



AMERICAN OPERA CLASSICS



DARON HAGEN

ORSON
REHEARSED



Orson Rehearsed An Operafilm

Omar Mulero, Tenor • Robert Frankenberry, Tenor
Robert Orth, Baritone

• Fifth House Ensemble • Roger Zahab

**Daron Aric
HAGEN**

(b. 1961)

Orson Rehearsed (2018)

An Operafilm

Libretto by Daron Aric Hagen

First performance: 15–16 September 2018
at the Studebaker Theater, Chicago, USA

Orson Welles #1 **Omar Mulero, Tenor**

Orson Welles #2 **Robert Frankenberry, Tenor**

Orson Welles #3 **Robert Orth, Baritone**

Peter Marshall, Piano (special guest pianist) 17

Daron Aric Hagen, Electronics 1–10 13–16

Fifth House Ensemble

Melissa Ngan, Flute • Grace Hong, Oboe

Elizandro Garcia-Montoya, Clarinet, Bass Clarinet

Eric Heidbreder, Bassoon • Parker Nelson, Horn

Katherine Petersen, Piano

Sarah Plum, Violin • Sixto Franco, Viola

Herine Coetzee Koschak, Cello • Eric Snoza, Double Bass

Roger Zahab, Conductor

1	Overture	3:11
2	Maybe a Man's Name: Our works in stone <i>(Orson #1, Orson #2, Orson #3)</i>	4:15
3	Everybody's Shakespeare: Jesus, the days I've seen <i>(Orson #1, Orson #2, Orson #3)</i>	4:14
4	Lament for Jacaré: J'accuse! <i>(Orson #3)</i>	3:44
5	First Nach(t)musik: Ah <i>(Orson #2, Orson #3, Orson #1)</i>	3:25
6	The Magnificent Downbeats: I intended to portray a golden world <i>(Orson #1, Orson #3, Orson #2)</i>	3:07
7	All Through: Marc, on fire, alone, at the piano <i>(Orson #2)</i>	3:27
8	Manhattan Ambulance Ride: Give me the script <i>(Orson #3, Orson #2)</i>	3:08
9	Border Sequence: The scene was conceived musically <i>(Orson #1, Orson #2, Orson #3)</i>	3:39
10	Card Tricks and Talk Show Badinage	3:25
11	Second Nach(t)musik: We're born alone <i>(Orson #1)</i>	3:14
12	Beatrice Welles Practices Chopin, 1924: Then I heard her again <i>(Orson #1, Orson #2, Orson #3)</i>	3:48
13	Consider the Chimes: Come! Sing me a dirty song <i>(Orson #3)</i>	3:21
14	Serenade for Rita: Rita's face is not on the bomb by her own choosing <i>(Orson #2, Orson #3, Orson #1)</i>	5:23
15	Myocardial Infarction: My two greatest assets have been mental stability and being, like, really smart <i>(Orson #3, Orson #1, Orson #2)</i>	3:03
16	Postlude: Go On: Our works in stone, in paint, in print, are spared <i>(Orson #1, Orson #2, Orson #3)</i>	5:13
17	Charlie's Rag (End Title)	2:26

Daron Aric Hagen (b. 1961)

Orson Rehearsed (2018)

Hollywood, California. 10 October 1985. Evening. Orson Welles, the American actor, activist, filmmaker, visual artist, director, writer and creator of *Citizen Kane*, is alone in his home. His heart has stopped.

We enter his mind in this moment, on the threshold between life and death. In the bardo, Orson's thoughts unspool as a stream of consciousness that loops back on itself, like a Möbius strip. Those thoughts are articulated by three avatars: the first (Omar Mulero) represents the past, the memory of his youthful wunderkind self; the second (Robert Frankenberry) represents Welles' vestigial self-image as a swashbuckling mid-career artist, bemused to find himself crumpled on the floor in his bathrobe, dying; the last (Robert Orth), represents Welles' spirit, "out of time" – what Heidegger called an "ecstase."

We sit beside Welles as he weighs his life and gradually comes to terms with his own death. The 60-minute narrative arc is not a physical one. Rather, it is a psychological, emotional, and spiritual journey that begins in the echoes of his heart's final beats and ends with the sound of his footsteps as he makes his existential exit. We hear what he hears, and, in the filmed and staged versions of *Orson Rehearsed*, we see what he sees – three 60-minute films counterpoint the onstage and filmic action of his avatars' monologues. The final result is *Orson Rehearsed*, a film within a staged opera within the film called *Orson Rehearsed* taking place within Orson Welles' dying mind.

At its face, the piece consists of a series of linked essays about how opera and film overlap. Digging deeper, it examines the relationship between an actor and the roles he inhabits – Falstaff, Othello, Brutus, Ahab, Kane, Quinlan, and, in his "greatest prestidigitation," himself.

Deeper still, it is a survey of the real and imagined failures of Welles' life: from the loss of his mother at the age of eight to the accidental drowning of Manuel "Jacaré" Olímpio Meira during the filming of *It's All True*; the pain of his repeated loss of creative control in the editing of *The Magnificent Ambersons* and *Touch of Evil*; his humiliation

in "starting at the top" with *Citizen Kane* and ending up earning "grocery money" doing wine commercials.

Deeper still, there is the consolation of a life fully lived – the giddy joy of careening across Manhattan in a rented ambulance (to better cut through traffic) at the top of his game on his way to the radio broadcast of *The War of the Worlds*, the tender recollection of his wife Rita Hayworth, and fatherhood.

A passionate social activist, Welles' last thoughts are of the future – with the foresight available only to the dead, he mourns his country as the words of a xenophobic reality television president are intercut with Emma Lazarus' paean to liberty. But the body gives out even though the spirit's still willing – it is no longer Welles' problem, it is ours. His avatars join together in a secular hymn: "Our songs will all be silenced," they sing, "but what of it? Go on singing. Go on. Go." And he does. We do.

Composed over the course of four years, the musical score fuses live players with pre-recorded sounds and sound effects. The present live recording documents what the audience heard in the staged production that I directed at the Studebaker Theater in Chicago under the auspices of the Chicago College of the Performing Arts in September 2018.

Daron Aric Hagen

Libretto – Synopsis

1 Overture

It is 10 October 1985. Orson Welles' heart has just stopped. Head leader gives way to a filmic countdown clock as we enter his mind in this moment, in the bardo, suspended on the threshold between life and death. Orson's thoughts unspool as a stream of consciousness that loops back on itself, like a Möbius strip. We hear what he hears: the afterimage of his heart's tattoo in the timpani,

fragments of the scores of his movies, and scraps of dialog from unmade scripts, soaring melodies. We see what he sees: clouds through a jet's window transform into surf; his hands typing transform into his mother's hands playing the piano; stepping through the iris of his own eye, a solitary Departing Boy of about nine carrying a suitcase walks away from him down a country road; playing cards fly upwards from the floor as a fire curtain parts to reveal Welles' friend President Franklin Delano Roosevelt urging national unity. As a trumpet call unfolds, the profiles of three men (Orsons #1, #2, and #3) appear in various stages of life – one in the past, one in the present, and one in the future. They are avatars, figments of his expiring imagination expressed as the unity of three ecstases. The iris returns, revealing the Departing Boy through the rifling pages of a forgotten blue book that transforms into surf.

2 Maybe a Man's Name

Out of the Departing Boy's back emerge dozens of Orsons in black and white, in various attitudes: some watch one of the many movie screens suspended over the heads of other Orsons on which their interior thoughts are being projected; others embrace as though saying hello or goodbye to one another; several others stand off to the sides, observing as three of the Orsons, who sit on stools as though rehearsing a play, give voice to Welles' thoughts. Those thoughts range freely, untethered by chronological time, obeying only the dream logic of the theater in his mind.

Orson #1 (O1) / Orson #2 (O2) / Orson #3 (O3): "Our works in stone, in paint, in print, are spared, some of them, for a few decades or more, a millennium or two ..."

O3 – clearly dying, his flowing silk pyjamas stained, the heels of his favourite slippers broken down – pushes his portable typewriter away with his foot.

O3: But what of the so-called "information age?" Now, nothing is ever lost, no matter how ephemeral.

O1 – the young one, wearing a stylish suit from the 30s – performs a deft magic trick with his Hamburg hat, of which he is clearly proud.

O1: Do we start at the top? Or do we cut to the finish? *The three Orsons seem suddenly aware that something is not right. Like a juddering heartbeat, the Orsons intone the rhythm known to every film editor and artist who revises:*

O1/O2/O3: Edit. Edit. Edit.

O2 – middle-aged, his suspenders askew, one shirt tail hanging out like a tongue, clearly fully engaged in the hurly-burly of rehearsal and life – carries a copy of Herman Melville's Moby Dick, which he has dog-eared nearly to shreds.

O2: "Call me Ishmael."

O3: I started at the top – I should know.

They resume bantering.

O1: Did I say, "A movie in production is the greatest train set a boy ever had?"

O3: Why don't you "giggle" it on the "inter-webs?"

O2: (*Indicating O3's manual typewriter.*) You mean "Google," and the "Internet," and that's the wrong sort of "laptop," old man.

Again, the abrupt awareness that something is wrong.

O1/O2/O3: Edit. Edit. Edit. "Everything must finally fall away in universal ash."

O2: Why bother with Ishmael? Why not just call me Orson? He was my greatest prestidigitation.

O1: The triumphs, the frauds. The fraudulent triumphs; the triumphant farragoes.

O3: The treasures, the fakes. The fraudulent treasures; the triumphant fakes.

They begin teasing out the truth of the situation.

O1/O2/O3: We're going to die.

O3: There's no "to be or not to be" about it.

O1: Nevertheless, "be of good heart," old chum.

O2: The Pequod's crew is chum, chum. "We're going to die..."

O1/O2/O3: "... cry the dead artists out of the living past."

The three Orsons are not accepting the idea of dying, despite the fact that many of the other Orsons are clearly saying farewell to one another now.

O1/O2/O3: "Our songs will be silence, but what of it? Go on singing."

The films cut out abruptly as disembodied voices observe, "Maybe a man's name doesn't matter that much." Other Orsons, shaking their heads as they depart, murmur, "Edit. Edit. Edit."

3 Everybody's Shakespeare

Chimes sound and footsteps are heard as the Departing Boy emerges once again from the iris. A strange red silk banner unfurls like a wave – Desdemona's kerchief – Welles' wife, actress Rita Hayworth's flowing hair – red wine rolling around in a merlot glass. Welles' thoughts turn to his beloved Shakespeare. His soul has intertwined with the roles he's inhabited in life such that he repurposes the words from Falstaff, Othello, and Julius Caesar to address his condition.

O1/O2/O3: "Jesus, the days I've have seen."

O3 (Falstaff): "Lord, Lord, how subject we old men are to this vice of lying. This same starved justice hath done nothing but prate to me of the wildness of his youth and every third word a lie."

O1/O2/O3: "We have heard the chimes at midnight."

O2 (Othello): "Speak of me as I am; nothing extenuate, nor set down in malice. Then must you speak of one that loved not wisely but too well."

The silhouette of Beatrice Welles emerges for a moment from the red kerchief.

O1/O2/O3: "Men in rage strike those that love them best."

O1 (Brutus): "O, that a man might know, The end of this day's business ere it come! But it's enough to know that the day will end, And then the end is known."

O1/O2/O3: "Never call a true piece of gold a counterfeit: thou art essentially insane without seeming so."

O3 (Falstaff): "To die is to be a counterfeit, a counterfeit of a man who hath not the life of a man. But to counterfeit

dying when a man thereby liveth, that is to be no counterfeit ..."

O1/O2/O3: "... It is to be the 'true, perfect image of life,' indeed."

The phrase appears suddenly on all the movie screens. The distant trumpets return, images of his childhood in Chicago, the EL [elevated train], pounding pavement, and a countdown clock that will return more frequently as his time runs out, give way to the analog static (or "snow") on a television when no transmission signal is obtained after the end of the broadcast day.

4 Lament for Jacaré

The snow transforms into water; a drowning swimmer's hand is seen, and then three sailors hoisting a sail in some sort of skiff. The spectre of Manuel "Jacaré" Olimpio Meira is revealed in a pool of blue light playing a stand-up bass, wearing O1's Hamburg. Orson's feelings of regret about Jacaré's drowning death during the filming of It's All True in 1942 overcome him.

O3: J'accuse! Jacaré! He and three other *jangadieros* sailed from Fortaleza to Rio – *Four Men on a Raft* sailing a thousand miles to protest Brazilian poverty. Just perfect I thought to my movie I thought – like real life. Jacaré is the perfect floating signifier of leadership and historical motivation. The "true and perfect image of life, indeed." *J'accuse!* Jacaré! I offered him what he'd earn in a year to reenact his triumph. A poor fisherman: how could he refuse? This Ahab, camera in hand, lost the shot when a wave drowned the real and the fictional Jacaré. Later, his decomposing head was found in the belly of a huge shark somewhere off the coast of the Barra da Tijuca. Jacaré.

5 First Nach(t)musik

Amid a spray of wind chimes and the sound of crashing surf, the ghost of Jacaré disappears. The wave transforms into a tombstone as a single

note, like the pinging of a heart monitor, begins. As it repeats, various Orsons surround O3 to comfort him. They sing a wordless vocalise. A swelling chorus of dozens of Orsons join them as they attend the signature beating of his heart. Jacaré's hand transforms into the hand of the Departing Boy. His back to us, he traces the letters engraved on tombstones as he walks slowly through a graveyard. Hail falls, then rain, and then sunshine comes. We see a lock of his hair. The tombstones become seatbacks in an empty theatre.

O1/O2/O3: Ah!

6 The Magnificent Downbeats

As O1 bursts into a theatrical pin spot and we find ourselves behind an active movie screen on which an irregular, thready film countdown is running, another spectral Orson declares, "They destroyed Ambersons," and a third cries, "It was too downbeat!" His broken heart convulses with each "downbeat" as he relives the fury and sorrow of losing creative control of his 1942 film, The Magnificent Ambersons.

O1: I intended to portray a golden world, almost of memory, and to show what happens.

"And the picture itself destroyed me," cries another Orson. "They destroyed me," says another. "It was the purpose of the movie," another says.

O3: I thought I had a movie so good. I was so sure of its value. So sure.

"Downbeat. Downbeat. Downbeat," say the Orsons as the tissues of Orson's heart rend. Another repeats, "It was the purpose. The purpose. The purpose." O3 clearly registers the heart attack that is killing him. He is led by the other Orsons to a stool. Each relives the experience through their own lens.

O1/O2: A golden world. / A film so good.

O3: I couldn't go back to shoot. All I could do was send cables.

O1/O2: A golden world. / A film so good.

O3: Everybody they could find was cutting it. "Death by a thousand cuts."

O1/O2/O3: Almost one of memory.

O3: I was so sure of its value. So sure.

O1/O2/O3: So sure. / A film. / A world.

O3 buries his head in his hands. Out of the dark, a spectral Orson notes, with finality, "It was too downbeat." There's a beat of silence.

7 All Through

With the sound of a sprinkling of wind chimes and a roll of thunder a moment of stillness and grace begins in which Orson recalls the exhilarating evening in 1937 when The Cradle Will Rock – an opera by Marc Blitzstein that Welles directed – debuted, despite the actors being forbidden to take the stage by the Federal Government. As he sings, spectral female voices sing, again and again, in a memory-echo of Olive Stanton, the actress who performed the role of Moll that night, "All through the storm ..."

O2: Marc, on fire, alone, at the piano, putting *Cradle* over on an empty stage. A rich Philly kid who went to Curtis, who studied with Schoenberg in Berlin. A communist, and deeply patriotic American. Gay, like his friend Lenny, he married Eva the way Leonard married Felicia. Marc called out "Scene One," and we all wondered, would he find tinder? It's Plato's Cave," I thought, "Look at him glow." Olive sang, "All through..." He played. And I knew we had made history. I knew. All through.

8 Manhattan Ambulance Ride

Orson recalls careening at top speed across 1938 Manhattan in a rented ambulance. He is of two minds: one half, still in makeup from the rehearsal of Danton's Death at the theatre, is

compiling director's notes; the other is editing scripts. They're on their way to the CBS studio to perform in the Mercury Theater of the Air radio broadcast of H.G. Wells' The War of the Worlds. O1 drives the ambulance: he observes with undisguised terror in the rear-view mirror as the madmen in the backseat toss scripts around.

O3: Give me the script.
O2: No, not that one.
O3: One is enough!
O2: (Reading *Danton's Death*) "Some part of me, ..."
O3: (Reading *Danton's Death*) "I don't know which, ..."
O2: "... contradicts the rest."
O3: That's a good line. Tell John.
O2: Edit, edit, edit.
O3: Ha! John Houseman acts as though he's directing.
O2: Edit, edit, edit.
O3: Give me the script. The other one.
O2: (Reading *Koch's script*.) H.G. Wells!
O3: Now *there's* a ripping yarn.
O2: Just perfect for Halloween.
O3: The cast and I will scare the hell out of them this evening.
O2: Edit, edit, edit.
O2/O3: Let's add some music there! "In the early years of the 20th century, this world was being watched ..." Great stuff! Edit, edit, edit!
O3: Hand me the Büchner play.
O2: (Reading) "The power of the people and the power of reason are one."
O3: Franklin's been president since '33:
O2: "The people ..."
O3: He says that I should run against McCarthy in '46.
O2: "The reason ..."
O2/O3: Great stuff! "Our world was being watched by intelligences far greater than our own ..."
O2: That's the stuff!
O2/O3: "I don't take art as seriously as politics."
Orson again registers the erratic beating of his heart.
Edit, edit, edit. "I try to be a Christian. I don't pray because

I don't want to bore God."
Again, in an echo of his heartbeat's judder, as the ambulance's siren wails.
Edit, edit, edit.

9 Border Sequence

Art and life are again transposed as O2 repurposes Tanya's (played by Marlene Dietrich) lines to Quinlan (played by Welles) in the 1958 noir/mystery film Touch of Evil. O3 repurposes Quinlan's lines to Tanya in response. O1, via telegram, decries the studio's re-editing of the film – and, to his mind, the "edit, edit, edit," sound of his own heart – without his authorization. It's another defeat, of course, and all the more painful summoned up on the heels of the ebullient reliving of early triumph. Spectral voices observe, in lines drawn from an unproduced Welles screenplay, "Mexico is more than our nearest neighbor; it shares with us the American Dream." Welles, fully aware now that he is dying, has equated his status between Life and Death with the liminal zone between the US and Mexico.

O1: "The scene was conceived musically,"
O2: Edit. Edit. Edit.
O3: "Read me my future," I said.
O2: "You're a mess, honey," she said.
O3: "This isn't the real Mexico. You know that."
O1: "The scene was conceived musically,"
O2: Edit. Edit. Edit.
The films in his head begin playing again in counterpoint with the Orsons, revealing their inner thoughts – in effect, they are thoughts unspooling within Welles' thoughts.
O1: "It depended more than anything on syncopation."
O2: Edit. Edit. Edit.
O3: "This isn't the real Mexico. You know that."
Cyclone fence transforms into concertina wire along the Rio Grande ...
O2: "You're a mess, honey," she said.

O1: "Syncopation has been utterly removed, utterly removed. Removed."
O2: Eye equals 'i'.
A typed page of screenplay transforms into the face of a gravestone ...
O1: Edit. Edit. Edit.
O3: "Come on, read my future for me."
O2: "Your future is all used up," she said.
O1: Eye equals 'i'.
O3: "This isn't the real Mexico. You know that."
Bare branches wave frantically like Holy roods, transforming into racing clouds and then into surf ...
O1/O2/O3: Edit. Edit. Edit. Eye equals 'i'. "Your future is all used up," she said. Edit. Edit. Edit. "This isn't the real Mexico. You know that."
O1: "The scene was conceived musically,"
O2: Edit. Edit. Edit.
A Día de los Muertos statue of the Virgin Mary grips a cross with skeletal fingers ...
O1: "It depended more than anything on syncopation."
His heart's judder.
O2: Edit. Edit. Edit.
The screens fade away and are enveloped by racing clouds in which the Orsons seem to float ...
O3: "This isn't the real Mexico. You know that."
O2: "You're a mess, honey," she said.
O1: "Syncopation has been utterly removed, utterly removed. Removed."
O2/O3: Eye equals 'i'.
The clouds disappear, leaving O1 alone in a pin spot, seen as though from a theater's highest balcony or ... from heaven.
O3: "Come on, read my future for me."
O1/O2/O3: Edit. Edit. Edit. Eye equals 'i'. "Your future is all used up," she said. All used up. All used up.
Orson is left in the dark again. He needs a miracle, or at least some magic.

10 Card Tricks and Talk Show Badinage

Instead, the crude sound of canned applause and lurid, fake, obviously MIDI-mock-up talk

show music accompany a reverse iris that opens to reveal playing cards flying upwards. Casino owner, lounge singer, and television personality Merv Griffin is heard ("From Las Vegas ... from New York City!") hawking his own show, on which Orson appeared only hours before "in order to raise grocery money." O1 sits on the lip of the stage, tossing cards into his Hamburg hat; O2, legs stretched out before him, reads Moby Dick; O3 draws a deck of cards from the pocket of his silk pyjamas and practices card tricks. The Orsons are elaborately disinterested in the movie screens above them, on which are projected this conversation between Welles and Merv:

MERV: "Have there been joyous times?" ... the reverse film clock and various playing cards ...

ORSON: "I'm not an essentially happy person. But I have all sorts of joy. There is a difference, you know." ... the unsettling image of a manically jerking Orson marionette and a "DEAD END" sign can be vaguely seen among the playing cards and countdown clock ... "Joy is a great big electrical experience." ... Suddenly, as though on a '50s black and white television with very bad reception, the Orson marionette is revealed. Just as suddenly, it disappears ... "And happiness, well... A warthog can be 'happy'." ... the Orson marionette ... "I'm not knocking warthogs. Why did I think of them?" ... the cards and puppets give way to Departing Boy's hands digging in the sand on a beach which transforms into a closeup of Welles' eyes; the Departing Boy's hand that traced the letters on the tombstone caresses Welles' forehead, which becomes a tombstone ...

MERV: "What about painful times?" ... the cards return, landing on the tombstone ...

ORSON: "Enough of those to do. Bad conscience pain." ... the garish, '50's television Orson marionette, the "DEAD END" sign ... "That's the worst." ... Face cards on tombstones ... "Regrets." ... the king of hearts, then the

queen ... "The times you didn't behave as well as you ought to have." ... the cards transform into the sailors on the skiff, into the hand of the drowning Jacaré, and then into the Orsons themselves as the music recedes.

11 Second Nach(t)spiel: Alone

There is a crack of thunder as his thoughts turn away from memory and inward. The screens go dark. Only O1 remains – he's small and alone in a sea of black.

O1: We're born alone. We live alone. We die alone. Only through love and friendship can we create the illusion for the moment that we are not alone.

12 Beatrice Welles Practices Chopin, 1924

Out of the darkness Beatrice Welles' hands drift over a keyboard in 1924.

O1: Then I heard her again.

O2: A voice in the dark.

The vague outlines of her hands carrying a birthday cake laden with candles in the dark. It is Orson's ninth birthday ...

O3: Speaking lines from *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

O1/O2/O3: "Sometimes in the dead watches of the night ..."

O1: "These antique fables apprehend ..."

O2 is revealed as Beatrice's hands and the cake continue their progression ...

O2: "... More than cool reason comprehends."

O1/O2/O3: "... it strikes me that of all my mistakes ..."

Beatrice's hands first multiply and then become the Departing Boy's hands at the keyboard as the cake continues its progression ...

O2: "This stupid cake ..."

O1/O3: she said,

O2: "...is just a cake."

O1/O3: Ah.

O2: "But the candles you blow out will never come back to you."

The Departing Boy's hands morph into the rifling blue pages of the book ...

O1/O2/O3: "Just before my mother died, I made the greatest of mistakes."

O2: "You must puff hard,"

O1/O3: she said,

Beatrice's hands return, a dozen of them, ghostlike, at the keyboard, the book, the cake, and, finally, the Departing Boy on the country road ...

O2: "And blow them all out. And you must make a wish."

O1/O3: A wish!

O2: "A lovely boy stol'd from an Indian king."

O1/O2/O3: Shakespeare.

O3 is revealed, head in his hands, remembering as his boyhood hands join Beatrice's hands at the keyboard and the cake continues its progression ...

O2: "I puffed, and I blew."

O3: "How I blew, and I blew!"

Beatrice's silhouette, very dim, as she runs her hands through her hair and her head drops to her chest, mixes in with the hands and the cake ...

O1/O2/O3: "Whoever had so sweet a changeling?"

O1: "All of a sudden, the room ..."

O2: "Suddenly the room went dark."

O1/O2/O3: "And mother had vanished forever."

Nine year old Orson is seen, poised to blow out the candles. He does so. In the ensuing darkness, the words "I had forgotten to make a wish" appear.

13 Consider the Chimes

Backward chimes erupt in the dark. The three principal Orsons watch the countdown clock expectantly as it speeds towards zero. It floats in mid-air, and seems to swim either in blood, or in wine, or in the ocean – they are all mixed together. As a "PICTURE START" card flashes, O3 spins reflexively into performance mode, in a recontextualization of Falstaff's "Credo."

O3: Come! Sing me a dirty song. Make me laugh. I rarely gambled – well, only seven days a week. I was as

virtuous as a gentleman need be – more or less. I swore little; whored no more than once – every 15 minutes. I paid my debts – three or four times. I lived well. Maybe I did forget what the inside of a church looks like. No matter. Go ahead, call in my marker. I repent. I lived well. Maybe I did forget.

14 Serenade for Rita

As he bows his head as though in prayer, a spectral afterimage of Rita Hayworth appears before him. As valedictory, he repurposes the words of his 30 June 1946 radio broadcast in which he announced that her likeness adorned the atomic bomb ...

O2: Rita's face is not on the bomb by her own choosing (*Is this the face?*), but by election of the fliers who drop the bomb. *Is this the face?* As regards [her] selection, I find their taste beyond reproach. (*Is this the face?*) But the bomb-dropping itself, well that better be worthy of the accompanying photograph. (*Is this the face?*)

O1/O3: "Is this" Faustus claimed of Helen of Troy, "the face that launched a thousand ships and burnt the topless towers of Iliion?" Rita Hayworth?

O3: I want a better toast ...,

O1: ... a better boast, for Rebecca.

O2: I want a better boast.

O1/O2/O3: I want my daughter to be able to tell her daughter that her grandmother's picture was on the last atom bomb.

In quick succession, as the distant trumpet calls return, the red silk banner transforms into Rita, and is joined with a roll of thunder by Orson, who seems to be nodding a gentle goodbye. They dissolve into Departing Boy's finger tracing the letters on the tombstone as an old-fashioned intertitle card appears on the screens in his mind reading:

15 Myocardial Infarction

1938 / 1986 / 2018

In which Orson's three ecstases – past, present, and future – deplore the end of his American Dream in a final cri de cœur.

Experiencing the actual moment of his death as an activist, as an artist, and as a man, Orson's consciousness now extends into the future. He hears waves lapping, seagulls calling. He sees, from mid-harbour, a beautiful sunset illuminating the Statue of Liberty.

His activist avatar repurposes a 2018 "Reality TV" politician's social media "tweets" in an anguished foreshadowing of a world still 33 years in the future. Images of barbed and concertina wire writhe like snakes above his words as they spill from his iPhone onto the screen.

O3 (2018 Politician): My two greatest assets have been mental stability and being, like, really smart.

His artist avatar passionately repurposes the words of Emma Lazarus, as they appear at the base of the Statue of Liberty as he observes the sun slowly setting on his American Dream.

O1: (1938 Poet): Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,

As a man Orson decries the corruption of American civil and political culture – against which he has fought all his life – by quoting the words of political fixer Roy Cohn, who appears to be in a jail cell with a totalitarian eye glaring down from a movie screen above him.

O2: (1968 Lawyer): "I don't wanna know what the law is."

O3: "Being, like, really smart."

O1: With conquering limbs astride from land to land;

O2: "I don't wanna know what the law is."

O3: "I went to the best college for college."

O1: Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand

O3: "The best college for college. My I.Q."

Scraps of tail leader begin to appear and disappear, as though someone has gathered up all the bits of unused film on an editing room floor, pasted them together, and is running them

through a moviola.

O1: A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame

O3: "My I.Q."

O2: "I don't wanna know what the law is."

O1: Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name

O3: "My I.Q. is one of the highest."

O2: "I wanna know who the judge is."

O1: Mother of Exiles. From her beacon hand glows worldwide welcome; her mild eyes command the air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.

The sun slips below the horizon, the Statue of Liberty disappears, and a battered traffic sign reading "DEAD END" takes its place.

O2/O3: "I wanna know who the judge is."

The countdown reaches zero and stops.

O1: Mother of Exiles.

16 Postlude: Go On

The aural primordial soup of an orchestra tuning is heard. The avatars assemble for a final time in the theatre of his mind in order to sing together a secular hymn. As at the beginning, there are many Orsons – some observe, some sing, some watch the movie screens, which all display the same, ravishing orange sunset.

O1/O2/O3: "Our works in stone, in paint, in print, are spared, some of them, for a few decades or a millennium or so,

O1 and O3 embrace as, above and around them, screens show tail leader ...

but everything must finally fall in war, or wear away into the ultimate and universal ash –

O2 picks up his copy of Moby Dick, claps the conductor (who looks a lot like Marc Blitzstein) on the back and leads him off. The other musicians follow. Only the orchestra's pianist remains, asleep, her head resting in her arms, at the piano. She is revealed to be Beatrice Welles.

the triumphs, the frauds, the treasures and the fakes."

Several Orsons observe the Departing Boy as he departs. One Orson hugs another Orson goodbye as, again, the orchestral aural primordial soup bubbles up.

A fact of life: we're going to die. "Be of good heart," cry the dead artists out of the living past.

Bits of tail leader alternate with the Departing Boy and Sleeping Beatrice.

"Our songs will all be silenced, but what of it? Go on singing."

As disembodied voices variously observe, "Maybe a man's name doesn't matter that much," a pair of Orsons hug goodbye on the empty stage's deck as above them a dozen movie screens float, displaying tail leader, distinctly calling to mind the sails of the Pequod ...

Go on.

O1 observes as O3 looks out into the empty theatre and gallantly salutes a farewell with his script before, carefully side-stepping his portable typewriter, exiting ...

Go.

The orchestral tuning returns a final time. O1 is alone. He notices Sleeping Beatrice at the piano. There is the sound of gentle rain, surf, a smattering of applause, and departing footsteps, as he crosses the stage, pauses, leans over to kiss Beatrice on the cheek, places his prized Hamburg on her head, looks out at the house a final time, smiles, and goes.

17 Charlie's Rag (End Title)

A solo piano plays as a lifetime's worth of names scrolls on a screen to an empty theatre.

Daron Aric Hagen



Photo: Elliot Mandel

Daron Hagen

Daron Hagen is a composer, performer, writer, and director. His music is performed worldwide, from the UCCA Center for Contemporary Art (formerly Ullens Center) in Beijing to the Louvre in Paris, the South Bank in London to Lincoln Center in New York City, and from Suntory Hall in Tokyo to McCaw Hall in Seattle. Commissioned by the New York Philharmonic, Seattle Opera, and The Philadelphia Orchestra, among many others, his catalog includes nine operas, five symphonies, twelve



concertos, dozens of instrumental works, and over 300 art songs and cycles. A faculty member of the Chicago College of Performing Arts, he has taught at Bard College, the Curtis Institute of Music, and the Princeton Atelier. He has served as president of the Lotte Lehmann Foundation, and artistic director of the Seasons Music Festival



Academy in Washington, conducted the cast recordings of several of his operas, and stage directed the premieres of others. Twice a Rockefeller Foundation Fellow at Bellagio, he has received the Guggenheim Fellowship, Kennedy Center Friedheim Award, ASCAP Foundation Rudolf Nissim Prize, Barlow Endowment, and Columbia

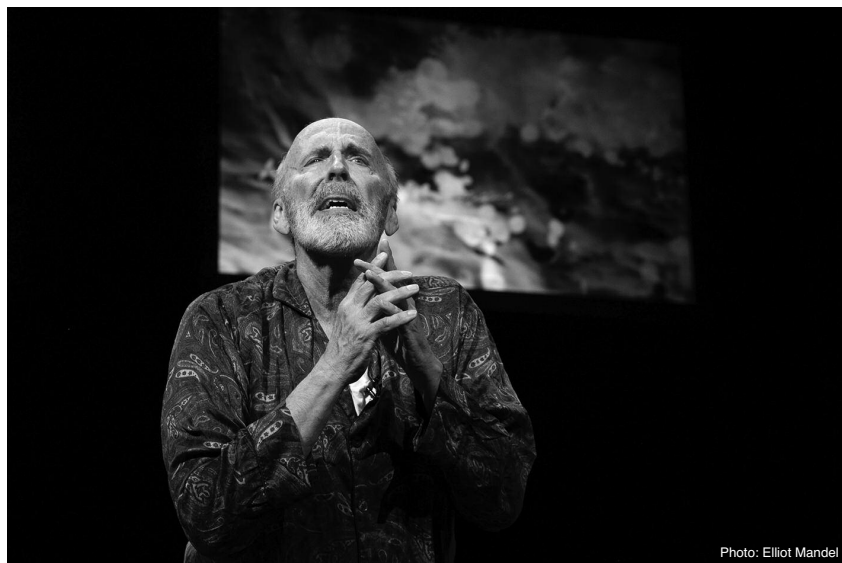


Photo: Elliot Mandel

University Bears Prize; he is also the recipient of the American Academy of Arts and Letters' Academy Award for "the artist who has achieved his singular voice." A Lifetime Member of the Corporation of Yaddo, he attended the Curtis Institute of Music and The Juilliard School, and now lives in Rhinebeck, New York with his wife and two



Photo: SnoStudios Photography

sons. His memoir, *Duet With the Past*, was published by McFarland and Company in April 2019.

www.daronhagen.com

Omar Mulero

Tenor Omar Mulero is active in both opera and musical theater. Operatic credits in the US include Carl and Samuel (*The Finishing School*), and Orson Welles (*Orson Rehearsed*), as well as scenes as Tamino, Nadir, and Roméo; musical theater credits include Jack (*Into the Woods*), Mr. Bazzard (*The Mystery of Edwin Drood*), and Zebulun (*Joseph and the Technicolor Dreamcoat*). Mulero completed his Masters in Vocal Performance at Roosevelt University where he



Roger Zahab (left) with the composer

Photo: Elliot Mandel

studied with Mark Crayton; he now studies with Rebecca Schorsch and coaches with Dana Brown in Chicago.

Robert Frankenberry

Robert Frankenberry enjoys a multi-faceted relationship with music as a singer, pianist, and conductor. On stage, he has performed a wide range of roles including Mozart (*Amadeus*), John Adams (*1776*), Carl-



Photo: Elliot Mandel

Magnus (*A Little Night Music*), Bacchus (*Ariadne in Naxos*); the title



Photo: Elliot Mandel



Photo: Elliot Mandel

**Daron Aric
HAGEN**
(b. 1961)

1-17 Orson Rehearsed (2018)

An Operafilm

Libretto by Daron Aric Hagen

Orson Welles #1 Omar Mulero, Tenor

Orson Welles #2 .. Robert Frankenberry, Tenor

Orson Welles #3 Robert Orth, Baritone

Fifth House Ensemble

Roger Zahab, Conductor

WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING

A detailed track list can be found inside the booklet.

The English libretto is included in the booklet, and may also be accessed at www.naxos.com/libretti.669049.htm

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AMERICAN OPERA CLASSICS

Daron Hagen is a Guggenheim, Rockefeller, and Kennedy Center Friedheim Award-winning composer, with a catalog of internationally performed work spanning four decades. His operafilm *Orson Rehearsed* is the psychological, emotional, and spiritual journey taken by the American actor, polymath, and creator of *Citizen Kane* Orson Welles, as he finds himself on the threshold between life and death. Memories of Welles as a wunderkind and in his swashbuckling prime are brought to life, as well as successes and failures both real and imagined, with the consolation of a life fully lived. Fusing live players with pre-recorded sounds and effects, the film version of *Orson Rehearsed* has been a multiple award winner at festivals in the US, Europe and beyond.

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Time:
62:10