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'TIL DEATH DO US PART: THE COMPOSITION AND PRODUCTION OF
A CONTEMPORARY LYRIC OPERA

D. Christopher Wolff and David Vayo*, School of Music, IWU

'Til Death Do Us Part is a two-act lyric opera, with an original libretto, composed between 1991 and 1995. The work is written for seven principal vocal roles, several minor roles, a small chorus, and a pit orchestra of twenty-six musicians. The one hour, forty-five minute production consists of fifteen major arias and duets, three large choral pieces, five recitative sections, three incidental segments and a few purely instrumental compositions. The individual recitatives and arias are primarily influenced by contemporary concert music, but also reflect my interest in jazz and popular musical styles.

The composition of this piece allowed me to explore the dramatic and musical interpretation of text, large scale musical form, and the utilization of drama as a model of expression. I created recurring themes, motives, and harmonic progressions, in order to unify the work so it was complete in itself rather than a number of musically unrelated pieces held together only by the libretto. *'Til Death Do Us Part* has also provided me with multiple opportunities to interact with and learn from student and faculty performers. Working on such a large scale project has brought me to a greater understanding of orchestration, harmonic language, and melodic contour, as well as contemporary notation and performance techniques. I look forward to producing this opera, so that I can not only hear, evaluate, and learn from a performance of my work, but also share it with others. The work is scheduled for its premiere performance on Saturday, May 6, 1995, at 7:30 p.m., in Westbrook Auditorium, IWU.