9151 Villa Park Circle Dallas, Texas 75225 Feb, 3, 1985

Dear Don:

I am at a loss to suggest anything regarding the show, and especially your decision to try something this summer at a reduced budget just to be able to say to the State that you used the theatre.

All my instincts and experience tell me that this will be unfavorable to the real show when it finally gets set up. Every time a locality fails to get its money, but decides to go ahead and do something, the result has been very bad - in all the cases I know about.

The point is that no matter how hard we try to tell the public that this is only a trial run and so on, they invariably get the notion deep down that this represents your opening gun, your supreme effort, and they are usually disappointed and disillusioned. There could be exceptions to the trend, but I don't know of any.

The point that bothers me is this: we have had musical shows, we have had historical dramas. The two together have not been tried. The show TEXAS is a weak effort to combine the two - neither one works very well. The music is corny and monotonous because it is all the same. The script has been emasculated to where the story line is nearly non-existent. I imagine it is clear and logical to people who know the show and have seen it a lot, but to a newcomer it is vague and pointless.

What we have done with Billy the Kid is combine the two. It is not a drama with music, as so many try to be, nor is it a musical show with a historial setting. It is a blend, so that one without the other is weak. I am certain that if you do this particular show, or try to do it, without Frank's music, it will fizzle, because too much of the lines and the scenes are interdependent with the music. This was the point we tried to get across to that Foundation, but apparently they did not buy the idea because it was too new. "It had never been done before," I can hear them saying.

There is a musical theme for Billy that recurs every time he appears, or when the voices are heard in those interludes. The same is true of the other principals such as Montesinos and Carmen. The music rises and

dims out with the flow of the action, the choir is heard back of things, the soloists sing when the situation demands it, and all these are cued to the action in such a way that they would be intrusive if they were not coordinated properly, and this is extremely difficult to do in the outdoor theatre. The only solution so far has been recorded tape. In Tulsa the whole show Oklahoma is done that way. You may remember that I suggested you call Rachel Rediger at the Ohio show and let her tell you what it means to have this kind of approach.

The reason I decided on this kind of show was that your people wanted to have music, and we had TEXAS just two hours away and we had to find a new vehicle that would not be the same old turkey. If we were to do a show with music, it had to be a new departure, so we hit on this kind of show, a sort of cut-down opera, or <u>opera comique</u>, in which there are spoken lines as well as singing, and based on a historical theme. I have a feeling that this will come to be the direction of outdoor drama, because there is so much trash being peddled now as drama, and so much stiff competition from TV, that there is no way but to join the trend. The show at Cherokee, N.C. goes on and on because it sticks faithfully to every line and scene and action that has been going on for 35 years and they have a kind of institution. They are afraid to change one word, like the people at Branson, Missouri, at Shepherd of the Hills.

If you must go on with something, I strongly urge you to set aside thie script and use one of your own. Or get Charles to write one - I think he had one already which he either sent to Betty or told her about. Get a guitar and perhaps a country fiddle band, and let them furnish the background and the dance music. Use dances that can be set up without a lot of detail - Spanish fiesta music, cowboy music, an Indian splash. If you could even get Frank to write and record music, the whole thing would still have to be worked out in great detail, and I doubt that the organization could get the thing done in these few months- not because they are incapable but because the demand is so totally different.

Also, if you decide to record something and use the University players, or some other union musicians, remember that union musicians have to have a residual. That is, every time you use the music they have to have a royalty on it. The key thing about Frank's arrangement is that the players are willing to renounce the residuals and simply take a one-time fee. This is unique, and you will have trouble finding it anywhere else. Frank happens to be a person of some influence, and he has ways of getting it done. No one else I know of can wangle it. Perhaps it is his sitting on the board of Emmy Awards that gets him the prestige - something.

I am saying all this not because I want to preserve my script intact, but because I don't want you to get into a complicated situation. If you can get a simple set-up that can be handled with ease by amateurs and students, you will be far better off. Likewise, if the time comes when you want to do something startlingly different, you will not have tipped when you had gloves on. I know that the play we had designed for this would be a winner, because there would be nothing like it anywhere, but to do it half-heartedly in a cut-down effort to rush something onto the stage could be disastrous. I have a feeling that no one so far except Frank and I has really visualized this show in its entirety. One has to hum some Spanish folk music of 1850, some Indian themes from the Navaho and Apache, some themes from the Old West that are not yet run to death in popular country rock and so on, to see what this show envisions. These aff reasons why we have been upset over that demned lighting situation and insisting that the stupid architect correct it instead of trying to force you to make do. There is too munch at stake: you are akready 11 miles off the main highway on a remote caprock, you are nearly an hour from any town of any size, you are in a spot where the wind will blow constantly all evening long, where the cast has no place to live, where no one would ever think of putting a tourist attraction - the odds are all against it - except one: a brilliant show. Unless the show is brilliant, it is going to be New Mexico's greatest headache.

The problem basically is that we have been thinking in terms of the show

on the stage and not of the business organization. We have started from backstage instead of starting at the box office. The fact is that if the money is available, one can have a bang-up show, because you can buy actors and singers - they are available in the same way as carpenters and bricklayers for building the theatre. But the business management, the funding, these are the life blood, the vital parts, and this is where we should start. I felt you had all this in hand, that it would move. And I suppose you are as disappointed as anyone else that it has not. I wish you had gone after Alan Levy, about whom I told you, because he is a genius at this. He costs money, but he can make it go. Rick Alling is capable, and I feel sure Charles can put a play on the stage. But all this is incidental to having the life blood.

In view of this, I feel it would be a grave error to try this Legend of Billy the Kid this summer. Get something else, and give it a fling, and downot hope for much. Perhaps you will be delightfully surprised. Perhaps you will decide to go on with it and give up this present idea.

For my part, I hoped that you would not listen to all the advisers here and there, and go in a straight line. But I seem to have come after the fact; too much was settled long before I got in the picture. The theatre was already beyond change, the funding was a year late, and we seemed to feel we could put on anything at all and it would work. If the audience is as dumb as those people at Canyon, perhaps it will. I don't know how long it will last, perhaps for 25 years. Who can tell? I do feel that the idea we have here for a musical outdoor drama would be a new breath of

air in the American theatre. But I could be wrong.

Let me know if [l can help.

Sincerely, Kermit

cc/ Frank Charles Betty

