The Donnelly Opera

Joshua L. Richardson
*The University of Western Ontario*

Supervisor
Daniel, Omar
*The University of Western Ontario*

Graduate Program in Music
A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Master of Music
© Joshua L. Richardson 2018

Follow this and additional works at: [https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd](https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd)

Part of the [Composition Commons](https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd)

**Recommended Citation**
[https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd/5316](https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd/5316)

This Dissertation/Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Scholarship@Western. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository by an authorized administrator of Scholarship@Western. For more information, please contact [wlswadmin@uwo.ca](mailto:wlswadmin@uwo.ca).
Abstract

*The Donnelly Opera* is a one-act chamber opera based on an infamous Southwestern Ontario event: the murder of the Donnelly family in 1880. The libretto was written with the consultation of various historical sources. Modern text setting practices are utilized with careful attention to the use of perfect rhymes and natural syllabic emphasis to help maximize audience comprehension. The opera uses traditional vocal archetypes of aria, recitative, and ensemble singing. The main focus of the opera is the dramatic portrayal of the events that took place leading up to the second murder trial. It is written for four vocalists (soprano, mezzo-soprano, tenor, baritone) and five instrumentalists: clarinet, horn, cello, piano, and percussion, (timpani, chimes, toms, cymbal, and triangle) and is approximately 25 minutes in length.

Keywords

Music, opera, Canadian opera, the Donnellys, Canadian history, chamber music
Acknowledgements

*The Donnelly Opera* was written with support from many different artists and faculty at the Don Wright Faculty of Music and elsewhere. I would like to thank my advisor Prof. Omar Daniel, and second reader Prof. John Hess. Also Prof. Peter Paul Koprowski, Prof. Paul Frehner, Prof. David Myska, Prof. Kim Lundberg, Prof. Torin Chiles, and Prof. Jay Hodgson. Furthermore, I would like to thank the musicians and performers: Rae Cunningham, Ron George, Anna Grigg, Jake Schindler, Ethan Lacey, Jessica Clark, Stephanie Brassard, Grayson Nesbitt, and Adam Ianetta. I would also like to thank conductor Ben Leibovitz, director Erin Dickau, and costume designer Becky Lenko. I am grateful to the late Chris Doty for providing the initial idea to pursue this topic.

Finally, I’d like to thank my wife Jenny Richardson for her unending support, as well as the rest of my family.
Table of Contents

Abstract .......................................................................................................................... ii
Acknowledgements ......................................................................................................... iii
Table of Contents ........................................................................................................ iv
Score .................................................................................................................................. 1
Curriculum Vitae ............................................................................................................ 67
The Donnelly Opera

Libretto and music by Joshua Richardson
Run Time Approx. 26 mins

Norah Donnelly - Soprano
Mary O’ Connor – Mezzo-Soprano
William Donnelly – Tenor
Charles Hutchinson – Baritone

Bb Clarinet
French Horn
Cello
Percussion (Timpani, Chimes, Tom-toms, cymbal, triangle, slapstick)
Piano
There's no justice for the Donnells.

The suspects of murder are heard outside of the courtroom single.

Just ice for the Donnells.
Will

file without the conviction of Carroll the others go free without a

Bb Cl.

Hn.

Vc.

Toms

Pno.

15

15

15

15

18

18

18

18

The Donnelly Opera
careful with the evidence, I scoured high and low, I had witnesses to the crime. There's no justice for the Donnelys.
Will Hutchison, this is the day that our case has been dealt a crucial blow! The Donnelly Opera
jury were biased, the judge made it certain that no one ever knew that these men have killed my kin though their alibis were thin and held no weight.
town had set its mind to be deaf and to be blind to my family's horrible fate! There's no just-ice for the Donnelly Opera.
Will

Bb Cl.

Hn.

Vc.

Perc.

Pno.

He helped around the farm with ploughing and planting and he shared my father's bed.

And when the mob showed up that night he hid and he saw every thing and escaped simply a tempo
There's no just-ice for the Don-nel-lys.

When mobs get a-way with mur-der!
Will: "Murder? There's no justice for the Donnellys!"

Charles: "Charles, I have a lead that may pro-fit our case a great deal. an old friend was a part of the vigilance com-

Charles: "Oh? Do tell?"

Phno.
mit-tee and there are things James will reveal.

That sounds promising.

Pizz.

Triangle

Yes, that sounds promising.

The attorney could withstand the vigilant's fury by moving the case from Toronto to
This will remove the bias from the jury.

That sounds promising.

Your family has a reputation for causing problems in the town. When a cow seemed to go...
Charles

missing or some-one's cut-ter, you were blamed when a barn was burned down.

Vc.

pizz.

Pno.

Will

I never claimed that we were angels but there are things I won't al-low.

Bb Cl.

Hn.

Vc.

We work hard for what we own, yes we burned a barn but we never stole that cut-ter or that cow

Hn.

pizz.

Vc.

Pno.
Will

But still they blamed it on us.

Damn! the town still blamed it on us!

Charles

While listening to the townsfolk I have recently observed they’re
Charles saying that the Donnelly only got what they deserved.

Now that it's likely that the trial will be moved the odds of a conviction are so very much improved.

Will sits down and Norah sits on his lap to share a drink from a flask.

We should have some booze to celebrate the news!

You know I don't drink!
Then for me and for No rah.

my hus-bond makes his own wine. It was a

A love-ly broach my dear.

keep-sake from my mo-ther though I'd sell it for a price be-cause in truth, I have an-o-ther but
this one’s pret-ty nice.

No thank you ma’am just of-fer-ing the comp-li-ment.

Mis-ter Hutch-in-son, my John-ny needs shoes.

I gave your week-ly pay yes-ter-day.
We had some unforeseen debt and since John-ny is your main wit-ness he’s un-a-ble to work.

The crown is not here for you to abuse. But I don’t think that boy should go bare-foot so here’s a
Charles

sum to pay for John-ny’s shoes.

Norah

Norah gets up from sitting on Will’s lap.

Should we really ce-le-brate al-rea-dy?

Even though the sus-pects now sit in a

Phn.
The last trial didn’t go so well. But

The judge practically begged for a conviction. The

shouldn’t we consider why the case was lost? When the judge practically begged for a conviction. The

suspects even swore on the word of God and don’t you think it’s odd a

Strict Time (Like clock) j=64

Strict Time (Like clock) j=64

The Donnelly Opera
Norah says that they were all in Stratford. Now what on earth would they be doing there?

Norah

Ma-her says that they were all in Stratford. Now what on earth would they be doing there?

Bb Cl.

Hn.

Vc.

Pno.

Norah

real-ly big shock that they all had an al-i-bit for 2 O’ Clock?

James

Pno.

Norah

wit-ness says he called on big Jack Ken-ne-dy to borrow a drug be-cause of a cough-ing
Norah

That must have been quite the walk especially at 2 O’clock.

The Thomp-soms said that Carol slept at their house and that is what they swore if he had wok’en up they would have heard him be-

"scare."

Norah

"must have been quite the walk especially at 2 O’clock."

The Thomp-soms said that Carol slept at their house and that is what they swore if he had wok’en up they would have heard him be-
Norah Cl.

Vc.

Pno.

Norah

Bb Cl.  Vc.  Pno.

Norah

Bb Cl.

Hn.

Vc.

Pno.

Norah

Bb Cl.  Vc.  Pno.

Norah

Bb Cl.

Hn.

Vc.

Pno.

Norah

Bb Cl.  Vc.  Pno.

Norah

Bb Cl.

Hn.

Vc.

Pno.
sleep in bed, his story seems to change what ever suits his need. Then how did all our family end up dead? And Johnny is the only one who's
Norah:

215

will-ing to talk a-bout what real-ly hap-pened at 2 o’Clock.

Some-one’s daugh-ter had a-wok-en at two but the girl is on-ly a youth. She

saw her fa-ther fast a-sleep can that real-ly be the truth? ’Cause I heard a real-ly loud

Norah:

216

219

222

Norah:

224
I had retired to bed around midnight & took to the side furthest from the wall.

We had Will's brother John staying with us & the two of them stayed up much later.
Norah

Will came to bed a-round one. I had on-ly just fall-en back to sleep when I heard:

Lights change to signify a flashback to event

The Donnelly Opera
Norah

Pno.

Will

Hn.

Vc.

What are they doing to my horse?

What does he want?

How many, Will? How many did you see?

A mess of them. Your brother's out there too.

He holds a grudge because I married you.
What could they want at 2 O' clock?
Norah Perc.

John, it's hard to ignore but do not open that door!

Slapstick or Snare

Hn. Vc. Pno.

Will B-Cl. Hn. Vc. Pno.

Damn it John!

Expressivo \( q=72 \) mp

Expressivo \( q=72 \) mp
285

I told you not to open up that door and now your blood is spilled up.

286

There was no way to protect you.

290

He's dying, Will. It seems unlikely that he will survive.
We need to pray while he is still alive. I'll fetch a piece of holy candle.
Norah

In paradisum deducant te angelii, in tuo adven-

breath ad. lib.
cresc. poco a poco

Norah

tu suiciant te martyres, et perducant te
Norah

in civitatem sanctam Jerusalem

Chorus Angelo

Bb Cl.

Vc.

Pno.

Norah

rum te sustinat, et cum

Bb Cl.

Vc.

Pno.

Norah

Lazarum quondam pauperem aeternam
No rah, I can see you'd love to tell your test - i - mo - ny but our best chance for se - cur - ing a con -
Charles

vic-tion is our case a- gainst James Carroll for the kill-ing of your mo-

Pno.

333

Norah

Now that the trial is to be moved, no more bi-as or shift-ing the blame.

Hn.

340

Vc.

340

Pno.

340

The Donnelly Opera

Spirito $p=72$

And we will con-vict now that there's a wit-ness from the in-side, James Fee-he-ley.

Will

Hn.

Vc.

Pno.
Will

And no more smearing of the Donnelly name. So let's go see James and see how it

Hn.

Vc.

Pno.

Norah

Yes, let's go see James and see what he knows.

Will

Charles

Let's hope it's enough to convince the

Hn.

Vc.

Pno.
Norah
Will
Charles
Hn.
Vc.
Pno.

Norah
Will
Charles
Hn.
Vc.
Pno.

Norah
Will
Charles
Hn.
Vc.
Pno.

There will be justice for the Donnelly's.

The Donnelly Opera
Mary takes off her scarf, and then her coat throwing both to the ground as she rushes toward Charles.
Mary

And ev'ry thing with in it lost, and

Bb Cl.

ev'ry thing with in it lost like our beds and our spreads and our

Vc.

quilts and our cup-boards. I fear what all these things will cost!

Perc.

Triangle

Pno.

Triangle

The Donnelly Opera
Our home is laid waste.  At least that can be replaced, un-
like children. My kids were safely tucked in bed.
If it weren't for Bob Donnelly they'd be dead! I'm the boy's
Mary

mo-ther

I must keep him heal-thy

and health is ex-pensive.
Mary

B♭ Cl.

Hn.

Vc.

Pno.

John-ny, dull as gold that had just been mined but gold is worth much more once it's been refined.
Mary: Ever since he took the Donnelly hire, they've made him work.

Bo Cl.: and work, and work, and work! he's been tried and tested and put through the fire.

Hn.: 

Vc.: 

Pno.: 

The Donnelly Opera
Mary

At thirteen years old, my boy’s as precious as gold!

Bb Cl.

Hn.

Vc.

Pno.

As gold. It’s not about the

Mary

Bb Cl.

Hn.

Vc.

Pno.

The Donnelly Opera
It's not about the money, but if you gave me money, it would be for Johnny's care.

Not to cause a alarm, but
Mary

this, this will keep my John from coming to harm, for

B♭ Cl.

friends of the kil - lers say they will

Hn.

> p

Vc.

> p

Toms

Pno.

non legato
Mary

pay

four

Mary

thou-
sand!

for

my

sweet

The Donnelly Opera
Will and Norah enter.

Will

Charles! The witness who was going to be the case's salvation.

Norah

So we rushed to see why we both had to know.

Will

Since it was nearby was he planning to go.
Charles, he was boarding on a train he was going to let us down he was leaving for A-

Though he did tell us one crucial
fact that the defence for the vigilantes knows they know you've been paying the O'Connors!

They already doubt the O'Connors' fitness they will
Norah: What have you there?

Mary: No-thing at all.

Will: think we've been brib-ing our most im-port-ant wit-ness.

Bo Cl.:

Hn.:

Vc.:

Pno.:

Mary drops bag of money making loud bang. She quickly picks up.

What's in your hand?

On-ly my hard earned wage!

Agitato \( q=108 \)
Norah

Looks like a whole year's wage!

Will

Did you just

Bo Cl.

Mary

You're such a liar!

Will

pay her yet again?

Bo Cl.

Cuivré

Hn.  

Vc.

Toms

Pno.

You're such a liar!

I'm not a

fierce

fierce
Norah

Are you so needy?  There won't be justice if you are greedy!

Mary

liar but I just learned there was a fire our house was burned!

Bb Cl.

Culvée

Hn.

Vc.

Toms

Pno.

544

Norah

you liar so needy no justice so greedy

Mary

burned! no liar just learned a fire house burned!

Will

Why would you pay her yet again?

Bb Cl.

mp

Hn.

Vc.

554

Toms

Pno.

554

The Donnelly Opera
Will

Charles

Bo Cl.

Hn.

Vc.

Perc.

Pno.

Charles

I should’ve thought things through. I am so sorry to the both of you. Let’s adjust our expectations.

Hn.

Charles

The case is not lost though there might be some complications. But here, a 

Bo Cl.

Hn.

Vc.

Pno.
Charles remembers the letter from the attorney general and grabs it from his desk.

Charles: Letter from the attorney general. It should bring some good news.

Will: What does it say? Is the trial to be moved?

Charles: No.

Pno.:
it's to stay right here.

Norah

Can there be just-ice for the Don-nel-lys?

Just-ice for the Don-nel-lys!

There's no just-ice for the Don-nel-lys!

Can there be just-ice for the Don-nel-lys?

Just-ice for the Don-nel-lys!
There's no just-ice for the Don-nelly's!

There's no just-ice for us!
Norah: Just ice for the Donnellys!

Mary: There's no justice for the Donnellys!

Will: There's no justice for the Donnellys!

Charles: Just ice for the Donnellys!

Bo Cl.: There's no justice for the Donnellys!
There’s no justice for the Donnellys!

There’s no justice for the Donnellys!

There’s no justice for the Donnellys!

There’s no justice for the Donnellys!
Joshua Richardson

Education

Western University, London, Ontario

MMus in Composition (2015-present)

BMus with honors in Composition (2012-2015)


Performances


Beal Secondary School, “From Sea to Sea”, The London Singers/ Beal Singers Composer (June 8, 2017)

Von Kuster Hall, “Mary O’Connor”, for soprano and piano trio Composer (March 16, 2017)

Von Kuster Hall, “Piano Quartet for the Stratosphere”, Ensemble Made in Canada Composer (October 27, 2015)


Honours

Western University
Dean’s Honor List (2012-2015), Gold Medalist

Ontario Arts Council Theatre Creators’ Reserve Grant (2007)

London Arts Council Grant (2005 & 2006)

The London Fringe Festival “Best Original Production” for Musical “Oscar, Emily, & the Giant” (2005)

**Professional Development**

**Scriptlab** Certificate in Musical Theatre Writing (2006-2007)  
Instructor Jim Betts

**Smile Theatre** Workshop in Musical Theatre Writing (2008-2009)  
Instructor Leslie Arden

**Experience**

Dash Quest Heroes, a mobile game published by Tiny Titan Studios  
Music and sound designer (2017-present)

Piano Tuner, Self Employed (2004-present)

Maud, a mobile video game published by MagicWalnut  
Music and sound designer (2014)

Coffee Break, a short film  
Composed and produced soundtrack (2007)

**Activities**

Church worship leader at New Song Fellowship, London Ontario (2002-present)