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Threnody

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THRENODY

Amanda Dehnert and Curtis C. Trout*, Department of Music Theatre, IWU

Threnody is the title of a dramatic play with music, written, composed and directed by Amanda Dehnert. It was performed in the E. Melba Johnson Kirkpatick Laboratory Theatre, McPherson Theatre, and the Weidner Center for the Performing Arts in Green Bay, Wisconsin as a Region III finalist in the American College Theatre Festival. It is an exploration into the effects of mystical European folklore on American society. Act I, *The Crossing,* is set in the Ozark mountains around 1900 and presents two sisters who are confronted with physical representations of folkloric creatures. This first act examines the very real beliefs of the mountain peoples and how it is that faith in the unseen and unknown can alter the reality of one's existence. Act II, *Wishing Well,* has a similar theme with a contemporary setting; new characters explore the same issues of faith and the individual, showing how one man allows his life (and then the lives of his wife and child) to be shaped by a spirit. This act brings into question the concept of "wishing" and the forces involved - whether the consequences of a wish are the responsibility of the individual or the supernatural.

The two acts presented under the guise of a single drama create a larger thematic statement: the folklore belonging to a culture which came thousands of years before us has very real repucussions on the human spirit even today; and despite the scientific developments of society, there are still and will always be things that science cannot explain, and there will always be a part of the soul tied to mythic forces. The music composed was for unaccompanied voices in the mode tradition. It created a mood for each piece as well as helped to establish the ancient nature of the spiritual forces involved.

The piece was entered in the American College Theatre Festival, and was chosen as the only original work and the only student-directed/designed production out of 40 university productions in a five-state region to be one of 6 presenters at the regional festival in Green Bay. Amanda Dehnert received an award for Meritorious Achievement from the Regional board for Threnody.