April 2018

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 tadam@uwo.ca, 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 Donnelly Opera.

Just ice for the Donnelly Opera.

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

file without the conviction of Carroll the others go free without a...
Will:

There's no justice for the Donnellys.

careful with the evidence, I scoured high and low, I had witnesses to the
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. The whole
Will had set its mind to be deaf and to be blind to my family's horrible fate! There's no justice for the Donnelys.

just ice for the Donnelys

There's no justice for the Donnelys.

The Donnelly Opera
The boy John-ny O' Con-nor was staying with my folks.

He helped a-round the farm with ploUGHing and plant-ing and he shared my fa-ther's bed.

And when the mob showed up that night he hid and he saw ever-y thing and e-scaped.

simply
a tempo
There's no just-ice for the Don-nel-lys.

When mobs get a-way with mur-der!
Will: 

There’s no justice for the Donnelly!

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

Oh? Do tell?
mit-tee and there are things James will reveal.

That sounds promising.

Yes, that sounds promising.

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

Yes, that sounds promising.

Your family has a reputation for causing problems in the town. When a cow seemed to go...
miss-ing or some-one's cut-ter, you were blamed when a barn was burned down.

I ne-ver claimed that we were an-gels but there are things I won't al-low.

We work hard for what we own, yes we burned a barn but we ne-ver stole that cut-ter or that cow.
Will

but still they blamed it on us. Damn! the town still blamed it on us!

Bb Cl.

Hn.

Vc.

Pno.

105

105

105

105

109

109

109

109

While listening to the townsfolk I have recently observed they're

Charles

Blamed it on us. Damn! the town still blamed it on us!
Charles

saying that the Donnelly's only got what they deserved.

B♭ Cl.

Now that it's like-ly that the tri-al will be moved the odds of a con-vic-tion are so ve-ry much im-proved.

Hn.

Vc.

Pno.

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

We should have some booz-e to cel-e-brate the news!

Charles

You know I don't drink!

Pno.
Mary

Will

Bb Cl.

Hn.

Vc.

Pno.

Mary

Will

Bb Cl.

Vc.

Pno.

Mary

Will

Bb Cl.

Vc.

Pno.

Mary

Pno.

I'll have a sip
and some of mine

Then for me and for No - rah.

my hus - band makes his own wine.

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 - other but
Mary

this one's pret-ty nice.

Will

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

B♭ Cl.

Hn.

Vc.

Pno.

Capriccioso \( \text{q.} \) = 54

Capriccioso \( \text{q.} \) = 54

Mary

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

Charles

I gave your week-ly pay yes-ter-day.

B♭ Cl.

Hn.

Vc.

Pno.
We had some unforeseen debt and since Johnny is your main witness he's unable to work.

The crown is not here for you to abuse. But I don't think that boy should go barefoot so here's a...
Mary

Charles

sum to pay for John-ny's shoes.

Bo Cl.

Vc.

Thank you. I'll not ask again, you have my word!

Pho.

Norah

Bb Cl.

Vc.

Should we really ce-le-brate al-re-a-dy? Even though the su-spects now sit in a

Pno.

Freely \( \hat{=} \) 108 Norah gets up from sitting on Will's lap

Freely \( \hat{=} \) 108
The last trial didn't go so well. But

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

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

portamento

strict time (like clock) \( \frac{3}{4} = 64 \)
Norah

really big shock that they all had an alibi for 2 O’Clock? 

James

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

A

wit ness says he called on big Jack Ken ne dy to bor row a drug be cause of a cough ing

Pno.
Norah: That must have been quite the walk especialy at 2 O’ clock.

Thompsons said that Carol slept at

their house and that is what they swore if he had woken up they would have heard him be-

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

Thompsons said that Carol slept at

their house and that is what they swore if he had woken up they would have heard him be-
Norah

cause of their cre-a-ky floor.

They will do all things to block the

Bb Cl.

Vc.

Pno.

Norah

truth get-ting out a-bout 2 o'clock!

Bb Cl.

Hn.

Vc.

Pno.

Norah

Three men said they played cards with Pitch-fork Ry-der. He told po-lice that he was fast a-

Bb Cl.

Vc.

Pno.
Norah

sleep in bed, his story seems to change whatever suits his need. Then how did all our family end up

Vc.

Hold till breath is exhausted  Norah takes time to catch breath

Bb Cl.

dead? And Johnny is the only one who's

Hn.

Vc.

Timp.

Norah

Pno.

The Donnelly Opera
Norah

\[ \frac{215}{f} \]

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

Norah

\[ \frac{216}{O} \]

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

Norah

\[ \frac{224}{mp} \]

saw her fa-ther fast a-sleep can that real-ly be the truth? ’Cause I heard a real-ly loud
I had re-tired to bed a round midnight I took to the side furth-est from the wall.

Norah

Freely q=108

Vc.

Pno.

Norah

We had Will's bro-ther John stay-ing with us The two of them stayed up much lat-er.

Bb Cl.

Vc.

mysteriously
Lights change to signify a flashback to event
Norah: How many, Will? How many did you see?
Will: A mess of them. Your bro-ther's out there too.
Norah: What does he want?
Will: He holds a grudge be-cause I mar-ried you.
What could they want at 2 O’clock?
John, it's hard to ignore but do not open that door!

Gunshot signifying that John has been shot

Will

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

There was no way to protect you.

He's dying, Will. It seems unlikely that he will survive.
Freely \( \frac{1}{2} \) \text{ simply}  

Norah

\( \text{Freely } \frac{1}{2} \text{ simply} \)

breathe ad. lib.  
cresc. poco a poco

Norah

\( \text{Freely } \frac{1}{2} \text{ simply} \)

Bb Cl.

Vc.

Pno.

Norah

\( \text{Freely } \frac{1}{2} \text{ simply} \)

Bb Cl.

Vc.

Pno.
Norah

Bb Cl.

Vc.

Pno.

V

Hn.

Vc.

Pno.

Charles

P deliberately

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 Pno. 333

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

Pno.

Hn.

Vc.

Pno.

Norah Hn. 340

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

Vc.

Pno.

Will Pno. 337

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

Charles

Hn.

Vc.

Pno.

Spirito \( \approx 72 \)

Spirito \( \approx 72 \)
And no more smearing of the Donnelly name. So let's go see James and see how it goes.

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

Let's hope it's enough to convince the

The Donnelly Opera
There will be justice for the Donnellys.

Norah
Will
Charles
Hn.
Vc.
Phono.

B♭ Cl.
Hn.
Vc.
Timp.
Phono.
The Donnelly Opera

Norah and Will hurry off agitato \( \approx \) 60

Charles

Mary

You’ll not believe what I have learned,

Bo Cl.

Hn.

Vc.

Timp.

Pno.

Mary runs on stage in a fit

X

\( \sum \)
Mary takes off her scarf, and then her coat throwing both to the ground as she rushes toward Charles.
Mary

Our home is laid waste.

At least that can be re-placed, un

B♭ Cl.

Like chil-

dren.

My kids were safely tucked in bed.

Vc.

Pno.
If it weren't for Bob Donnelly they'd be dead!

I'm the boy's
Mary

mother  I must keep him healthy and health is expensive.

The Donnelly Opera
Mary

Bb Cl.

Hn.

Vc.

Pno.

The Donnelly Opera

47

Mary

Bb Cl.

Hn.

Vc.

Pno.

mined

but gold is worth much more once it's been refined.

Johnny, dull as gold that had just been mined

f

p
Ever since he took the Donnelly hire, they've made him work.

and work, and work, and work! he's been tried and tested and put through the fire.
At thirteen years old, my boy's as precious as gold!

It's not about the...
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
this, this will keep my John from coming to harm, for
friends of the killers say they will

Mary

B♭ Cl.

Hn.

Vc.

Toms

Pno.

non legato

The Donnelly Opera
FF (p) = 60

Mary

(tranquillo \( \cdot = 60 \))

Charles

\( \text{Al-right her's a sum for your home.} \)

Bb Cl.

Hn.

Vc.

Pno.

Mary

Perc.

Pno.

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

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-

mer-i-ca he was getting out of town. Though he did tell us one crucial
fact that the defense for the villains knows

They know you've been paying the O'Connors!

They already doubt the O'Connors' fitness they will
Norah drops bag of money making loud bang. She quickly picks up... What have you there?
No-thing at
think we've been brib-ing our most im-port-tant wit-ness.

What's in your hand?
Only my hard earned wage!

Mary
Norah: Looks like a whole year's wage!

Will: Did you just pay her yet again?

Mary: You're such a liar!

Will: I'm not a liar!

Norah: You're such a liar!
Will gain?

Charles Al-right, e-nough! Things don't look good.

Bb Cl.

Hn.

Vc.

Perc.

Pno.

Charles I should've thought things through. I am so sor-ry to the both of you. Let's ad-just our ex-pect-a-tions

Hn.

Charles the case is not lost though there might be some comp-li-ca-tions But here, a
Charles remembers the letter from the attorney general and grabs it from his desk.

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

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

No
MenoMosso $\approx 72$

Norah

MenoMosso $\approx 72$

Will

It's to stay right here.

Charles

BbCl.

Vc.

Chm.

Pno.

Spirito $\approx 72$

Hn.

Vc.

Chm.

Pno.
There's no just-ice for us!

Just-ice for the Don-nelly's!

There's no just-ice for the Don-nelly's!
There's no justice for the Donnellys!
Norah

Mary

Will

Charles

Hn.

Vc.

Timp.

Pno.

Just ice for the Donnellys!

There's no justice for the Donnellys!

There's no justice for the Donnellys!

Just ice for the Donnellys!

There's no justice for the Donnellys!

There's no justice for the Donnellys!

There's no justice for the Donnellys!

Just ice for the Donnellys!

The Donnelly Opera
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)