

« YOUNG GOODMAN BROWN »
LIBRETTO IN ONE ACT BASED ON THE STORY
BY NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

*Observations we shared in first developing this opera**

This was to be an opera about man's insatiable curiosity about the nature of fear and the unknown. Man's enormous conceit and self-centeredness which in most situations is self-sufficient, here becomes his major flaw. Just this once Brown thinks that he can go into the woods and get back the same as he left, unscathed. Curiosity at first is all that spurs him on.

As he goes into the woods, he meets himself face to face and recognizes that he too is evil, has all the potential for evil. Only in solitude can he admit to himself his evil thoughts and hence make way for the Devil, and like Faust, he does prepare for evil. Evil, like good, comes only when one prepares for it.

The crux of the drama is that Brown must make all the major decisions himself. Exterior evil he can cope with. What he didn't count on was evil from within. And his evil is that he condemns everyone else who falls short of the image of what he thinks they should be (of what he thinks he himself is). This is pride of the worst form.

He goes into the woods « just this once », but what really works as the point of no return for him is when the one person he loves most falls short of his image of her. He cannot make it on his own self-resources. He resources. He has put all peo-

* The music of *Young Goodman Brown* is by R. James Haskins; The Opera was first performed in March 1972, Wilmington University, Wilmington Ohio.

ple on trial and now he is ready to believe the worst of all men, yet he thinks the best of himself since he chooses to make the final judgments.

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This opera was first conceived when we wrote *The Cask Of Amontillado*. We thought of these two works as companion-pieces. But other projects got in the way, especially *Symphony N. 3*, *And Man Created God In His Own Image*. Several years after *Amontillado*, the conception of the work had undergone numerous changes. We troubled over the text several times during 1969-70 and only in the summer of 1970 did we finally « force » it to the surface. It was mid-August, 1970 that we started into it about 10:00 a. m. and worked into the afternoon and evening not really getting to the heart of the problem. It looked as hopeless as the other times we met at his home and in Cincinnati where he was studying. It looked as hopeless as the other meetings we had had earlier to define our intentions with this work. Yet by 11:00 that night things began to fall into place and we started to write the final draft together. First Jim had an idea, then I had one, and we worked and reworked the text until it was finished. Next we worked out the lighting, staging, orchestral resources and by the time we finished at 3:00 a. m. we had all the material included here. The music was completed and scored in January, 1972.

ALLEN J. KOPPENHAVER

1 - PROLOGUE

Setting: *The Village of Salem. The set is to be very simple. Bare stage. Scrim behind which the Witches' Sabbath and the Salem Church scenes are to take place. During these scenes there is an altar-pulpit as a prop. From the scrim back the stage is raked 15 feet deep, 3 feet at upstage. (Lights up on two gossips, Stage Left, Area I)*

- FIRST GOSSIP: They put him into the ground today.
 SECOND GOSSIP: He was an odd one, Old Brown.
 FIRST GOSSIP: Never was the same after that crazy spell he had
 as a young man.

* * *

(Lights down quickly. Lights up on Area 4. Brown is seen just leaving his house, stops, turns to kiss his wife, Faith, at the door. The costumes will be black and white, simple. The set should be dark enough so that Brown's dark dress makes him seem to be a part of the darkness into which he will vanish at the end of the scene, and makes Faith seem suspended in air with the white collar she wears against her dark dress. She has a pink ribbon in her hair and the subtle hint of sensuality is there. Faces must be clearly lighted).

- BROWN: *(as he kisses her)* Tonight. This one night only, and then...
 FAITH: Stay with me this night. The morning will be soon enough for travelling.
 BROWN: I must go tonight!
 FAITH: *(in mild terror)* But why this night...of all the nights of the year?
 BROWN: Tonight. I must go this night. There can be no other.
 FAITH: *(Simply, directly)* Stay.
 BROWN: Already there is doubt between us. Three months we are one. Is it all undone with this one travelling?
 FAITH: It is not for me to say. *(With no emotion)* God bless you then. May all be well when you return. *(She says this innocently enough).*
 BROWN: *(Quickly)* What do you mean? *(Then, after no reaction from her)* Go in
 And say your prayers
 And go to bed at dusk
 No harm shall come your way.
 FAITH: But you
 When you dissolve into that darkness
 And the color of you is gone
 Will God paint you back again?
 BROWN: *(Has been walking toward the dark line which is the forest, turns just at the edge of the woods, to Area 2)*
 I should not leave her this way
 It would kill her to know the way this night walks on.

Yet after this night
 Beyond the corner of my longing
 I will nevermore leave my poor little wife.

(He turns and vanishes into the forest. When the lights come up once again, the village is hidden behind a scrim on which will be projected images during the performance).

II - JOURNEY INTO THE WOODS

(Lights up on Brown alone in Area 2. As he moves furtively about searching for someone, lights suddenly appear on Satan in Area 6).

- SATAN: You are late!
- BROWN: *(Startled)* Oh! *(They have met before)*
- SATAN: I expected you sooner.
- BROWN: My wife kept me back. I had to explain.
- SATAN: Ah, Faith *(something between pity and sarcasm. Brown turns to go back)*. Stay with me - a little while. Later, if . . .
- BROWN: But no one, none, of my family
 Ever stayed with you - here -
- SATAN: *(To Area 2)* Ah, no you say, so you say.
 Everybody walks this way sooner or later.
(Stronger) Your grandfather, when he whipped the Qua-
 ker ker woman
 Through the streets of Salem, had my help.
 Knew me.
(Stronger) Your father knew me when he set ablaze
 The Indian home of King Philip.
 It was my pine branch, rooted in flame,
 That sent the violent fire into the
 Darkest folds of their savage hearts.
(more lyric)
 Many an evening did we walk the lovely darkness
 Of my woods
 Your father
 Your grandfather
 And I.
 And I would, for their sakes,
 Help you.

- BROWN: Why have they never told me?
Why have I never seen it in their hearts?
- SATAN: Perhaps you've never looked.
- BROWN: Never looked?
- SATAN: Would you have believed?
- BROWN: Yes.
- SATAN: Would you have believed? (*driving the question home*)
- BROWN: Yes . . . maybe . . .
- SATAN: (*Picks up doubt*) Ah, maybe. Probably not.
- BROWN: (*No answer*)
- SATAN: Had you been there
Would you have seen more carefully?
How all, all of your people have eaten with me.
- BROWN: (*Disbelieving*) All? All?
- SATAN: All!
- BROWN: Grandfather?
- SATAN: All!
- BROWN: The Deacons?
- SATAN: All!
- BROWN: Father?
- SATAN: All!
- BROWN: Teachers?
- SATAN: (*Laughs*) Come with me
I will be the first teacher to show you truth.
- BROWN: No, I still have my wife
I would not break her heart on your granite shores.
- SATAN: (*Kindly*) Ah, nor would I harm your poor Faith,
(*Now he manages his game a new way*).

III - THE TEMPTATIONS

(*Goody Cloyse enters Stage Left, pauses on naked stage D. Lighting Area 8*)

- BROWN: (*Seeing her*) What is she doing here?
Goody Cloyse. At night and here.
She taught me God.
- SATAN: You know her. Good.
Let us go to her.

BROWN: *(Like pulling his hand out of fire)* No!
(Then quieter) I will wait here.
(Draws to the side in darkness where he is seen only as a dim shade)
 I would not want her to see me here.
 At night and here.

(Satan moves between Area 5 and 6 near Cloyse but he will be silhouetted. Brown stays in Area 2)

SATAN: So be it. Wait here. I will return.
 BROWN: There. Is it that she knows him?
 I cannot hear. I dare not move. My God,
 Is she one of them?
 She speaks with him as if she knew him.
 At night and here.

(Satan returns to Area 2. Cloyse moves up ramp to A2)

My mind is set
 I can go no further
 I do not care if she chooses death.
 I must return home.
 SATAN: *(Again, kindly)*. Sit a moment and rest.
 When you are refreshed, here is my stick to help you.

(As he says this, he reaches out his stick which is transformed into a snake which moves off stage).

BROWN: *(Into Area 3)*
 What world is this?
 How am I betrayed?
 Life rushes into death too easily in this darkness *(Pause)*
 What? What comes this way? Why?

(A procession will move through. Eventually we hear them humming a hymn. Minister and Deacon are first to move through lighting Area 8, then they move up the ramp to the platform Area A2. The Minister goes to pulpit).

Who is that? No!
 Not the minister himself - certainly not.
 And the Deacon. It cannot be.

At night and here.
I cannot make them out.

Yet, those voices. It must be them.
At night - here!

Not even this. No
I cannot follow after.

Now. Now. Now. I must turn back.

(Chorus must move in on the heels of the Minister and Deacon and fill the A2 and A3 platforms. A few on incline C).

What is that sound? What more can come of this night?
No more. I will see no more.
I am going back. Now.
What *have* I seen? Do I see?
Gone, it is gone.
No! It rushes in upon me.
Why have I opened these dark doors?
Gone again? Good. Gone!
Aigh! No, no more. Stay away.
Love your darkness
Only never let me know.

(The ribbon Faith wore in her hair in Prologue drops into Area 5. Brown sees it fall and moves over to pick it up. From then on he has it clutched in his hand up to the moment of his death)

My wife?
You
Also??

(After a long pause, he turns and sees Satan in the dark corner of the stage. Moves toward him. Now he cannot go back. To Satan who is still in Area 6.)

What are you doing to me?
Now I must go on.

(Lights down on Area 6. Satan exits. Red lights up on larger Area 7 behind scrim)

IV - THE WITCHES SABBATH

Music: As they approach, we hear the music in the distance that is like a hymn, familiar (It will be a tune that was part of the fabric of music when Brown left Faith in first scene, and will be the hymn that is sung in the church in Salem later on). As we enter into the scene, the song gets fuller, more filled with sense of violence, a witches chorus on which we hear superimposed Brown's own cry of despair, a cry out of the desert.

This is the center of the opera, the point of no return for Brown. If flight scene is used it merges into this one. Brown is silhouetted against this scene and is not actually lighted himself.

The stage has been darkened when Brown found the ribbon and fainted. Now as Brown begins to regain consciousness, the light too comes up and he finds himself in the midst of the Sabbath revel. He pulls himself slowly to his feet, and having adjusted to this scene, having realized the whole of it, he sings against the chorus:

CHORUS: Listen to the Master's call
 « Give your hearts to me
 Whether you be great or small
 Know that I will touch you all »
 Listen to the Master's call *tonight.*

Soon the night will cover day,
 Darkness follow dawn.
 Follow in His steps, the Way,
 To the end, rejoicing say,
 Listen to the Master's call *Tonight.*

(The lines of Brown and the Chorus are to be sung together as indicated)

BROWN: What hell is here?

CHORUS: Know that all thy friends are here

BROWN: What cove of hell?

CHORUS: Gathered in this feast tonight?

BROWN: What lone-li-ness?

CHORUS: Gathered now from far and near

CHORUS: We are one without a fear.
Listen to the Master's call *tonight*

BROWN: (*Finally, exhausted*): The World is not God's!
(*Now the minister that Brown had known, the one who will give the sermon in Scene VI, moves upstage left to a flat rock which he stands upon to sermonize. Just as he will be remarkably quiet in Scene VI, so here he is filled with fire and venom.*)

MINISTER: Children of Darkness
Once again we've thrust ourselves into the dark places of
the earth.
Rich with fire, burning with intensity.
When he made light and dark he separated them
And we have come to know the wild blood of fire
When it fills our beings with life!
That fire - there - is what transforms us.
That fire and that tree!
These have made us gods knowing good and evil
And loving *both!*

CHORUS: Yes, both!

MINISTER: Why do you think he warned us away?
Because we should become gods
Instead of only men.
Now you are gods. Taste of the fire!
Now you are rich in your pride
And your pride is good?

CHORUS: (*Rushes to altar to drink of the fiery blood-like substance, animal in their movements*)

MINISTER: Know that there is nothing to be held
back from you.
You have dared the Darkness
You have challenged the night
And have won. It is good! It is good!

CHORUS: (*Takes up the chant*) It is good! It is good

MINISTER: (*Brings several couples whom Brown knows to the altar, and he is shocked by it, but he is fast drifting into his deepest cynicism.*)

All have been blessed with this fire and this fruit
 And all are one in this great and darkening secret.
 All! All! All!

(This becomes a slow, then gradually pulsating chant that draws first one couple, then another, and another up to the altar. They finally draw apart, still chanting, to reveal Faith standing there. Only then does Brown realize it is Faith).

BROWN: Faith! Even you!

(Faith does not speak but finally turns from him and advances toward the altar and waits, her back to him. The chant continues. He seems unable to do anything. Finally he takes a first slow step toward her, then another as the chant turns to frenzied triumph. He gets caught up in the chant).

BROWN: All! All! All! *(Turns toward the audience in anguish from Faith but with double meaning as he addresses the audience)* I condemn you all!

(He stands there in tears, his body shaking. Instant blackout for 5 seconds. Scrim up).

V - POST-SABBATH

(Brown is alone on stage. As quickly as this can be managed the lights should come up on Brown, a pale washed-out, deadly moonlight, a tubercular light of the wasted soul in a dead world. The music here is transparent as it was thickly rich just a moment before. Now it is the music of Schonberg's Pierrot but not necessarily that discordant or unnerving. It must be music of terrible loss and nostalgia. He can nevermore be himself and he has in effect, because of his own action, willed these people to be evil. It is as if he had in a moment of idle curiosity pushed the button that wiped all humanity off the face of the earth and now he is alone to realize what he's done, and what he can nevermore undo. This, exclusively pantomime, and his actions constitute a re-enactment of the plot up to this moment, in a sense a reliving his life before he drowns spiritually.

Brown starts from his position of tears of the last scene, moves out reluctantly, slowly into the circle of light. The stage should be intensely dark and the edge of the circle of light clearly marked so that as he moves beyond the edge of the circle he clearly is dipping into darkness. As the dance progresses

the circle gets smaller and smaller, his movement more frantic until he is as it were trapped in this tube of light and as if strangling he collapses and the light goes out).

VI - THE RETURN TO TOWN

(This scene is fairly well lit and we see the interior of the church with a layout the same as the forest scene. The stone becomes an altar with cloth and candles. The rock on which the minister stood becomes an enclosed pulpit now. The congregation enters, much more subdued now and singing a hymn, the same tune as the night before but now the music is more « religious » - harmonically simplified. It is a processional and by the end of the hymn they are all seated. Brown enters upon this scene and is shocked by the « transformation » and takes his place by the side - Area 6 - awe-struck, separated from them by a blood red spot light from overhead. The men in the chorus kneel in orderly rows, hats on heads, women have no hats here. The men's top hats are to be worn at the belt as a sexual symbol during the Witches' Sabbath).

CHORUS: Listen to the Master's call
 « Give your heart to me
 Whether you be great or small
 Know that I will touch you all ».
 Listen to the Master's call *today.*

Soon the night will cover day
 Darkness follow dawn
 Follow in his steps, The Way
 To the end, rejoicing say
 Listen to the Master's call *today.*

Know that all thy friends are here
 Gathered in the feast today
 Gathered now from far and near
 We are one with thee today
 Listen to the Master's call *today.*

(The chorus settles into their pews and the sermon begins)

MINISTER: Children of God

The text for this glorious dawn of God is the first word.
« In the beginning God created the heaven and the
earth».

All was darkness until the Spirit of God
Moved upon the face of the world.
And the transforming light was upon us.
That light God divided from the darkness.
Know in your deepest heart that the light was good.
Not the light of fire, nor the light from any other source
But God's light - there - the eye of God - in God's heaven.

Then it was he told - warned man
Of the most dangerous sin of all
To want to know what God knows
For he touched that tree of the Knowledge of good and
evil

And he told man - All things have I made for Thee
But this one thing have I forbidden thee.
For in the day that thou eatest thereof
Thou shalt surely die.

The story we all know since
Each of us in our pride has eaten that fruit.
We know pain, and we know love
But we also know death, for that too
We have bought with our pride.
The serpent said,
« Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil ».
But *gods* not *God*. And like the gods of earth and sky,
The gods of fire and brimstone, we are not God.
Nor shall we know God.
The secret will is not to be divined.
Nor all our searching the forests of our dreams
Shall find him out.

We have eaten thereof
And we know - we are naked.
Only God - this light upon the altar of our souls -
Can help us to subdue the wilderness without
And the old Adam within
Amen.

(Brown moves to Area 5. Though he believed what he said, the minister fails to convince Brown who remembers so much of this in ironic terms from the night before, and Brown rushes out of the building just as the congregation finishes with the « Amens » and hums the hymn from before softly, with feeling).

Lights down immediately behind scrim, up on Brown only. He shrivels up in a heap center stage and dies in a fetal position with Faith nearby. She turns from him in horror as he is dying. At this point she is to do a quick change, back to audience, make up her face briefly to look old. Lights down so this area is dimly lit but visible enough to see Faith's face. When area is dim she turns to stand over him as if he is in the grave. Lights up same time, low intensity on Area 3 for Gossips.

GOSSIP 1: He was an old one, Old Brown.

GOSSIP 2: Never was the same after that crazy spell

he had as a young man.

GOSSIP 1: Must have been something he inherited.

GOSSIP 2: Must have been.

(Blackout - end of opera)

Notes on Alternate Production

In its first production, the opera was given conventional staging, i. e. full cast of singers and orchestra and a stylized set. When we first envisioned the work, we thought of another manner of proceeding, though a more costly one.

Since at the very core of the story Hawthorne wrote is the question of whether or not Young Goodman Brown has been dreaming all this, Haskins and I thought that the best handling of the work would be to stage the first and last scenes (plus the two gossips' scenes) normally with cast and set. But from the moment Brown enters the forest he is to be on a completely empty stage, alone. All the people and actions of these scenes is to be filmed beforehand and the music of these scenes pre-recorded with the film. Against this Brown acts and sings his role, and a small chamber orchestra of about seven players plays against the taped sounds. The film once made could then be loaned with the score, the actors approximating the costume and size of those on the screen. The total cast of the initial film prevented us from doing the work as we would have preferred.

Costumes

Basic Puritan costumes, black, white collars, tall black hats for men, white bonnets for women (Though it must be mentioned that this costume for Puritans is a 19th century invention, not actually Puritan, it is the costume preferred for this work).

Satan wears a floor length black cape closed at the throat, black leotards, and a huge broad-brimmed hat falling at the back.

Musical Resources

Voices (20). Faith is a soprano. Brown is a baritone. Satan is an alto with depth in her voice. Minister is a deep bass speaking voice. He does not sing.

Chorus -Soprano, Alto, Bass with soprano and mezzo soloists from chorus.

Pre-recorded tape: *A)* Sounds generated from: suspended cymbal, glass-bowl, sanza, recorders, smashed glass, human voice; *B)* 2-channel deck, 2 speeds. Second 2-channel deck (one or two speeds). Tape deck with reverberating device; *C)* Tape deck operator. Tape deck should have 2 large speakers preferably in the pit. Operator must be able to read a musical score.

Orchestra (24). 2 flutes (first doubles piccolo, second doubles alto flute), 2 oboes (second doubles English horn), 2 bassoons (second doubles contrabassoon), 1 trumpet, 2 horns, 1 tenor-bass trombone, 4 violins, 2 violas, 2 celli, 1 double bass, 3 percussionists to play 3 tympani, suspended cymbal, snare drum, bass drum, bongo drums, whip, ratchet, 5 temple blocks, vibraphone, xylophone and tam tam (small). 1 piano player using tympani mallets, lightweight mute to be built into piano, heavy weight mute (felt).

A. K.

(Satan returns to Area 2. Cloyse moves up ramp to A2)