

Title: *Highway 1, USA*
Composer: William Grant Still
Librettist: Verna Arvey
Premiere: May 11, 1963
Production: New LAO production
Estimated run time: 0:55
Intermissions: 1

Title: *Der Zwerg (The Dwarf)*
Composer: Alexander Zemlinsky
Librettist: Georg Klaren, adapted from Oscar Wilde
Premiere: May 22, 1922
Production: Revival of LAO production
Estimated run time: 1:30

Plot summary: *Highway 1, USA*

Bob and Mary have worked hard and sacrificed a lot in order to put Nate, Bob's younger brother, through college. Mary dreams of the life they will have once Nate's education is completed. Bob explains that according to his mother's deathbed wish, they must support Nate until he has established himself financially. Mary tells Aunt Lou of her hatred for Nate.

After finishing his education, Nate remains idle for a year, living with Bob and Mary and contributing nothing. One morning Bob expresses his doubt that Nate will ever get a job. Nate comes in after Bob has left and commences to woo Mary. Mary laughs at him and confirms her love for Bob. Nate becomes enraged and stabs her.

Mary's screams bring Bob running. Thinking that Mary is dead, Bob takes the blame in order to protect his brother. Mary regains consciousness and names Nate as her assailant. As he is led away, Nate pleads with Bob to help him. Ignoring his pleas, Bob kneels by Mary and promises her a brighter future.

Director's notes: None (yet)

Areas of sensitivity: The work itself only received its professional premiere in 2021. Much of Mo. Still's opera work has yet to be professionally produced, in spite of the fact that his *Afro-American Symphony* was the most performed American work by American orchestras between 1930 and 1950, and he was the first American composer to be commissioned by New York City Opera.

Violence/stabbing;

Nomenclature:

The Dwarf

It is the 18th birthday of Donna Clara, the Spanish Infanta. Don Estoban, the court chamberlain, supervises as the servants prepare a sumptuous birthday party. The Infanta's favorite maid, Ghita, marvels at the splendor of the decorations and gifts. Don Estoban describes some of the fabulous gifts to the maids. The most wonderful of them all, he says, is also the most repulsive, for the Sultan has sent the Infanta a dwarf. The dwarf, Don Estoban explains, is completely unaware of his appearance for he has never seen himself in a mirror; he thinks he is a handsome knight. The maids hurry to cover the mirrors before the gift ceremony begins.

After the Infanta and her retinue have taken their places for the celebration, the dwarf is brought in. The ladies laugh with merriment. Gazing at the Infanta's beauty, the dwarf is unable to sing the merry song requested of him. Instead, he sings an impassioned song of lovesickness. The Infanta tells the dwarf that he may choose any of the ladies in the court as a wife, and the dwarf tells her that the only one he could love is the Infanta herself. The Infanta sends her guests away, and listens intently as the dwarf improvises a story about rescuing her from a dragon.

Ghita tries unsuccessfully to bring the dwarf, lost in rapture, back to reality. His beautiful dream finally collapses when he inadvertently uncovers a mirror and suddenly finds himself face to face with his reflection. When the Infanta returns, he begs her to tell him that he is handsome and that she loves him. The Infanta tears herself away from him, saying "I want to dance and play with you, but I can only love a man, and you are an animal." The dwarf falls dying at her feet, as the Infanta hurries back into the ballroom to dance.

Director's notes: None

Areas of sensitivity: The pairing of these two works marks the return of the LAO Recovered Voices initiative, dedicated to rescuing works from historical neglect or censorship.

The physical attributes of the title character are used as a source of subjugation, mockery, and scorn.

The title character has a hump, facial scarring and a limp

The title character is "owned" by the royal family; he is a birthday gift for the Infanta

Both the work and the director's interpretation reaffirm the audience's sense of empathy with the title character and that the monsters of the piece are the Infanta and her acolytes

Nomenclature: Historically, the term "dwarf" has been used to "other" individuals with certain physical attributes; the term is now discredited and seen as non-inclusive and potentially pejorative.

While it remains the title of the work, we will attempt to limit our use of the term except in direct reference to the character created by Zemlinsky and Wilde under that name.

When discussing the Dwarf's physical attributes, please refer to the company's resource guide for inclusive language.