

The Integrated Arts People

BURNING BRIGHT

An American Grand Opera by Frank Lewin

The Integrated Arts People is proud to announce the addition to its catalog of *Burning Bright*—an American grand opera with libretto and music by Frank Lewin. Based on the novel and play by John Steinbeck, the work had its premiere under the auspices of Yale University last November. The opera received unanimous praise from audiences and professional reviewers: "It is a tribute to Lewin's understanding of the dramatic function of music and his skills as a composer that he was able to produce a three-and-a-half-hour piece that held the audience's attention." (George W. Loomis, *American Record Guide*.) "The work has narrative sweep and passion, in a tonal idiom with plenty of harmonic richness and color. Words are expertly set, and the timeless story is effectively told." (Gilbert H. Mott, *Opera News*.)

Burning Bright dramatizes the nature of fatherhood: childless Joe Saul yearns for an heir who will carry on his long family tradition. His wife Mordeen

is deeply in love with him. Determined to give her husband what he needs so desperately, she submits to the advances of a younger man and becomes pregnant. The biological father, however, insists on his rights. After a violent confrontation that pits the two men against each other, the opera ends in a moving reconciliation.

In order to universalize the characters and their traditions, Steinbeck set each act of the play in a different location—a circus, a farm, a ship. Lewin's opera adds a strong American feeling to the story by placing the action in recognizable American regions. Text and music incorporate ethnic and folk elements. "Passages of arioso-like, declamatory, and folk-song character blend seamlessly. And Lewin's music is grateful for the voices." (Kurt Oppens, *Opernwelt*.) Realistic sounds—music and noises of a circus performance, country fiddling, ship's whistles and fog horns in New York Harbor—are woven into the score.

The composer has an extensive background in dramatic music. "For the past 40 years Lewin has pursued a career

writing film, television, and theatre scores in addition to a substantial amount of concert music. [Among Lewin's credits is music for the CBS television series *The Defenders*.] The dramatic effectiveness of his opera score and good sense of theatre is not therefore unexpected." (Stewart Manville, *Opera*.) For the creation of *Burning Bright*, the composer received a number of fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the New Jersey State Council on the Arts. The premiere was supported by the largest grant awarded in the NEA's New American Works category for 1988.

Combining epic lyricism with colorful orchestration, *Burning Bright* is a true American grand opera, destined to become part of the standard repertoire.

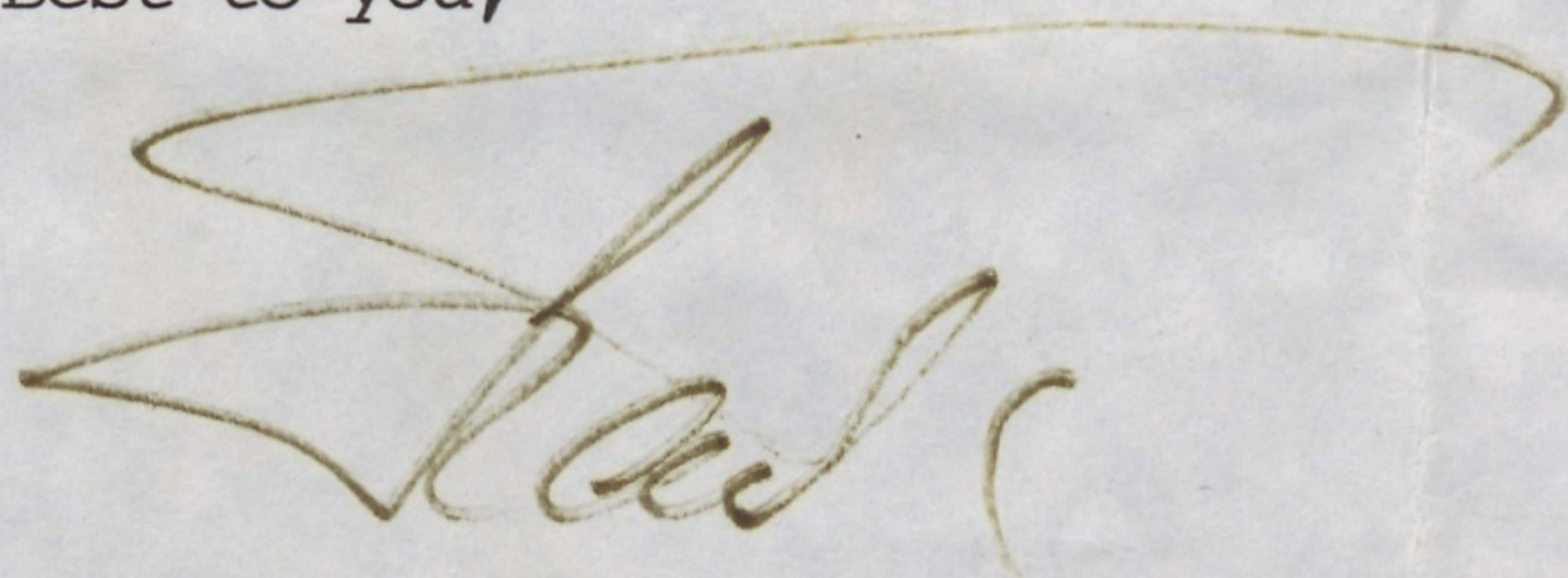
Opera companies interested in producing *Burning Bright* should contact Cynthia Herbst at 212.996.6131.

9/30/94

Dear Scott: It was good talking to you, and I look forward to seeing you at the conference.

You might like to have a sample of the opera, and herewith a cassette (used by the publisher).

Best to you,



FRANK LEWIN
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