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I, Evan M Williams, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts in Composition.

It is entitled:
Jonestown: A Multimedia Chamber Opera – Act I

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Jonestown: A Multimedia Chamber Opera – Act I

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Graduate School
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by

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ABSTRACT

Jonestown is a multimedia chamber opera in four acts, which is based on the mass murder/suicide of the Peoples Temple Agricultural Project — informally known as Jonestown — based in Guyana, South America and its leader, Pastor Jim Jones.

The work revolves around three characters, Christine, Mary, and Joe. The character of Christine is based on Christine Miller, who can be heard in the final “Death Tape” of Jonestown opposing the mass suicide and advocating for a more peaceful resolution. Mary and Joe — a married couple facing problems in their relationship concerning Jim Jones — are completely fictional characters, however, details of their lives are drawn from real-life events that occurred around 1978.

The opera employs audio recorded by the people of Jonestown, which was later confiscated by the FBI, and digitized by the Jonestown Institute at San Diego State University. There is no actor or singer representing Jim Jones. These audio recordings provide excerpts of Jones’s words unaltered and uncensored.

The first act of this opera introduces Christine, who expresses her hope for a better world through the work being done at Jonestown. We also meet Mary and Joe, and learn that the source of their marital problems is that Jim Jones is the father of their baby boy, not Joe. The chorus — consisting of other members of Jonestown — sing about their desire to create a Christian/Communist community, yet sermons by Jim Jones express his belief that salvation cannot be found in heaven, but on earth, through himself.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to my thesis advisor and committee chair, Dr. Douglas Knehans, for his guidance throughout the process of writing this opera. I also wish to thank Drs. Michael Fiday and Mara Helmuth for their mentorship and guidance as my composition teachers at CCM and as members of my committee.

Further thanks goes to Jackie Stevens, Becca Finkelshteyn, Marcus Shields, and all of the chorus members and instrumentalists who brought this work to life in a staged reading at CCM on November 13, 2015.
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SETTING
The Peoples Temple Agricultural Project in Guyana, South America (also called Jonestown).

TIME
Late September to November 18, 1978

PERSONNEL
Christine
  Lyric Soprano
Joe
  Lyric Baritone
Mary
  Dramatic Soprano

The People of Jonestown
  SATB Chorus (16 – 24 voices)
  With solos throughout

Soprano Saxophone
Alto Saxophone
Tenor Saxophone
Baritone Saxophone
Percussion
  4 Toms (pitched high to low)
  Brake drum
  Bass drum
  Glockenspiel
Piano
2 Violins
Viola
Cello
Double Bass

EQUIPMENT
Stereo Playback
Video Projection
Max

DURATION
ca. 90'
ABOUT THIS OPERA

Jonestown is a fictional retelling of the story of the life and mass murder/suicide of the People’s Temple and their Agricultural Project in Guyana. While some characters are inspired by actual people, the opera is not biographical or meant to serve as a historical account.

The opera focuses on three characters, Christine (based on Christine Miller), a woman who was one of the few people to speak out against the mass suicide in favor of a more peaceful resolution, Joe and his wife Mary, who’s troubling relationship with Jones and the People’s Temple strains their love and partially leads to the downfall of the temple.

There are no characters representing Jim Jones or Congressman Leo Ryan, rather the extensive tapes and videos are an intricate part of the opera, allowing these figures to “speak” for themselves.

The opera begins around late September 1978, a few weeks before the mass suicide. The “White Nights” and murder of Congressmen Ryan are the real-life events that the characters must deal with, ending with the mass suicide on November 18, 1979.

The libretto is by Evan Williams with texts adapted from tapes and transcripts of the Peoples Temple Agricultural Project, generously provided by the Jonestown Institute, with other texts from the Bible, Karl Marx, Vladimir Lenin, Peter Kropotkin, Mao Zedong, Harvey Milk, Willie Brown, William Blake, and Emily Dickinson.

NOTE ON ELECTRONICS
The performance of this work requires audio and video playback through the program Max or Max Runtime. Please contact Evan Williams for the Max Patch and media files for this work. Please consult Cycling '74's website for instructions on downloading and installing Max or Max Runtime. The patch "Jonestown.maxpat" can be operated either by the conductor or a separate technician.

The score indicates when each audio file or video must be triggered with a number in a circle, and the first few words of the text being heard or seen in this media. These numbers correspond the cue number in the patch. The current cue number can be seen in the top left-hand corner of the patch.

To trigger each cue in the patch, either press the space bar on the computer operating the patch, or use a USB pedal. This pedal should be programmed to either send the ASCII code 32 (space bar) or 98 (the b key). Please consult the manual of your USB pedal for instructions on programming it. Those using the full version of Max can also edit the patch for it to except the ASCII code of their choice.

Feel free to contact Evan Williams with any questions, concerns, or issues with the electronics in this work.

Email: evan@evanwilliamsmusic.info
Website: www.evanwilliamsmusic.info
Tonight, the story...

It was, for a time...
Everyone says...
...we were a family...
And I'm showing the thing...
Video: ...a man of the highest character...
Everyone calls Jonestown...
If we can't live in peace...
The curtain opens on an outdoor scene of the Peoples Temple Agricultural Project and the people of Jonestown. Some are doing work such as farming or building, but as they sing they rise and stand resolute.
"All that is solid melts into air.

p no vibrato

p no vibrato

p no vibrato

p no vibrato

- 13 -
all that is holy is profaned
real conditions in life, and his re...
S. Sx.

A. Sx.

T. Sx.

B. Sx.

Pno.

S

ge-ther in-to the dust?

And if we be lift-ed up

A

ge-ther in-to the dust?

And if we be lift-ed up

Ch.

T

ge-ther in-to the dust?

And if we be lift-ed up

B

g-e-th-er in-to the dust?

And if we be lift-ed up

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

- 19 -
So the poor have hope,
No man can serve both God and mon-ey.*

Matthew
rich man to enter the Kingdom of God."

Matthew nineteen and twenty
We seek a new and better society, where there must be with intense conviction

We seek a new and better society, where there must be with intense conviction

We seek a new and better society, where there must be with intense conviction

We seek a new and better society, where there must be with intense conviction
be neither rich nor poor; all must work.

there must be neither rich nor poor; all must work.

there must be neither rich nor poor; all must work.
S. Sx.

A. Sx.

T. Sx.

B. Sx.

Pno.

Ch.

A

Ch.

T

B

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

Not just the rich, or the poor, but all work.

Not just the rich, or the poor, but all work.

Not just the rich, or the poor, but all
work-ing peo-ple must en-joy the fruits of their com-mon

all work-ing peo-ple must en-joy the fruits of their com-mon
but soon we shall see face to face.

For

For

For

For

For

For

For

For
in full. For now abide for now abide
in full. For now abide for now abide
in full. For now abide for now abide
in full. For now abide for now abide
in full. For now abide for now abide
faith, hope, and love, these three
Enter Christine, she slowly makes her way to the front of the crowd, hardly noticed by anyone.
Bright and hopeful

\[ \text{\textit{The people of Jonestown slowly exit.}} \]
In this place, this most sacred place, we build a life of peace. Where ev’ry need is supplied,
and ev'ry heart is open.
In this place, this most loving place,
There is no greed.
All are equal, All are free.
We seek a new life here, one free of pain or suffering.
We work for a better tomorrow.
filled with hope and joy. In this place, filled with hope and joy. In this place,
we live, we pray, we love, we hope. For "Hope" is the
thing with feathers— That perchès in the soul— And sings the tune without words— and never stops
And

at all–
sweet–in the Gale–
is heard— And sore must be the storm—
That could a-bash the little Bird

That kept so many
I've heard it in the
chil

est land-

and on the strang

-61-
S. Sx.

A. Sx.

T. Sx.

B. Sx.

Perc.

Pno.

C.

in Ex-trem-i-ty, It asked a crumb of me.

In this place,

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

- 63 -
this most sacred place,  
Hope springs.
Exit Christine
The scene changes to the inside of Mary and Joe's cabin. Mary is putting down their child for a nap.
Scene 2

**Slow, somewhat regretful** \( \text{\( \dot{q} \)} = 60 \)

*quasi recitative*

That old run-down house,

I often dream of home,

and the life we built there.
always something for you to fix.

too many hot days in the sun on the roof. So many shingles
This new home, in this place, it brings me joy to be here and and bricks to re-place. But it was ours, our home.
raise our boy here ...

You're qui-et.

This place no long-er gives me joy. It is a pri-son now. We are

heavy

heavy

heavy

heavy

heavy
What do you mean? We helped build this place__ in pa-ra-dise, held in__ by bars made of lies. Can't you see it?

Can't you see it?
where we can raise our children, grow our crops, safe from the cruelty of greed.
is no true safety here. We have replaced one greed for another.

How could you say this?
After all that Jones has done for us, and our son? Have you so quickly for-

His son, not mine!

- 75 -
got-ten?

Do you not re-mem-ber?

Who it was who said to me—

mf with a feeling of guilt

No greater re-gret have I—

No

No greater—

No
"Give your self to Jim Jones. Give him your heart. Give him your trust. Give him your whole self,
great re-gret have I—_
he will calm your fears of this place.
No greater regret have I than giving you to that
This new life in this most sacred place fills my heart with peace.
We sow seeds of hope, and reap a harvest of joy.

Mary goes to the child and cradles him.
Hush now, sleep now. Baby don't cry.
Sleep is sup-

- 82 -
posed to be
By souls of san-i-ty
The shut-ting of the eye.
Sleep is the station grand
Down which, on either hand
The hosts of witness stand!
Morn is sup-
posed to be
By peo-ple of de-gree
The break-ing of the Day.
Morn-ing has not o-curred! That shall Au-ro-ra be East of E-ter-ni-ty
One with the ban-ner gay
One in the red ar-ray
That is the break of Day!
Curtain closes
Interlude
Jim Jones' Teachings #1

\[ \text{Attention, attention...} \]
Foreign investments...
One form or another...
...but the revolution of socialism.
The curtain opens on the outdoor scene with the people of Jonestown.
or the poor, but all working people must enjoy the

or the poor, but all working people must enjoy the

or the poor, but all working people must enjoy the

or the poor, but all working people must enjoy the

or the poor, but all working people must enjoy the

or the poor, but all working people must enjoy the

or the poor, but all working people must enjoy the

or the poor, but all working people must enjoy the

or the poor, but all working people must enjoy the

or the poor, but all working people must enjoy the

or the poor, but all working people must enjoy the
means of production being the collective work of humanity, the product
means of production being the collective work of humanity, the product
means of production being the collective work of humanity, the product
means of production being the collective work of humanity, the product
So the poor have hope, and injustice shuts its mouth.

So the poor have hope, and injustice shuts its mouth.

So the poor have hope, and injustice shuts its mouth.
Hope is born in their hearts,
Interlude
Jim Jones' Teachings #2

\[ \text{\textbf{You've been brainwashed...}} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{Interlude}} \]
Jim Jones' Teachings #2

\[ \text{\textbf{You've been brainwashed...}} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{Interlude}} \]
Jim Jones' Teachings #2

\[ \text{\textbf{You've been brainwashed...}} \]

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\[ \text{\textbf{Interlude}} \]
Jim Jones' Teachings #2

\[ \text{\textbf{You've been brainwashed...}} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{Interlude}} \]
Jim Jones' Teachings #2

\[ \text{\textbf{You've been brainwashed...}} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{Interlude}} \]
Jim Jones' Teachings #2

\[ \text{\textbf{You've been brainwashed...}} \]
* Multiphonic of choice containing the given pitch
Jones: ...Work out there for that fuckin' Ford...

You’re gonna help yourself, or you’ll get no help! There’s only one hope of glory. That’s within you! Nobody’s gonna come out of the sky! There’s no heaven up there, we’ll have to make heaven down here!

How many believe I’m God? How many believe I’m the Almighty God? Creator of Heaven and Earth... I would have nothing to do with God. Have nothing to do with that skygod. Have nothing to do with this Bible.