek theatre also play a significant role in the work. In his program note to the 1976 premiere of *Casey at the Bat*, Schuman quotes an observation by author Jacques Barzun’s book *God’s Country and Mine*: “Baseball is Greek in being national, heroic, and broken up in the rivalries of city-states.” Schuman clarifies the connection by adding, “In the fans we have our Greek chorus commenting, philosophizing and in their own way actively participating. And in the solo performers, too, as each fulfills a predestined role.”189

187 Gury to Schuman, May 23, 1951, NYPL 145/2.
188 Harrison, “‘Casey at the Bat,’ A Baseball Opera.”
189 William Schuman program note to *Casey at the Bat*, April 6, 1976, NYPL 109/4.
This concept of destiny or fate provides a particularly strong link between Schuman’s *Casey* and ancient Greek drama. Assuming that the majority of those who attend a performance of Schuman’s opera or cantata are familiar with Ernest Thayer’s *Casey at the Bat*, most of the audience walks in to the performance knowing the outcome for Casey in his fateful at-bat. Yet audiences are drawn in to the story through the music and staging and find themselves, like the Mudville fans on stage, rooting for Casey to overcome the fate afforded him by Thayer. Librettist Jeremy Gury even comments on this audience reaction within *The Mighty Casey*, as the Watchman speaks directly to the audience, stating:

> I guess the story of what happens here this afternoon is known far and wide. Men have wept for Casey who never knew him, tears rolling down their faces as if they were children with a broken dream. I don’t pretend to know why that is – maybe it’s because hope is so much stronger than despair. You know what happened to Casey as well as I do, but deep inside of you there’s that bright little glow of hope that says: “Maybe it’ll work out in a different way for Casey this time. Maybe something else will happen.” I think that the little glow of hope stays alive until the very last minute, a flame that nothing can dim.\(^{190}\)

Like plays of the ancient Greeks such as *Oedipus Rex*, where characters attempt to overcome their predetermined destinies in vain, so too does Casey to the disappointment of both the Greek chorus on stage and the theatregoers in the audience.

\(^{190}\) William Schuman, *The Mighty Casey: A Baseball Opera* (Vocal Score), 63-64.
**CHAPTER 6**

**CHORAL EXCERPTS AND RECORDINGS**

*Choruses from the Baseball Opera “The Mighty Casey”*

While it was nearly twenty years before Schuman reworked *The Mighty Casey* into a cantata for the 1976 Bicentennial, he did revisit the opera score on numerous occasions between the 1953 premiere and the early 1970s, leading to the creation of choral excerpts for professional and collegiate ensembles and a four-hand piano accompaniment for these choruses. The idea to publish choral excerpts developed in 1958 when Kenneth Munson, Chairman of the St. Lawrence University Department of Music, “offered Schuman a commission as part of the school’s Festival of the Arts to be held in the early spring [March 20] of 1959.”

Munson specifically asked Schuman for an a cappella work between five and eight minutes in length, which ultimately yielded one of Schuman’s most frequently performed choral works to date, *Carols of Death*. Along with this new choral work, Munson and Schuman agreed that choral excerpts from *The Mighty Casey* would also fit well into the festival for performance by the university’s Laurentian Singers. Munson writes, “The Casey chorus arrangements you are planning for us will make an excellent closing group for this Festival concert.”

This version of *The Mighty Casey* includes six choral numbers from the opera, though organized differently from their original sequence in the original score:

1. Two Out
2. Surprise

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191 Swayne, *Orpheus in Manhattan*, 304.

192 Kenneth Munson to Schuman, October 27, 1958, NYPL 38/6.
3. This Gladdened Multitude
4. Hist’ry Hangs on a Slender Thread
5. Oh, Somewhere
6. The Mighty Casey

Schuman’s preface to the *Choruses* indicates “the selection, sequence and arrangement of the music … is designed to present the choruses in a practical form for regular choral performance.” With practicality in mind for a concert setting, it is logical that one would consider saving the high-energy “The Mighty Casey” until the end of the performance. Yet Schuman’s pragmatic aims are undermined by the fact that, in the same preface, he describes the order of the choruses as “captur[ing] the dramatic flavor and storyline of the opera.” While a sense of drama is created through the first five numbers (they are listed in the *Choruses* in the same sequence as the opera), the placement of “The Mighty Casey” after the protagonist’s strikeout in “Oh, Somewhere” confuses the dramatic intent of Ernest Thayer’s poem. Consequently this imperfect sequence of numbers balances the dramatic nature of the score with the practical expectations of a choral concert setting.

In the preface Schuman also suggests that any of the choruses may be excerpted as individual octavos, and he even provides suggested cuts for those looking to narrow the choral selections further. The composer proposes that “Two Out” and “Hist’ry Hangs on a Slender Thread” may be removed from a performance without diminishing the performance. Notably, the Gregg Smith Singers recording of excerpts from *The Mighty Casey*, released in 1991, eliminates both of these choruses.

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Three of these choral selections also include notable changes from the opera, the most significant of which is in “Oh, Somewhere.” Here the ending “is changed in order to make it easier and more effective without the orchestra.”\textsuperscript{195} Two parts of this piece are amended to attain such a goal. First, Schuman makes a cut of eight measures, beginning at the fourth bar of rehearsal letter C, reentering five measures before rehearsal letter D.\textsuperscript{196} This cut certainly makes the Requiem easier by removing complex polyphony among the voices and a consistently ascending range that leads sopranos to a high B♭. Yet this cut also leaves Schuman in a different key from where “Oh, Somewhere” ends in the opera. Whereas the measures removed lead the choir to B♭ Minor and eventually to E Minor in the opera, Schuman rewrites the ending down a whole step to accommodate the measures removed from the new score (see Figure 6.1). This transposition was immediately accessible and effective, as Kenneth Munson clarified in a letter to Schuman: “Dick Gilbert was delighted with the suggested transposition of the ending of ‘Somewhere’; it worked beautifully.”\textsuperscript{197}

Schuman makes one final modification to the ending of “Oh, Somewhere.” Once he reaches the Watchman’s final statement, “But there is no joy in Mudville. Mighty Casey has struck out,” the composer replaces the transitional material to Scene III with one last choral wail to create a more dramatic, definitive ending to the number (see Figure 6.2). When one compares this brief ending to the more extensive finale added by

\textsuperscript{195} Schuman to Hugo D. Weisgall, March 1, 1961, NYPL 44/5.

\textsuperscript{196} Only the full orchestral score to The Mighty Casey includes rehearsal letters. Unfortunately neither the vocal score nor the full orchestral score include measure numbers in “Oh, Somewhere.”

\textsuperscript{197} Munson to Schuman, March 14, 1959, NYPL 38/6.
Schuman to the cantata in the 1970s, it becomes clear that the rhythmic and pitch content in the piano parts became Schuman’s model for the cantata’s extended finale.

Figure 6.1. Transposition added to “Oh, Somewhere” in Choruses for the Baseball Opera “The Mighty Casey.”

This change brings up the much more significant issue of instrumentation. While a full orchestra would no longer be practical for concert performances of the Casey choral excerpts, Schuman aimed to find a middle ground between the vocal score for piano accompaniment and the full orchestral forces. The result was a new arrangement of the choral excerpts for four-hand piano, created by Norman Lloyd.\(^{198}\) While Lloyd’s fee of

\(^{198}\) Schuman and Lloyd were colleagues at Sarah Lawrence. Schuman eventually hired Lloyd as a supervisor of student activities at Juilliard. Swayne, Orpheus in Manhattan, 186.
two-hundred dollars to create the edition would be paid directly by St. Lawrence University,¹⁹⁹ Schirmer agreed that it would publish this new arrangement, though separately from the choral parts. Keeping the piano parts separate allowed Schirmer to “bring down the number of pages very considerably, thus making it possible … to publish this collection at a reasonable price, and … issue the piano duet arrangement in a more practical format which would not necessitate so many page turns and would be much easier to read for the pianists.”²⁰⁰

Figure 6.2. Closing phrase of “Oh, Somewhere” in the four-hand piano arrangement of Choruses from the Baseball Opera “The Mighty Casey.”

¹⁹⁹ Schuman agreed that he would personally pay Lloyd “any expense in excess of $200.” Schuman to Munson, November 6, 1958, NYPL 38/6.

²⁰⁰ Heinsheimer to Schuman, April 27, 1959, NYPL 180/5.
Two smaller changes from the opera to the new choral edition are also included in numbers besides “Oh, Somewhere.” In the vocal score for the opera, Schuman offers an option to performers in “This Gladdened Multitude,” stating that the “orchestra may be tacet” throughout the first hymn-like passage sung by the choir, and may reenter in octaves on the more colloquial text “So from the gladdened multitude.” In this new edition for concert performance, Schuman provides no such choice, leaving the entire song a cappella. In “The Mighty Casey,” Schuman replaces the unison choral ending with the harmonized version associated with “Autograph” in the original opera score. He also extends the song four measures in a similar manner to “Oh, Somewhere,” achieving a brief, yet grander ending for the chorus and piano parts alike.

Figure 6.3. New ending to “The Mighty Casey” in Choruses from the Baseball Opera “The Mighty Casey.”

\[\text{Figure 6.3. New ending to “The Mighty Casey” in Choruses from the Baseball Opera “The Mighty Casey.”}\]

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\[\text{Figure 6.3. New ending to “The Mighty Case}
While *Choruses from the Baseball Opera* “*The Mighty Casey*” is available as a complete set of the six songs in several libraries throughout the United States, modern performers looking to perform the pieces are expected to either purchase the vocal scores to the full opera or rent the opera’s choral scores along with the four-hand piano arrangement from G. Schirmer. When Schuman originally created this new version of *The Mighty Casey*, Schirmer “came to the conclusion that it would not be practical to publish all six under one cover. This would be a publication of approximately 70 pages, and the price for choral groups would be prohibitive. We, therefore, will publish all six of them separately.”

After years of modest performance, Schirmer no longer offers the choruses individually as Heinsheimer suggests, resulting in the necessity for modern performers to either purchase the vocal score or rent the choral score to the opera to perform these choral excerpts.

However, using the choral parts from the full opera poses a problem for modern performers. While the majority of the material from the six choral excerpts is exactly the same (save the new piano scoring) across the opera and the Lloyd four-hand piano edition, the figures cited above indicate that a number of minor changes were made to the opera score to create the piano arrangement. If one chooses to use the four-hand piano edition, it is therefore necessary for the conductor to make several creative decisions, specifically with regard to the endings of “*The Mighty Casey*” and “*Oh, Somewhere,*” to align the scores in the hands of the singers and the pianists.

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202 Heinsheimer to Schuman, October 13, 1959, NYPL 180/5.

203 Sarah Gallagher (Rental and Performance Department, G. Schirmer, Inc.), e-mail message to author, June 17, 2011.
In “The Mighty Casey,” a conductor should consider two changes to the choral score to align the singers with the four-hand piano arrangement. First, a cut can easily be accomplished replacing the final five measures of “The Mighty Casey” with the equivalent material in “Autograph.” This change creates four-part harmony within the vocal material in lieu of unison melody, which Schuman includes in the complete choral excerpts, *Choruses from the Baseball Opera “The Mighty Casey.”* More importantly, a conductor must provide the choral singers with the final four measures of the movement from the four-hand edition (shown in Figure 6.3 above), which Schuman added to the choral excerpts. By modifying and updating the choral parts from the opera score in this manner, one can quickly create continuity between the choral and four-hand piano parts when excerpting “The Mighty Casey.”

Unfortunately, “Oh, Somewhere” poses a more significant challenge when trying to match the scores. As stated above, Schuman includes both a transposition in the newly-composed vocal parts for the four-hand piano arrangement, and a new ending to create a more definitive conclusion to the movement. These changes are not indicated within the opera choral parts provided by G. Schirmer. However, Schuman himself maintains that the amendments, required to create agreement between the vocal and piano parts, are realistic to accomplish through clarifications “made during rehearsal.”

Despite these issues, the new four-hand piano arrangement and the choral excerpts from *The Mighty Casey* immediately led to increased number of performances of the work. Equally important to Schuman as the quantity of performances, the work’s popularity especially grew in the composer’s hometown of New York, where no

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204 Schuman to Heinsheimer, October 22, 1959, NYPL 180/5.
complete performance of *Casey* had yet taken place. The year after the 1959 performance at St. Lawrence University, *Casey* would finally get its New York premiere by the Camerata Singers, though in an abbreviated form featuring four of the choruses as part of a performance of several Schuman works in a concert at Circle in the Square. Based upon the positive reactions of the audience and critics alike, Schuman and the Composers Showcase, the group that produced the February 1, 1960 concert, had plans to perform the work again the following year, this time in its entirety. Schuman recognized the group’s limited budget and saw an opportunity to popularize the opera in a new manner by completing the four-hand arrangement for the entire score. Schuman wrote to Hans Heinsheimer of the opportunity:

> The work will have to be done with the piano four hands. The bulk of the music – the big choruses – have, of course, already been arranged for piano four hands and these arrangements were paid for by St. Lawrence University a couple of years ago. It will now be necessary to have the rest of the score arranged for four-hand piano. I hope that Schirmer will be willing to go this expense which I cannot believe would be excessive.\(^{205}\)

Heinsheimer responded to Schuman within days, stating, “We will be glad to take care of the arrangement for four-hand piano of the remaining sections from *The Mighty Casey*, and if you will designate a person you want to do this job I am sure we can make arrangements with him or with her.”\(^{206}\)

By early January, Hugo Weisgall was set to direct the performance and Schuman had chosen Juilliard professor Robert Starer to arrange the rest of the work for four-hand piano.\(^{207}\) Yet in March, once Schuman provided details of exactly which portions of the

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\(^{205}\) Schuman to Heinsheimer, December 19, 1960, NYPL 180/7.

\(^{206}\) Heinsheimer to Schuman, December 22, 1960, NYPL 180/7.

\(^{207}\) Schuman to Heinsheimer, January 6, 1961, NYPL 180/7.
score would need revision, Heinsheimer received an estimate of three-hundred dollars for the arrangement to be completed. He wrote to Schuman:

I really cannot ask the firm to spend so much additional money on this venture. There must be a way of doing this with the existing piano four-hand arrangement and with the printed piano vocal score. … It seems like a rather unrealistic expenditure on top of all the very heavy expenses we have had for the choruses from The Mighty Casey and which unfortunately have yielded only very small returns.\(^\text{208}\)

The Composers’ Showcase project ultimately did generate the opera’s first New York performance on April 11, 1961 at the Museum of Modern Art,\(^\text{209}\) though the performance received little critical interest. Its first full-scale premiere did not take place until August 30, 1967 in a performance by the Theatre Workshop of the Department of Parks featuring “some 85 kids and young adults.”\(^\text{210}\)

Some years later, conductor Gregg Smith took on the challenge of arranging The Mighty Casey in its entirety, this time orchestrated for two pianos, four hands. Smith, who directed his own choral ensemble, the Gregg Smith Singers, became particularly interested in Casey in the 1970s as his wife, Rosalind Rees, became a favorite soloist of Schuman’s, singing on two of the three premieres in the 1976 Bicentennial performance (one of which being Casey at the Bat). In May 1975, his choral ensemble performed a concert of Casey on Long Island, New York, followed by a professional production of the opera in Alice Tully Hall in May of the following year. Smith’s appreciation for the work and its value for his choral ensemble continued through 1979, as the conductor

\(^{208}\) Heinsheimer to Schuman, March 20, 1961, NYPL 180/7.

\(^{209}\) “Scorecard: Casey’s Baton,” Sports Illustrated. See also Schuman to Rudolph Tauhert, April 2, 1961, NYPL 180/7.

\(^{210}\) Tallmer, “A Bit of Joy in Mudville.”
“prepar[ed] a shortened version to use as the second half of his concert tour next season.”

The two-piano accompaniment of *Casey* was completed by Smith in early 1977. Unfortunately, the exact contents of this version are not currently available. While Schirmer continues to publish the Norman Lloyd four-hand piano version of the *Casey* choruses, the Smith arrangement is not offered by the publisher. It would be interesting to study this score in detail to identify Smith’s cuts and edits to the original score. Based on the years in which Smith created the new arrangement and the fact that he worked on the project in consultation with Schuman just after the premiere of the cantata *Casey at the Bat*, a number of edits are plausible, and the question of whether Smith created an arrangement of the opera or the cantata is left unanswered.

In letters to G. Schirmer, Smith describes his task as “arranging and copying of a two piano version of William Schuman's cantata *Casey at the Bat.*” Yet later he writes to Schirmer of his “services as arranger and copyist of the two-piano version of Bill Schuman's cantata, *The Mighty Casey.*” Smith’s inconsistency when providing the titles of the work makes it difficult to know whether he is creating an edition of the opera or the cantata, though his consistent description of Schuman’s “cantata” hints that the edition was of *Casey at the Bat*, not *The Mighty Casey*. Schuman’s own words support the hypothesis that Smith’s edition is of the cantata, as he writes to Bruce MacCombie at

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211 Schuman to Edward Murphy, July 10, 1979, NYPL 116/3.


213 Smith to Murphy, August 9, 1976, NYPL 116/3.

214 Smith to Murphy, February 4, 1977, NYPL 116/3.
G. Schirmer, “You do have some four-hand arrangements made some years ago by Norman Lloyd and more recently by Gregg Smith. Would it not be worthwhile to have readily available a complete four-hand arrangement for the whole opera?”

Schuman hints that similar to the Lloyd edition of 1960, the Smith version does not include the opera in its entirety. Incidentally, MacCombie did not allow for any further editions of The Mighty Casey to be created or published, citing limitations based on “today’s cost factors and budgeting problems.”

While it is likely that Gregg Smith’s edition of Casey at the Bat, completed in 1977, was never published by Schirmer because it was overshadowed by the full orchestral version published only the year before, it is unfortunate that the score is unavailable to modern performers. Though Casey at the Bat provides significant cuts that shorten the duration of the work and make it more easily performable by fewer singers than the full opera, the large orchestration limits the work’s performance. If made readily available, Smith’s two-piano edition could resolve this instrumental issue, potentially leading to an increased number of performances of the cantata.

**Extant Recordings**

Three commercial recordings of The Mighty Casey have been created since the work’s inception, two of which are readily available today. In 1994, Delos Music released a double compact disc recording of both Schuman one-act operas, A Question of Taste and The Mighty Casey. The recordings are taken from live stage performances by

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216 MacCombie to Schuman, September 10, 1982, NYPL 141/1.
the Julliard Opera Center in December 1990, who assembled the twin-bill program in celebration of Schuman’s eightieth birthday. Though it includes some ambient noise that one would expect of a live recording, including audience response and stage movement, the disc holds the important distinction of being the only complete recording of the opera available for public consumption.

While the two one-act operas stand comfortably on their own, it should be noted that Juilliard’s choice to present both Schuman works on one program was not unprecedented. In fact, _A Question of Taste_, was written with librettist J.D. McClatchy specifically to be performed on the second half of a program in which _The Mighty Casey_ would make up the first half. After the Glimmerglass Opera Theatre performed _The Mighty Casey_ in 1986 to great acclaim, the company, based in Cooperstown, New York, decided that it would repeat the work to open its fifteenth season in 1989. This would also coincide with the fiftieth anniversary of the dedication of the National Baseball Hall of Fame, which resides literally up the road from Glimmerglass. The question immediately arose regarding how to create an entire evening’s worth of music. The company ultimately decided that it was appropriate to commission Schuman for Glimmerglass’s first world premiere and create an all-Schuman program, hearkening back to the 1976 National Symphony Orchestra program. The result of the commission was _A Question of Taste_, a work of approximately fifty minutes length based on the Roald Dahl short story, _Taste._

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217 Critic Tim Page describes the 1986 performance in a _New York Times_ review as “a near total success, and one of the most engaging and unpretentious evenings of music theater I’ve attended in a long time.” Page, “Opera: Schuman’s ‘Mighty Casey,’ Sung in the Baseball Capital.”

218 In 1986, the eighty-minute _Casey_ was paired with Puccini’s _Gianni Schicchi_ to create a full-length program.
The other available recording of *The Mighty Casey* was released three years before the Juilliard recording (1991) by Premier Records on a disc titled *3 American One-Act Operas*. This recording consists of *The Mighty Casey*, Samuel Barber’s *A Hand of Bridge*, and Marc Blitzstein’s *The Harpies*, and features the Gregg Smith Singers, the Adirondack Chamber Orchestra, and the Long Island Symphonic Choral Association under the direction of conductor Gregg Smith. However, the 1991 recording does not include the entire opera *The Mighty Casey*, and instead offers an abridged version of the work.

To best understand Smith’s edits for this recording, it is necessary to consider two items. First, while the recording was released in 1991, it was made over a decade earlier in the late 1970s when Smith was engrossed in the work. Though the recording itself does not identify the recording date of each of the three one-act operas, the approximate date of recording is provided by Schuman in a previously cited letter to G. Schirmer’s President, Edward Murphy. In July 1979 Schuman wrote, “Gregg [Smith], incidentally, has recorded a number of excerpts from Casey which should be released before too long by Vox.” Though the work was not released until 1991, it seems the recording was made between 1978 and 1979. This timing coincides closely with the premiere performance and publication of the cantata score to *Casey at the Bat* with its many cuts to the full opera score. As a result, the recording includes a number of songs – “The Mighty Casey,” “You Look So Sweet Today,” “Kiss Me Not Goodbye,” “You’re Doin’ Fine Kid,” and “Oh, Somewhere” – that consist precisely of the cuts made for the cantata.

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219 Schuman to Murphy, July 10, 1979, NYPL 116/2.
Smith makes a number of additional wholesale cuts that diminish the length of the work significantly. First, he does away with the entire first scene, opening directly with “The Mighty Casey.” In the second scene he eliminates the consecutive numbers “Two Out” and “If Only Casey,” along with “This Gladden Multitude” and “The Rhubarb Dance” shortly thereafter. Finally, through the use of the cantata additions to “Oh, Somewhere,” Smith also eliminates the opera’s final scene. Also eliminated are all spoken Watchmen entries of the Thayer poetry with the exception of the stanza leading up to the final chorus, “Oh, Somewhere” (“The sneer has gone from Casey’s lips…”) and the announcement of Casey’s strikeout within the finale itself.

While the elimination of the Thayer recitations is surprising, Schuman apparently endorsed this change. This raises the second item to consider with regard to understanding Gregg Smith’s edits, namely that Schuman was involved in the project. Just as Schuman was consulted when Smith created the two-piano arrangement, he was included as part of the abridged recording, playing the role of the Watchman in the limited moments of spoken text cited above. Schuman’s close association with Smith on both projects leads one to believe that Schuman was consulted regarding the exclusion of the majority of the recited Thayer poetry. While no definitive answer is available, one must also wonder, based on the timing and the collaboration with the composer, whether

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220 In the Rhubarb sequence, Smith leaves “I’m Fed to the Teeth” and “A Strike’s a Strike” in the lower keys of C Major, matching the opera rather than the cantata score. This is not surprising based on Smith’s use of multiple soloists, allowing him to cast the men’s roles separately and use bass-baritones for the Manager and Umpire.

221 “Re the Gregg Smith arrangement of Casey for two pianos, I am enclosing a copy of a letter from one of the duo pianists. … I went over everything with Gregg and I believe that he has done a fine job.” Schuman to George Sturm, September 16, 1976, NYPL 116/3.
the contents of the abridged recording provide further hints as to the contents of Smith’s unpublished two-piano arrangement of *Casey* discussed earlier in this chapter.

The final professional recording of *Casey* is no longer available for purchase. In fact, the recording was never intended for public consumption, but was created as a teaching tool for educational purposes. In 1980, the educational publisher Educational Audio Visual, Inc. (EAV), “proposed to Schuman a plan to create a sound-filmstrip representation of *Casey* for use in schools, but this would require considerable further abridgment.” While Schuman initially dismissed the idea, “when presented with a ‘mocked-up’ version of a twenty-six minute condensation, which was surprisingly effective, he consented to the project.”222 To create this condensed version of the opera, EAV gained permission to include portions of the recently recorded Gregg Smith Singers. EAV made a number of small cuts to the Smith recording in order to further reduce the length of the work including: the removal of “A Prayer” in its entirety, the elimination of the orchestral introduction to “‘Ya Blind,” taking the optional cut of a verse within “A Strike’s a Strike,”223 and excluding the entire sung portion of “Hist’ry Hangs on a Slender Thread,” including only the portion in which the orchestra underscores the Watchman.

Yet the EAV recording also adds to the Gregg Smith Singers recording. As EAV music editor Walter Simmons indicates, “I wanted to have the entire poem intact on the recording. So we needed to record afresh the instrumental accompaniment behind the rest of the poem, and we needed to record Schuman reciting the rest of the poem.”224 Just as

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223 Schuman offers this optional cut in the opera vocal score at the bottom of page 122 (to the top of page 124).

224 Walter Simmons, e-mail message to author, May 7, 2011.
with the Gregg Smith recording, Schuman would be part of this project, providing the spoken narrative voice of the Watchman throughout the work. Yet in order to include each of the Thayer recitations in its proper place throughout the story, both the narrations and the underscoring music would need to be recorded. To quote Simmons, “We didn't have the budget to hire an orchestra. So Schuman basically sketched out an arrangement of those instrumental portions for an ensemble of about 10, as I recall.”\footnote{Walter Simmons, e-mail message to author, May 7, 2011.} These unpublished arrangements for the Cornell University Wind Ensemble under the direction of Marice Stith were then recorded, to which Schuman added his narrative voice in a studio. Still photographs were added that corresponded to the music, and an accompanying program for teachers was included that provides performer credits along with an informational guide on the Thayer poem, the composer, the composition, the libretto, and suggested supplemental activities. The sound-filmstrip product “remained on the market until the sound-filmstrip medium was gradually supplanted by videotape and other more advanced media.”\footnote{Simmons, The Music of William Schuman, Vincent Persichetti, and Peter Mennin, 95.}
CHAPTER 7
SUGGESTED PERFORMANCE CONSIDERATIONS

Choosing an Edition

William Schuman was devoted to *The Mighty Casey* over the course of his career with a consistency unlike any other composition, likely due to the work’s combination of his life-long passions of music, theatre, and baseball. Regarding *Casey*, Schuman once said, “I love that work more than anybody else does. … I still believe that one day that work is going to find its mark. … There are some weaknesses. … So it’s what I would call a flawed work, but I think its strengths should be able to carry it through.”

Schuman’s edits to the score, both in terms of the musical content and the performance medium (staged opera, cantata, and choral concert) show a profound dedication to seeing *Casey* succeed. His association with recordings later in his career demonstrates an equal commitment to the work, while it also highlights Schuman’s willingness to amend *Casey* considerably to create a piece that is more frequently performed.

In Schuman’s correspondence and records housed in the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, his devotion to *Casey* is readily apparent. Within the collection are a considerable number of letters regarding productions of *Casey* with which Schuman was involved. However there are also numerous letters between Schuman and individuals mounting regional and collegiate productions of the work. In many of these letters, Schuman engages in frank discussions of the positives and negatives of the score. In one such discussion with Linda Madden of the Tahoe Choir,

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Schuman goes so far as to admit, “I have long recognized that *Casey*, for all its attractiveness, is a flawed work.” The two write back and forth on the topics of tempo and cuts included in the Tahoe Choir performance. The conversation becomes so chummy that Schuman even asks Madden why she made specific cuts. Schuman engaged in similar discussions for years, and often requested review clippings, recordings, and full descriptions of the performers’ experiences and audience reaction. Such heartfelt interest in the opinions and experiences of others performing his work suggests that Schuman took such accounts into consideration when editing the score and participating in recordings throughout his career.

For those considering a performance of one of the versions of *The Mighty Casey*, Schuman’s own writings and edits indicate that no single option is perfect. Long-windedness is a significant issue that Schuman addressed throughout his career; with each passing edition and recording in which he was involved, the work shrank in length. Schuman took seriously the cuts made by outside performers, and he did not hesitate to discard entire songs in recordings. The cuts included in the Gregg Smith Singers and EAV recordings, endorsed by the composer, offer logical solutions to the issue of length, though these recordings still provide a challenge to the modern performer since they combine elements of both the opera and cantata scores.

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229 Schuman to Linda Madden, April 25, 1974, NYPL 145/3.


231 Schuman described the Tahoe Choir cuts as making “the most of the work’s assets and minimiz[ing] some of the problems of length.” Schuman to Madden, May 31, 1974, NYPL 145/3.

232 Approximate performance times: *The Mighty Casey* (1953) = 80 minutes; *Casey at the Bat* (1976) = 45 minutes; Gregg Smith Singers recording (1978-1979) = 33 minutes; EAV recording (1980) = 26 minutes.
The scores themselves can also be used as guides to effective edits for performance. Because many of the songs in *Casey* use simple verses and refrains, one has the opportunity to cut individual verses and shorten the performance without discarding entire songs. In the opera score, Schuman specifically offers this option in “Championship of the State” (letter G, second verse) and in “A Strike’s a Strike,” as discussed in chapter six. Schuman similarly offers the option to cut a number of instrumental sections intended for dance for productions where the staging does not include highly choreographed elements. Finally, recognizing the difficulty of some of the choral parts, Schuman offers the option for singers to remain in unison in parts of “Surprise,” described at length in chapter five.

Assuming one intends to perform the work beyond the scope of the choral excerpts (for which the four-hand piano edition is available), choosing an edition is challenging. While the cantata is a shorter work that gets more directly to the point of the Ernest Thayer poem and can be performed either with or without staging, it has three significant drawbacks. First, it is scored for an orchestra of symphonic scope, requiring enormous resources and funding to undertake. Second, in terms of dramatic content, the cantata includes the majority of the Thayer poem in one musical number rather than spread out over the course of the story, as discussed in chapter four. One could, arguably, reinsert each stanza in its proper place in the story based on its original location in the opera score, but doing so would require unwieldy cuts and yield awkward transitions between movements for the orchestra. Third, depending on one’s budget, the price to perform *Casey at the Bat* is a potential limitation based on the requirement to purchase vocal scores for each singer (twenty dollars per score as of the writing of this document),
and to rent the orchestral parts from G. Schirmer. While the issues of instrumentation are quickly solved if performing the work with piano alone, which would allow for more flexibility with regard to cuts and monetary restrictions, Schuman discourages this option. Regarding a production of the work by the Harford Theatre Association, Schuman states, “I rather gather that the production will be a mixture of modest professional talent and amateurs. There will be no orchestra, only a piano, and naturally the effect will be very much diluted.”\textsuperscript{233} If left with the options of either performing \textit{Casey} with piano or not performing the work at all, Schuman agrees that the piano is acceptable. However, for him, this extremely limited orchestration is not ideal.

If one chooses instead to perform the opera, different expectations arise. First, one must include a significant number of solo and choral singers, along with elements of staging and costuming. Second, though the opera offers a limited orchestration, described in a \textit{New York Times} review as “wind- and brass-heavy like a Broadway pit band,”\textsuperscript{234} as compared with the cantata, the length of the opera is a significant issue that most performers will want to address. Finally, performances using the opera score offer more options with regard to budgetary issues, as choral scores may be rented along with the orchestral parts from G. Schirmer, while the full vocal scores are also available for purchase (thirty dollars per score as of the writing of this document).

Of course, it must be reiterated that choosing a performance edition also requires one to consider the final message depicted in each score. While the cantata ending is more representative of Thayer’s original \textit{Casey at the Bat} poem, it ends on a decidedly

\textsuperscript{233} Schuman to Martin Gardner, May 25, 1965, NYPL 145/3.

\textsuperscript{234} Holland, “‘Casey,’ New Schuman Work, as Glimmerglass Opens.”
sad note, while the opera’s message is considerably more uplifting. This must be weighed in conjunction with the issues raised above when determining the best performance model for one’s production of Casey.

Bringing Casey to Life

Using the unusual subject of baseball as the subject matter for a musical work provides a number of opportunities for production teams to consider when performing The Mighty Casey. Including extramusical elements to a performance of the work can bring the score to life in a unique manner, adding to the experiences of performers and audiences alike in the process.

One such opportunity, specifically for those who choose to perform the cantata rather than the opera, is to respond to Schuman’s suggestions in his note in the Casey at the Bat vocal score to include “theatrical embellishments.” Schuman suggests minor wardrobe changes for the soloists to indicate their changing characters, and also suggests that the chorus “might favor the variegated dress of a baseball crowd over choral robes or formal dress.” In the context of the cantata, some very minimal staging and choreography is equally effective, especially for the Mudville fans. “The Mighty Casey,” with its colloquial texts and unison melodies, calls for some unified movements from the choral ensemble, while other works might be better suited for more individual actions from the singers. Moments where the Watchman recites the Thayer poem (where he describes the actions on the field) could be enhanced through the reactions of the fans, perhaps in slow motion under dimmed lighting to avoid upstaging the narration. Such

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235 William Schuman, Casey at the Bat: A Baseball Cantata (Vocal Score), “Note.”
interaction increases the choral singers’ engagement in the work, while adding to the theatricality of the performance for audiences.

One might include additional elements to add to performances of either the cantata or the opera, such as the use of characteristic set pieces and props, including baseball bases, bats, gloves, and balls, bleachers for the fans in lieu of choral risers, and a digital scoreboard using tools such as Microsoft PowerPoint and projections to reflect the state of the baseball game itself. In this way, the audience members are not only visually stimulated, but also become fans themselves, viewing a scoreboard just as they would at a real baseball game.

A final element that creative teams might consider to represent the atmosphere of a baseball diamond is to create the aura of a baseball stadium before and during a ballgame. For example, before the performance begins, sound effects could be employed that provide ambient noise associated with a ballpark, ranging from the hum of the crowd to vendor calls to rally music often heard over the stadium sound system to create crowd response. This could be reinforced through costumed vendors who walk among the audience “selling” snacks or apparel. Just before the performance begins, this stadium ambiance might be further supported by asking the audience to stand and performing the Star-Spangled Banner, either sung by an individual on stage or by playing an organ recording to which the entire theatre can sing along.

Schuman’s characters, especially Casey and the Watchman, also provide opportunities to further engage audiences in future productions. While Casey is a silent character in the opera, an actor is expected to portray his heroic stature on stage. In

\[236\] Schuman does not expect an actor to represent the silent Casey in a performance of the cantata version of the work.
past performances, the ability to cast individuals who simply need to emote and move in an appropriate manner without singing has led to some very creative casting. In 1958, the production team at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) “cast the role of Casey and the ball players with the ‘real McCoy,’ that is star players from our UCLA baseball team.”

A 1975 Gregg Smith Singers performance on Long Island, New York, cast George Booth, cartoonist from the *New Yorker*, in the role of Casey. Two years later, Los Angeles Dodger great Steve Garvey was supposedly interested in playing the title role for a failed attempt to mount the opera as a film.

While he did not portray the title character, Hall of Fame pitcher Bob Feller made a brief cameo in a 1991 semi-staged production of *Casey at the Bat* with the Cleveland Orchestra. In this performance, conducted by “Leonard Slatkin wearing a St. Louis Cardinals jersey,” the character of the Watchman was also reconsidered and divided to create a narrator (speaking) role, separate from the solo vocal material, which was divided among multiple performers. This enabled the Cleveland Orchestra to cast a non-singer to recite the Thayer poem. As stated in a *Dayton Daily News* review, “TV sports commentator Bob Costas added a touch of verismo from a press box.”

In October 2011, the South Florida performance of the work conducted by this author similarly split up the spoken and sung portions of the Watchman’s material and engaged Dave Van Horne, the

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237 Jan Popper to Schuman, December 3, 1958, NYPL 145/3.

238 Erica Shupp to Schuman, May 2, 1975, NYPL 145/3.

239 Gordon Duffey to Schuman, September 1, 1977, NYPL 116/3.

240 Gugegian, “Orchestra Plays Winning Ballgame.”

241 Krebs, “‘Casey at the Bat’ cantata suffers from too much cuteness.”
National Baseball Hall of Fame radio broadcaster for the Florida Marlins, to recite the Thayer poetry.

**Conclusion**

William Schuman’s *The Mighty Casey* combines the composer’s passions of music, theatre, and baseball, and provides the opportunity to unite diverse audiences whose interests lie in only one or two of these areas. Adding extramusical elements to a performance of *Casey* has the potential to go far in creating a more interesting and unique programming experience for performers and audiences. Perhaps nowhere is the result of such efforts so clearly evident than in a 1995 production by the Lancaster Summer Arts Festival in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, which took place on a real baseball diamond. In a review of the performance, author Marty Crisp illuminates the demographic diversity of the audience, highlighting people who came for the opera and others who were attending their first opera thanks to the subject matter and unusual setting; by “taking opera out of the furs and diamonds class and bringing in a whole different audience,” the company brought in a significantly larger audience than usual.242

While Walter Simmons argues that “The work [*Casey*] is simply too sophisticated musically to win over an audience the size Schuman and Gury were anticipating,”243 careful editing and extramusical elements provide the means for *Casey* to succeed with performers and audiences alike. While the work offers a significant challenge to singers and instrumentalists, those who perform *Casey* often come to believe that it “should be done … throughout the country because of the fine choral possibilities in it, and because

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242 Crisp, “The opera's grand slam // In the poem, Casey strikes out. But 'The Mighty Casey' was a hit at Stumpf Field.”

of its rousing general experience.”244 A fully developed production of *Casey* could offer the opportunity to engage baseball lovers in opera and opera lovers in baseball. As Composers Showcase director Hugo D. Weisgall states, “*Casey* is exciting and if anything can win me over to baseball it will be this work.”245

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244 Popper to Schuman, December 3, 1958, NYPL 145/3.

245 Weisgall to Schuman, February 4, 1955, NYPL 44/5.
APPENDIX A

CASEY AT THE BAT
A Ballad of the Republic, Song of the Year 1888

Ernest Thayer

The poem first appeared in the January 3, 1888 edition of the *San Francisco Examiner* under the pen name, “Phin.”

The outlook wasn't brilliant for the Mudville nine that day,
The score stood four to two with but one inning more to play;
And then when Cooney died at first, and Barrows did the same,
A sickly silence fell upon the patrons of the game.

A straggling few got up to go in deep despair. The rest
Clung to that hope which springs eternal in the human breast;
They thought if only Casey could but get a whack at that –
We'd put up even money now with Casey at the bat.

But Flynn preceded Casey, as did also Jimmy Blake,
And the former was a lulu and the latter was a cake;
So upon that stricken multitude grim melancholy sat,
For there seemed but little chance of Casey's getting to the bat.

But Flynn let drive a single, to the wonderment of all,
And Blake, the much despis-ed, tore the cover off the ball;
And when the dust had lifted, and the men saw what had occurred,
There was Johnnie safe at second and Flynn a-hugging third.

Then from 5,000 throats and more there rose a lusty yell,
It rumbled through the valley, it rattled in the dell;
It knocked upon the mountain and recoiled upon the flat,
For Casey, mighty Casey, was advancing to the bat.

There was ease in Casey's manner as he stepped into his place,
There was pride in Casey's bearing and a smile on Casey's face;
And when, responding to the cheers, he lightly doffed his hat,
No stranger in the crowd could doubt 'twas Casey at the bat.

Ten thousand eyes were on him as he rubbed his hands with dirt,
Five thousand tongues applauded when he wiped them on his shirt;
Then while the writhing pitcher ground the ball into his hip,
Defiance flashed in Casey's eye, a sneer curled Casey's lip.
And now the leather-covered sphere came hurtling through the air;
And Casey stood a-watching it in haughty grandeur there;
Close by the sturdy batsman the ball unheeded sped –
“That ain't my style,” said Casey. “Strike one,” the umpire said.

From the benches, black with people, there went up a muffled roar,
Like the beating of the storm-waves on a stern and distant shore;
“Kill him! Kill the umpire!” shouted some one on the stand,
And it's likely they'd have killed him had not Casey raised his hand.

With a smile of Christian charity great Casey's visage shone,
He stilled the rising tumult; he bade the game go on;
He signaled to the pitcher, and once more the sphereoid flew,
But Casey still ignored it, and the umpire said, “Strike two.”

“Fraud!” cried the maddened thousands, and echo answered fraud,
But one scornful look from Casey and the audience was awed;
They saw his face grow stern and cold, they saw his muscles strain,
And they knew that Casey wouldn't let that ball go by again.

The sneer is gone from Casey's lip, his teeth are clenched in hate,
He pounds with cruel violence his bat upon the plate;
And now the pitcher holds the ball, and now he lets it go,
And now the air is shattered by the force of Casey's blow.

Oh, somewhere in this favored land the sun is shining bright,
The band is playing somewhere, and somewhere hearts are light;
And somewhere men are laughing, and somewhere children shout,
But there is no joy in Mudville – mighty Casey has struck out.

− “Phin”
APPENDIX B

THAYER’S TEXT REINTERPRETED:
CASEY AT THE BAT AS EDITED
BY JEREMY GURY AND WILLIAM SCHUMAN

It looked extremely rochy for the Mudville nine that day;
The score stood two to four, but with an inning left to play.
So when Cooney died at second, and Barrows did the same,
A pall-like silence fell upon the patrons of the game.

A straggling few got up to go, leaving there the rest
With that hope which springs eternal within the human breast.
For they thought: “If only Casey could get a whack at that,”
They'd put up even money now with Casey at the bat.

But Flynn preceded Casey, and likewise so did Blake,
And the former was a pudd’n, and the latter was a fake.
So on that stricken multitude a deathlike silence sat;
For there seemed but little chance of Casey's getting to the bat.

But Flynn let drive a “single” to the wonderment of all.
And the much-despised Blake “tore the cover off the ball.”
And when the dust had lifted, and they saw what had occurred,
There was Blake safe at second, and Flynn a-huggin’ third.

Then from the gladdened multitude went up a joyous yell –
It rumbled in the mountaintops, it rattled in the dell,
It struck upon the hillside and rebounded on the flat;
For Casey, mighty Casey, was advancing to the bat.

There was ease in Casey's manner as he stepped into his place,
There was pride in Casey's bearing and a smile on Casey's face;
And when responding to the cheers he lightly doffed his hat,
No stranger in the crowd could doubt 'twas Casey at the bat.

Ten thousand eyes were on him as he rubbed his hands with dirt,
Five thousand tongues applauded when he wiped them on his shirt;
Then while the writhing pitcher ground the ball into his hip,
Defiance glanced in Casey's eye, a sneer curled Casey's lip.

* The cheering then diminished and the huckster’s raucous shout
Was quickly met by threats and cries of “Quiet – throw them out!”
At last the throng fell silent and the barking hawkers quit –
And the only sound was the catcher’s hand pounding the catcher’s mitt. *
And now the leather-covered sphere came hurtling through the air,
And Casey stood a-watching it in haughty grandeur there.
Close by the sturdy batsman the ball, unheeded, sped.
“That ain't my style,” said Casey. “Strike one,” the umpire said.

From the benches, black with people, there went up a muffled roar,
Like the beating of the storm waves on a stern and distant shore.
“Kill him! Kill the umpire!” shouted some one on the stand.
And it's likely they'd have killed him had not Casey raised his hand.

With a smile of Christian charity great Casey's visage shone;
He stilled the rising tumult; he bade the game go on;
He signaled to the pitcher, and once more the sphereoid flew;
But Casey still ignored it, and the umpire said, “Strike two!”

“Fraud!” cried the maddened thousands, and the echo answered: “Fraud!”
But one scornful look from Casey and the audience was awed;
They saw his face grow stern and cold, they saw his muscles strain;
And they knew that Casey wouldn't let the ball go by again.

* The pitcher moves with caution, his eyes then sweep the field,
The catcher’s hand then gives a sign, the pact between them sealed.
The pitcher knows his signals, he's been taught by plotting brains.
A high and inside ball 'twill be – for a single strike remains. *

The sneer is gone from Casey's lips. His teeth are clenched in hate.
He pounds with cruel vengeance, his bat upon the plate.
And now the pitcher holds the ball, and now he lets it go.
And now the air is shattered by the force of Casey's blow.

# Oh, somewhere in this favored land, the sun is shining bright.
The band is playing somewhere, and somewhere hearts are light,
And somewhere men are laughing, and somewhere children shout.
But there is no joy in Mudville – mighty Casey has struck out. #

* = Verses written by librettist Jeremy Gury.
# = The final verse (with the exception of the final line) is represented in the musical setting in the song “Oh, Somewhere.”
“A Man” was included in the premiere performance of the opera in 1953 and was replaced by “Kiss Me Not Goodbye” for all subsequent editions and performances of Casey. The transcription below is taken directly from a handwritten piano-vocal score housed in the Library of Congress in Washington, DC.

A Man

William Schuman

\[\text{staff 1}\]

\[\text{staff 2}\]

\[\text{staff 3}\]

\[\text{staff 4}\]

\[\text{staff 5}\]

\[\text{staff 6}\]
A Man

man ought to know from the things he has seen distant grass does n't grow.

man ought to know that his roots are so deep that to cut them and go.

more tempting and green. A man ought to try to be just like a

would bring home haunted sleep. A man ought to find all the joys of a

tree that will never ask why it's not fool loose and free. A roam. A
A Man

man ought to choose a place he can stay and a love he won’t lose when he’s weary and

gray. A man ought to try to be just like a

with mounting tension and emotion

tree that will never ask why, that won’t wonder and sigh, that will
A Man

live and will die watching years passing by, too content, never meant

_____ p

--- to be foot-loose and free. A man ought to feel that the love he has won is as

_____ p

_____ mp

warm and as real as the earth and the

poco accel. a tempo
Notes:

- Measure 6, beat 3: Schuman does not include an accidental on the low D in the right hand of the piano, suggesting a D♯ based on the previous notes in the measure. However, considering on the chordal structure and the presence of D naturals in both hands surrounding the note in question, the transcription creates a consonant G Major chord by adding a parenthetical ♮ accidental.

- Measure 30, beat 2: In the left hand of the piano, Schuman indicates an A Minor chord based on the lack of an accidental on the C. However, Schuman specifies that the right hand should play a C♯ by including an accidental. Consequently, the transcription creates a consonant A Major chord by modifying the piano left hand chord quality with a parenthetical C♯.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books


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