Research Essay

by

Jon Becker

for the annotation of the
CD booklet for the first recording of

Daughter of the South

(opera, in one act and two scenes)

1939

story and music by

Edward Joseph Collins

1886-1951

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Introduction

This essay was begun in 2009, following the May recording of the only opera composed by Edward Joseph Collins, *Daughter of the South*. The aim of the essay was to organize all the research on this opera, which had begun in 2001. This was in preparation for providing annotation for the booklet of a forthcoming CD, with this first recording of the opera, by six soloists and the Royal Scottish Nation Orchestra & Choir, conducted by Marin Alsop.

Daughter of the South is set entirely on a plantation on the Potomac River, near Leesburg, Virginia. The composer also wrote the libretto for his opera. The dramatic action commences on the day the "War Between the States" begins in 1861, and ends four years later, after peace has been declared.

Daughter of the South raises a number of questions:

- Born in Joliet near Chicago and arguably America's most significant composer of Irish descent, why did Collins choose to set his opera on a plantation in the Confederate South during the War Between the States?
- Given his early classical studies in Berlin and his intimate experiences with Wagnerian opera at Bayreuth, why did Collins compose a relatively short opera, with few ensembles and limited chorus?
- Why did Collins decide to compose *Daughter of the South* late in the 1930s, when the economy posed daunting challenges to opera companies worldwide?
- In his letters and his diary or private journal, the composer left some explanations, or at least clues. A 1921 diary entry that sketches what, 18 years later, would become *Daughter*'s core dramatic impetus: "a Southern beauty who loved a Northern boy in 1861."

Together with other sources, Collins's writings may offer provisional answers about the genesis of the opera, while also inviting further scholarly inquiry.

Operatic Influences: General

Collins dropped out of high school after his sophomore year, to study music abroad; later in life he considered his formal education to have been short-changed. In his journal entries spanning the years of 1920 to 1940, he also often laments his narrow professional studies, which he felt had been overly focused on piano performance. In a typical entry, 28 October 1927, he critiques his study of compositional forms:

> I don't seem to be able to get out of the woods in my study of musical literature, so I have decided upon a new plan; I am simply going to study the work as to form. There is nothing for repetitions now; my next birthday occurs in two weeks and I am terrified.

Yet his informal learning experiences, including those related to opera, were actually quite diverse.

Early Years, Chicago

Early Euro-American immigrants to the frontier locale on Lake Michigan that would become Chicago were guarded by USA troops stationed at Fort Dearborn. In 1804, troubles arose between the newcomers and the area's indigenous residents, who had been incited by the British. An emergency evacuation turned into a massacre. Fort Dearborn was destroyed, and was not to be rebuilt for a dozen years. Only after federal security had been re-established did the population again begin to grow. On 4 March 1837, the charter was approved and Chicago became a city of 4,170 people.

In 1850 Chicagoans were able to hear the city's first opera performance: An "Italian Opera Company" came by ship over Lake Michigan from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to perform Bellini's *La Sonambula*. In April of 1865, Crosby's Opera House opened, just eight days after General Robert E. Lee's surrender ended the USA's Civil War.

The *Theodore Thomas Orchestra* first arrived in Chicago in 1871, the night after a terrible fire had destroyed large sections of the city, including the *Crosby Opera House* where the orchestra's concerts had been booked. In succeeding decades the *Thomas Orchestra* became a favorite of Chicagoan, eventually reorganizing as the *Chicago Orchestra*. In October of 1891, Thomas conducted the first concerts of what we now know as the *Chicago Symphony Orchestra*.

Poster for the Chicago Opera House, 1889

The city's first resident company, the Chicago Grand Opera Company, formed in November 1910, with major support from the Metropolitan Opera Company of New York City.

By the time Collins was in his teens, Chicagoans would have already been enjoying opera for over five decades, despite the city being less than one hundred years old. Collins would have had ample opportunity to enjoy opera in his youth

While still a youth in Joliet studying piano and music, Collins heard performances by the predecessor of today's Chicago Symphony Orchestra. More than thirty years later, the experience was memorable enough to garner an entry in the composer's journal. On 4 January 1939 Collins wrote:

> Last night the [Chicago Symphony] program was dedicated to the memory of Theodore Thomas. I remember hearing about his death in Pierre, South Dakota. I was on tour with Nicoline and Nicolai Zedeler [Collins's youthful piano trio mates]. That was thirty-three years ago–Lord have mercy on us! But time cannot efface the memory of the beautiful concerts I heard when I began studying in Chicago. One day I heard the Thomas Orchestra play "Les Preludes" by Liszt and another day I heard "Tod und Verklarung" by Strauss. These were my first big musical impressions.

At the time of that 1906 concert, Strauss's tone poem would have been composed just seven years earlier, when Collins was twenty years old.

Abroad in Berlin and Beyond

As a young man studying in Berlin, 1906-1912, Collins attended recitals and opera performances. Those included a performance of Wagner's *Tannhäuse*r conducted by Richard Strauss (5 May 1908 letter from the Edward Collins to family in Joliet; this letter presently is in the archives of the composer's nephew Joseph Collins, Joliet, IL).

These years brought additional experiences that would prepare the composer for the writing of his first opera. After his Berlin studies, Collins toured England, France and Italy, accompanying mezzo-soprano and opera diva Ernestine Schumann-Heink in recital, as had his sister Kathryn (Collins) Hoffmann in earlier years. By then Collins had been composing songs and instrumental chamber works for several years; his first large-scale work was however still more than a decade in the future.

Century Opera Company, New York City
For two seasons, 1913-14, Collins was assistant conductor for the Century Opera Company, staying in a room at 85th and Amsterdam in New York City.

Early in the 20th century, several New York opera companies tried to compete with the city's main venture, the Metropolitan Opera. Perhaps in part to find a niche wherein it could be successful, Century presented operas mostly in English.

Quite audaciously, besides launching a full season with multiple New York venues, Century soon was reported in contemporary newspapers also to have started a training program for American opera singers, and to have acquired its own hall. Described as having a "vast auditorium," the Century Opera House was located between 62nd and 63rd Streets, just west of Central Park and north of Columbus Circle.


Century Opera House, New York City. It had a 2318-seat auditorium.
The building was demolished in 1930, and since then the block has been home to the Century Apartments, now condominiums.

In contrast to the Met, Century also presented opera outside of its hall, in the language of the audiences associated with the other various venues (e.g., a German opera might be performed in Italian in venues where the residential population was predominantly Italian-American).

During Collins's tenure with Century Opera, performances included:

- Verdi's *Il Trovatore*
- Wolf-Ferrari's *Secret of Suzanne* and *The Jewels of the Madonna*
- Puccini's *La Boheme* and *Madama Butterfly*
- Ponchielli's *La Gioconda*
- Rossini's *William Tell*
- Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*
- Massenet's *Thaïs*,

Gilbert & Sullivan's *HMS Pinafore* was presented at the Hippodrome.

In *Century Opera* programs, Collins is identified as *repetiteur* for Victor Herbert's *Natoma* on 13 April 1913, and as one of two assistant conductors for Verdi's *Aida* on 10 April 1914. Sometimes the Century presented opera in a staged recital format. A *New Jersey Courier* review of 20 April 1914 noted that, at a concert on the previous evening that closed the season at the Century Opera House, "Messrs. Pasternack and Nicosia conducted and Mr. Arthur [sic] Collins at the piano deserves mention for his part in the evening's entertainment."

Bayreuth Festival Opera, Germany

Later in 1914, Collins was hired as an assistant director for the Bayreuth Festival (Germany), where he also would play timpani. Collins had arrived in Bayreuth as early as 14 July 1914, based on a postcard addressed to him at the Festival (sent by a Romuald Wikarski of Charlottenburg, Germany, likely a fellow Berlin *Hochschule* alumni; now in the collection of the composer's nephew, Joseph Collins, Joliet; untranslated).

Collins's Bayreuth engagement was tragically foreshortened. On 1 August 1914, the Kaiser announced mobilization of all Germany for World War I. Collins had to flee the country, travelling in the entourage of mezzo-soprano and Bayreuth veteran Ernestine Schumann-Heink and her accompanist Katherine (Collins) Hoffmann, the composer's sister. Reportedly traveling at one point *incognito* in a farmer's wagon, they escaped via neutral Switzerland.

[*Even if Collins had remained in the employ of Century, rather than taking the Bayreuth position, the fateful winds of World War I probably would have still blown his life off course. Like the Met, early in the 20th century the Century and other opera companies tried to franchise their operations to other cities, including Chicago. Late in the summer of 1914, due to the "conditions of war," the Chicago Grand Opera Company was unable to secure travel arrangements for European singers who had been engaged. The Company had however already invested over $100,000 in costumes and staging.*

This provided an opportunity for Century Opera, which– due to the war– had cancelled its plans for a New York City season. Making use of the Chicago Grand Opera Company's investment, between November 23 and December 25 of 1914, Century presented 15 operas in Chicago, including Rossini, Puccini, Gounod, Verdi, Donizetti, and Bizet. Nonetheless, perhaps because of the economic stress from wartime or from its New York competition, the Century Opera Company was dissolved in 1915.]

Ernestine Schumann-Heink (center), Collins (lower left). Date, location and occasion unknown.

Collins, in WWI uniform.

Armistice Music Revue, Paris

Having left Bayreuth, Collins made his way back to Illinois, where he began performing and teaching piano. Coming from a first-generation Irish immigrant family, poverty was a real fact of life for the young Collins. He could no longer rely on the largesse of the benefactors who had funded his European education.

On 5 June 1917, following the United States draft for World War military service, Collins registered for military service. Subsequent letters to his family in Joliet make clear that the ability to send some of his military salary home to his family was important to the future composer.

Collins took a chance and joined the regular Army, thinking he would thus better gain the respect of career officers. The gamble paid off. Soon gaining the attention of superiors because of his music skills and mastery of French, German, and Italian, Collins was transferred out of the Infantry.

Following deployment to France, Collins served as an interpreter in the Intelligence section of the 88th Division, interviewing prisoners, and eventually field-commissioned to the rank of Lieutenant without, as he gleefully noted in letters home, ever having attended officer-training camp.

After his experiences as a soldier during the Great War, and at least up until the second World War, Collins wrote often about his low opinion of the entire military enterprise, including this fragment from a journal entry of April 1939:

> [missing section: Everyone one was?] … "yellow" in 1917-18. As though we wouldn't all have been conscientious objectors if we had had the courage! But now many people are thinking about war and what it means. Especially youth is waking up to the fact that war is not a parade with banners flying and bands playing and the young girl with the button is the result. I have always believed that war would cease when two things would happen; first when the masses would receive some education and second when science would turn out engines of warfare capable of destroying the civilian civilizations. Until the World War the soldier was the only victim, but with the British blockade that starved out Germany, and the Zeppelin attacks on London, war was brought home to those who invoked it.

During the Armistice, in addition to other music-related duties, Collins composed the musical revue or operetta *Who Can Tell?* The all-male production (with many female characters) was a great success with the troops and the public. *Who Can Tell?* was next presented in occupied Germany, where it garnered even more acclaim. The revue began to attract funding, which eventually allowed a far more elaborate version to be staged in Paris. Six performances in all were presented in the City of Light in May 1919, attended by luminaries such as France's President Clemenceau, and the USA's President Woodrow Wilson and General John Pershing.

A booklet titled *The 88th Division in the World War of 1914 - 1918 Official History*, includes this account:

> In its edition of May 14th, the dramatic critic of the Chicago Tribune in a letter addressed to the editor made the following comment: "There have been only two things of importance in Paris since you went away–the threat of the Germans to leave the Peace Conference, and the opening Monday night at the Champs Elysees Theatre of the 88th Division Show, Who Can Tell. Some show, Boy, some show! It is the best amateur show I have seen on either side of the water. There are lots of Broadway shows getting three dollars that ought to be sent to warehouse to let this one in for a run. It isn't a show–it's a production. In costumes, it makes the 'Garden of Allah' look like a rookie. … You would never know they were doughboys until they began to sing. 'Who can Tell' is a kind of a musical burlesque with enough of a plot to keep the show in military channels for three hours."

After the war, Collins returned to the USA. He married in 1920, departing afterwards aboard the steamer *Caronia* for a honeymoon in Britain. Once back in Chicago, he started a family, the first of four children being born in 1921.

Front cover of the only known surviving copy of the 1919 playbill for the Paris production of *Who Can Tell* of *Who Can Tell?*
From the Papers of Laurence R. Fairall, University of Iowa Libraries, Iowa City

Collins, Chicago, ca. 1920

Middle Years, Chicago

Teaching piano and performing from his base in Chicago, Collins also was able to attend many operas. On 13 January 1923, Collins wrote in his journal:

> Went to the Symphony concert tonight and was frightfully bored. Brahms's F Major Symphony sounded like a lecture on anthropology and Strauss' "Don Juan" seemed bombastic and silly–neither of them very intelligent men. I am inclining more and more to the opera. At least there is life and color not old people and textbooks. I yearn for color and imagination.

Collins certainly attempted to nourish his yearnings. In journal entries from 1921 through 1939, the year *Daughter of the South* was completed, Collins mentions attending performances of Gounod's *Faust*; Cadman's *Shanewi*s and *Witches of Salem*; Rimsky-Korsakov's *Snow Maiden*; Wolf-Ferrari's *The Jewels of the Madonna*; Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* and *Tosca*; Boito's *Mefistofele*; Saint-Saëns's *Samson and Delilah*; Delibe's *Lakme;* Massenet's *Thaïs;* Mascagni's *Cavellaria Rusticana* and *Judith*; Honneger's *Judith*; Rabaud's *Marouf*; Halevy's *The Jew*; Wagner's *Ring* cycle, *Lohengrin*, and *Flying Dutchman*; and, Mozart's *Don Giovanni*.

Collins also wrote of hearing operas at Ravinia Park, the summer festival located to the north of Chicago. Opera was presented there from 1912 to 1931, and Collins heard Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*; Smetana's *Bartered Bride*; and, Montomezzi's *The Love of Three Kings*, among other operas and symphony music.

Some of the journal entries provide insights into how Collins would approach composition of his own opera:

> **10 November 1922:** A company of Chicago singers gave Cadman's Shane[wis] today. I intended going but did not carry out my intention. But I read the plot and found it harmless and flat like all our American literature. No use denying it, we are still naïve and silly.
>
> **7 December 1922:** Heard "Aida" tonight. It reminded me of the opening night at the Century Opera Company. If I had stuck then I would now be conducting and would be happy. I yearn for the life of the theatre–the real life in contrast to the sham of society. On the stage the emotions are sincere and unashamed and the villain appears in his true light.
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> **14 December 1922:** Heard the Jewels [*The Jewels of the Madonna*, by Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari] tonight. Some years ago, hearing it for the first time, I was disgusted and tonight I have the same feeling. However, for years it was one of my favorites–especially the second act–and I seemed to feel a great deal of romantic beauty in it. Often I admire works on first hearing and then gradually outgrow them, or I do not appreciate them immediately but

learn to like them, but with the "Jewels" I have simply made a complete circle. When shall we have an opera composer who will combine Verdi and Wagner and begin where they left off! Such a one is destined to come just as sure as we had a Shakespeare and a Michelangelo.

21 December 1922: Heard "Madame Butterfly" tonight. It was sung and acted poorly, but still made an impression. I think the last half of the first act is the best thing Puccini has done.

15 January 1923: Heard "Carmen" again tonight. It is a grand old work, full of blood and fire.

30 August 1923: Heard a superb performance of "Madame Butterfly" tonight and melted as the heart-rending drama unfolded itself. The music, too, seemed more virile than usual. I marveled at the tragedy of love–how one's happiness depends on the faithfulness of the loved one. Who can fathom the depth of a good woman's love and what manner of man is he is he who casually tramples upon it?

15 November 1923: Spent the entire day studying "Samson and Delilah" and heard it performed this evening. It is a beautiful work but there are awkward things now and then in the orchestra.

11 December 1924: Heard "Lakme" tonight and for a short while was transported to a land of romance where the almighty dollar does not occupy men's lives. In the United States I am ashamed of art and all the great things which do not yield great profits. I know that 99 out of 100 men who listened to that work tonight ridiculed it ands were more than ever convinced that after all the only important thing in life is business. When Misa Pareto sang the "Bell Song" I forgot all this but when the lights were turned on I was back in the old material surroundings where nothing matters but "net."

18 December 1924: Heard a fine performance of "Thais" tonight. The music by Massenet is not so wonderful but the story by Anatole France is strong and full of color. The most striking situation is the close of the boudoir scene when Thais invokes the spirit of Venus and Athanard calls upon his God for strength to resist the woman. Mary Garden and Josef Schwarz sang the principal roles.

20 December 1926: Heard Cadman's "Witch of Salem" tonight and am more convinced than ever there is no incident in American history suited to operatic treatment. This libretto is by a woman so she indulges in a great deal of calling on God in an effort to heighten the dramatic effect. The Bible confronts us at every turn and with it, cruelty, oppression and ignorance. My, what mean livers these old colonists lived! They were just as vicious as the Catholic tyrants of the Inquisition and lacked the colorful vices of these latter. Whenever I think of Massachusetts I see an old brute reading the Bible and calling down hell-fire on his neighbors. The young lady (or old lady) librettist is also very necessarily free with such words "devil," "satan," "fiends of hell," "yawning pits of hell" etc. and at every one of these epithets the composer causes great consternation among the percussion players. All in all, a very stupid work. Once in the first act a pair of lovers almost cause their blood to circulate but the next moment the young woman was on her knees before the Bible, praying for something away off the subject.

27 January 1927: Heard the American premiere of Honegger's "Judith" tonight. It was very impressively done. The orchestration is very discreet and in the background. After the first few bars of dissonance it seemed very mild and lacking in the dissonances of the moderns. Only at the end when the chorus became very noisy did the orchestra come out of its shell. The *mise en scene* was beautiful, which reminds me that less colorful settings would probably cause the first two scenes to be very ennuyeux (boring). The next scene however in Holoferne's tent is wonderful and is of course the climax of the work. After all it is the powerful story that carries the thing along. I do love stories like Delilah and Judith; no prudery there!

12 December 1927: Heard a beautiful performance of Tosca tonight. Not as great as "Tristan," this knock-down-and-drag-out melodrama, but an irresistible work anyway.

1 August 1928: Heard "Marouf," an opera by Rabaud tonight. It is colorful and impressive–in fact it has the earmarks of standard repertoire. There is a poetic moment in the third act which has a touch of genius. Fourteen years ago today! I was visiting Lesser in Franzenbad and late in he afternoon went back to Bayreuth to find that the general mobilization had been ordered. What a day and what was to follow!

12 November 1929: Went to the opera last night and heard "Iris" by Mascagni. A second-rate work. And cursed by ye, barbarians of an audience with your incessant coughing and your applause when the tenor hits a high one!

9 December 1929: Heard "The Jewess" tonight and enjoyed it. Here is the real old "grand" opera which aims only at being a vocal display and succeeds admirably. Two fine sopranos and two fine tenors are needed to put the work over, and these four singers were present in the cast tonight. The finest role is not that of Rachel but that of her father Eleazar because, along with being grateful vocally it is one of the finest character parts of the stage, comparing in this respect with Boris Goudenow or Mephisto. Halevy evidently aims a good blow at the catholic church of the middle ages and his world developed into a magnificent piece of propaganda. Seeing this opera would soften anyone's heart to the wandering Jew. … The engrained cruelty of man is not going to be torn out of his character so easily as all that, and he is really not going onto the road leading to greatness until the blighting influence of religion and patriotism is destroyed. The marvel is that man with his tremendous gifts and possibilities made so little of himself– and I am one of those men.

16 July 1931: During these sickening hot days my only consolation is the thought that the damn summer school lasts only two weeks and three of them are already over. I have never had such feelings of disgust as this year; my work seems so futile and so much precious time is wasted. Have been at Ravinia Park three times in the past fortnight; heard fine performances of "Manon Lescaut." "The Bartered Bride," and "The Love of Three Kings." This last is a great work–both text and music contribute to making it probably the finest work by a contemporary. The Italians have been completely Germanized by Wagner. The score by Montemezzi is brilliant and sonorous and no effort is made at vocal display.

13 March 1939: Recently I heard Verdi's "Othello" again. This is a work I cannot warm to. First of all the text is silly; here is a general in the army supposedly a n astute man and a judge of human nature, allowing himself to be lured into destroying himself and all he loves by the idle gossip of a lowdown villain. The general does not even investigate the charges against his wife and Emilia, who knows the truth and could easily clear Desdemona (whom she loves) holds her tongue until it is too late. The music is full of pathos but without originality. You sit waiting for the compelling theme to merge from the orchestra but it keeps you waiting all evening. It is the result of Verdi's vast experience rather than his genius which reached its climax in "Aida."

2 October 1939: When I was a student in Germany I went through the Wagner phase like every other young musician, but I went through it for the first two years (1906-1907) for after I entered the Hochschule, I was taught to despise Wagner and I did learn to despise him. Environment is a very potent thing: I started in the Hochschule thinking about Wagner during the day and dreaming about him at night. The sound of one of the motives from the Ring made me swoon, and I thought that all the other composers were flat and academic. I remember in the summer of 1907 seeing the Rhein and being overcome; I saw the Rhein maidens swimming around and Siegfried standing upright in his boat. Joachim had died the year before but his ghost haunted the corridors of the Hochschule and lifted a warning finger at the very name of Wagner or Liszt, not to mention Max Reger or Richard Strauss. So after a year or two of Hochschule atmosphere, I went over to Brahms and thought Wagner was cheap and gushing. It seemed (as I left Germany in 1912) that Wagner had reached the zenith of his popularity, but then came the war and with it the old hero stuff. All the gods and especially the Valkyries were dragged out to inspire the poor German soldier. I hear Hitler is a great Wagnerite, so we shall probably have another epidemic of "echt Deutsch Musik" _ which means Wagner. He is the only musician who went into politics and used his art for propaganda purposes. His appeal is tremendous; if you please, the Metropolitan opera lost money last year on all except the Wagner performances. He is the favorite in the United States. Clouds and fire are thrilling things, also a beautiful maiden riding a fast horse.

6 November 1939: Went to "Mignon" in the evening with Elsie, Rita and Mary Virginia [female relatives]. Except for "Connais tu," the Gavotte and the Polonaise, this work would never been performed. Those kidnapped-by-gypsies" stories certainly were the vogue about a century ago. After the opera we met Carl Alwin (a refugee conductor from Vienna) [real name Oskar Pinkus Alwin] and went to an Italian restaurant where we ate preposterously fattening food and drank beer (!).

By the 1930s, when composing his own opera, thanks to the world-changing technology of the radio, Collins also was able to hear Met opera broadcasts from New York:

28 January 1939: Heard "Louise" on the radio this afternoon. I was again struck by the beauty of the work, especially the fine counterpoint that is woven in the orchestra. Of course, the motifs are not striking but like the text, they are very genuine and human. The waltz is wonderful and was the inspiration of Ravel's "La Valse." I am amazed that Charpentier was able to write only one important work; he evidently had cared too much about the nightlife of Paris. Of course with his great talent and flair for

instrumentation, he should have become a French Wagner. He is not typically French in the sense of Debussy, but leans more to Wagner–a kind of glorified Saint-Saens. I had my old score which I used when I worked for the Century Opera Company. 26 (!) years ago. I was amused to see my own stage directions (in German) and the names of the singers in the dressmaking scene. Many are now dead which gave me a sharp pang considering that they were all so young and pretty in those days. "Louise" is still a very good opera and requires about twenty good voices. I remember how hard we worked on it and the marvel is that it went so well. Apropos of "Louise" I had lunch not long ago with Joseph Pasternack, whom I hadn't seen since the days of the "Century." We talked like two old settlers about the members of the cast; those who hadn't died during the twenty-five years are now wandering about the country in terrible financial straits. Only Charley Drumheller survived the ravage of time and the Depression and is now assistant manager of the Chicago Opera Co.

Despite his employment as an assistant conductor for the Bayreuth Festival in 1914, Collins was by no means one of those who worshipped Wagner, as several relevant journal entries reveal:

?? February 1923 [exact date unknown; entry follows a missing journal fragment] It is becoming daily more apparent to me that a fine work for piano is the real test of greatness. Here is no tremolo or orchestral coloring to help the composer over a dry spot, not even the warm tone of the solo string instrument, but only [the] nakedness of an uninterrupted chain of pregnant ideas. The barrenness of many modern orchestral works is exposed to the light of day when they are compelled to undergo the boiling down process, which throws out the beautiful lines and weaves only the plot. The piano arrangement is the skeleton, visible to the penetrating eye of the expert who is thus able to foresee the early collapse of the gaudy exterior. It is the photography of the painting revealing paucity of subject matter. What we need is an operative composer whose music can stand up under piano performance. Bruckner, Richard Strauss, and even Wagner are examples of dramatic effects depending solely on color.

25 September 1925: There are many times when Wagner drags out a scene until it becomes tiresome but there are other times when the drama of a situation is overwhelming. An objective criticism of the Bayreuth master would be to grant him great dramatic power hampered by his overweening conceit. Steadfast in his conviction that he was the evolved artist he created a system which was highly original for a time but which is now wholly out of step with the march of progress. We don't want any gods with human weaknesses; what we ant is humans with god-like wisdom and strength. When I first saw the performance of "Rheingold" at Bayreuth in 1914 I could not restrain a laugh at the sight of Thor with his hammer. They also gave the "Flying Dutchman" that summer and I was amazed at the dullness and ridiculous character of the work. But then came a performance of "Siegfried" that was demoniac in its effectiveness.

24 October 1927: I have nearly finished [studying] the "Lohengrin" score. Rather late in life for me to be making the acquaintance of this old chestnut. I have always scoffed at it (like all the other modernists) but now I am loving it. Wagner certainly took a great step forward when he wrote it. I am amazed at the expertness of the chorus and the instrumentation. The chorus "Gesegnet soll sie schreiten" is positively wonderful. I expect to live on Wagner for a while now and when I say "good-bye" to him I shall *know* him. Next come "Tannhauser," "Dutchman" and "Rienzi," then I shall start in the other direction; but the "Meistersinger" will come last for that is the greatest and most difficult of all.

1 September 1930: Tonight I heard "Lohengrin" for the first time in almost twenty (!!) years. It is a silly work from the standpoint of both text and music but it has an "appeal" which means people like it without knowing why.

25 March 1939: Listened to much radio music today. The Metropolitan Opera Company was in Boston today and gave "Tannhauser." This is a work I have never appreciated. I find it very drab and long drawn out. The male ensembles are very dull and the last act is anaesthetic. The bright spot is Tannhauser's plight over being besieged by the two entirely different women, and his perfectly masculine longing for one when he is with the other. After a swell time with Venus he naturally is a little fed up and thinks that Elizabeth is more his speed. But, after being around the old prudes at Herman's joint he kicks himself for walking out on Venus and giving up such a good thing and is all for bolting the party at the castle. But here the enormity of his "sin" is explained to him and he starts for Rome with a bunch of other sinners who can't wait to kiss the Pope's foot. To cap the climax: When the Pope says "nothing doing" on forgiveness he arrives home in the last act hell bent for Venusberg. So the poor sucker in trying to "serve two mistresses" keeps himself in a state of perfect unhappiness. The "sin" complex is a direct result of going to confession in one's youth. I realize it–in fact I experiences it–and it was awful. My

> boyhood was lived in deadly fear of making a bad confession; not five minutes out of the box I thought of a "Sin" I had forgotten and walked the streets like a hunted murderer. To add to the enormity of my crime, next morning I went to communion and then Hell really opened up and prepared to swallow–me. Yes, at eleven or twelve years of age I suffered the tortures of the damned.

So, despite young Chicago's emergent cultural scene, Collins regularly was able to experience opera, including many of the major works being composed by his contemporaries.

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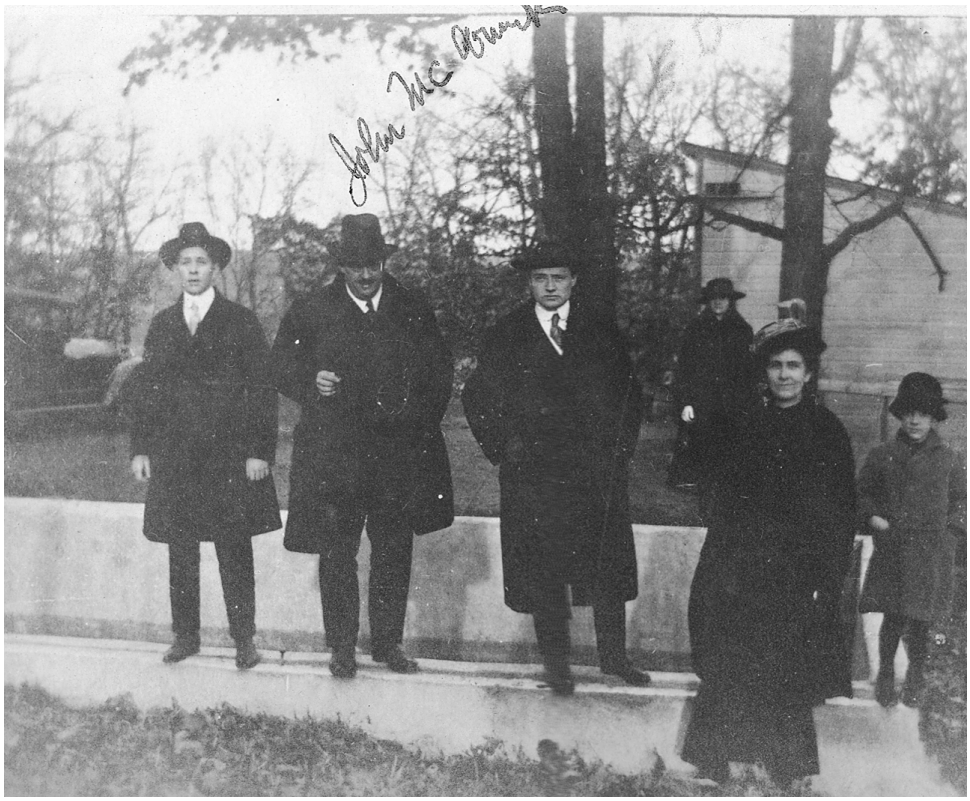
But Collins also experienced a local opera scene that was unstable, perhaps especially so from a composer's point of view. The Windy City's resident companies formed, folded, merged, or reconstituted regularly during the 1910s and 1920s. On 4 November 1929, Chicago's grand Civic Opera House opened but, unfortunately, the Depression soon followed. In *150 Years of Opera in Chicago* (p. 108), authors Robert C. Marsh and Norman Pellegrini write:

> The victim of difficult times, the first fifteen seasons in the new Civic Opera house were the least distinguished in the history of Chicago opera and therefore need not be treated in great detail. Twice there was no season from a local company. … from 1933-1946 resident Chicago opera swung from mediocrity to disaster. It was the lowest, bleakest period in the cultural history of the city.

Well prior to the House's opening, City Opera's directors had commissioned an analysis of the company by the Italian opera expert Giovanni Cardelli. From his report, Marsh and Pellegrini include this excerpt: "Opera in Chicago," he stated, "is, beyond all possible question, the worst to be found in any major opera house. … And, the present chorus is so bad, from every conceivable point of view, that it not even be considered in any project for the future of opera in Chicago." (Marsh and Pellegrini, pp. 114-5)



Collins (center), with renowned Irish tenor John McCormack (second from left), likely in Chicago, date and occasion unknown.

Organized in 1935 from the remaining assets of the bankrupt Chicago Grand Opera Company, the Chicago City Opera Company had produced just four seasons of opera at the Civic Opera House before it too succumbed to financial difficulties, in 1939, just as the challenges of the Depression gave way to those of World War II. On 23 November 1940, Collins wrote in his journal of the deteriorating situation:

> In the evening Frieda, Marianna and I went to the opera. It was "L'Amore dei Tre Re" and was conducted by Montemezzi himself. The singers were excellent and the old man conducted with much fire but with scarcely an understandable beat. He is tall and handsome, looking more like a *marchese* than a musician. His attitude toward the orchestra is very arrogant, but toward the public he is simple and unaffected. He adjusted his pince-nez with careful deliberation much in the manner of a professor of economics. I spoke to [Chicago City Opera conductor and music director] Henry Weber in the lobby; he was snooping around with a rather worried look. I hear that the season is disastrous from the money angle – $30,000 deficit for the first ten performances. Well, people learn with difficulty. No singer was engaged for more than two performances and for the six-week season Weber engaged twelve conductors, It was almost like the old days, when [Chicago opera singer and patron] Mary Garden lost a million in one season. The production is too lavish and the real lovers of music cannot afford the price of admission. The Gallo opera company plays here about four weeks a year to packed houses; that is because the best seats cost two dollars and the people feel that they can hear the music even if they don't own a dress suit or a mink coat. The singers are good and paid weekly salaries. They are mostly Americans who have had no Hollywood publicity (last night we heard a disgusting spectacle of photographs being taken of the prima donna, Miss Grace Moore, right during the performance. Trick cameras were placed on the stage and at an auspicious moment the Tribune photographer pressed a button and the audience and Montemezzi were blinded for a second.

There was no resident opera company in Chicago from 1946 until the present day Lyric Opera of Chicago was formed, in 1954, three years after Collins died. Perhaps this artistic environment explains at least in part why Chicago-based composer Collins wrote only one opera, and why his *Daughter of the South* is relatively brief, almost devoid of vocal ensembles, making limited use of the chorus, and replete with lengthy instrumental sections.

Opera Influences: American

Besides *Porgy and Bess*, identified as an "American folk opera" by it's composer George Gershwin, it's likely that fewer than three dozen operas and operettas received first performances during the years of the Depression and the start of World War II, including:

1932	*The Condemned*	Marc Blitzstein
1932	*Evangeline*	Otto Luening
1933	*Merry Mount*	Howard Hanson
1934	*Four Saints in Three Acts*	Virgil Thomson
1935	*Blue Steel*	William Grant Still
1936	*The Headless Horseman*	Douglas Moore
1936	*Garrick*	Albert Stoessel
1937	*The Cradle Will Rock*	Marc Blitzstein
1937	*Amelia Goes to the Ball*	Gian Carlo Menotti
1937	*The Man Without a Country*	Walter Damrosch
1938	*The Second Hurricane*	Aaron Copland
1939	*The Troubled Island*	William Grant Still
1939	*The Devil and Daniel Webster*	Douglas Moore
1939	*The Old Maid and the Thief*	Gian Carlo Menotti [radio opera]
1940	*A Bayou Legend*	William Grant Still
1942	*A Southern Interlude*	William Grant Still

Although some of these operas touched on themes explored in *Daughter of the South*, none are mentioned in the Collins journals. For three of the operas in particular, this is surprising.

Three American Opera Composers

Otto Luening was a resident of Chicago from 1920 to 1925 and knew Collins, according to Collins's daughter Marianna. She had met Luening in New York City, where he reminisced about her father (oral history recording, Rosenthal Archives, Chicago Symphony Orchestra). Luening's *Evangeline* was given its first performance by the *American Opera Company* in Chicago. This was an organization with which Collins had associated, via a fellow Chicago-based composer Eleanor Everest Freer. Known in society publications of the time as Mrs. Archibald Freer, she was founder of the Society for the Promotion of Opera in English, the American Society for Opera in Our Language, and the American Opera Society of Chicago (National).

Walter Damrosch, like Collins, was involved with military music during World War I, organizing the music ensembles of the American military forces, and later founding the Bandmaster's School of Chaumont, France. His acquaintance with Nadia Boulanger helped change the destination of American composers seeking a European education to Paris, from Berlin. With composer Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky, Damrosch conducted the opening concert of Carnegie Hall in 1891; he also was staff conductor of the Metropolitan Opera in 1900.

After World War I, American composer, violinist and conductor Albert Stoessel was later named director of the Bandmaster's School. He had been student with Collins in Berlin at the *Hochschule*. Stoessel enlisted in the United States Army in 1917, becoming a lieutenant and bandmaster for the 301st Infantry American Expeditionary Forces, which as part of the 76th Division in 1918 went to France, where he re-connected with Collins. In a 17 December 1918 letter, Collins wrote from his 88th Division's head quarters in Gondrecourt, France, to his family in Joliet:

> Last night I ran into Lieutenant Albert Stoessel. You probably never heard of him but he was a protégé of Lesser and played with me all the time at Lessers and at Mendelssohn's as well as at the Hochschule. Stoessel [had stayed] in Berlin until June 1915, so he was able to tell me many interesting things. After the concert we went up to his barracks and, after the light went out at 10, lit a candle, drew up around the stove and talked about our school days until about 2 A.M. (My old hour but unheard of in the army. I haven't been up that late since I left home). Stoessel knows all the people in Berlin that I know and I had him talk for hours about them, especially about poor old Lesser.

In 1921, Stoessel became the assistant conductor of the Oratorio Society of New York under Damrosch, succeeding him as director in 1922. About a decade later, Stoessel became director of the opera and orchestra at the Juilliard Graduate School, New York.

Despite these many New York City connections, the *Daughter of the South* seems never to have been considered for performance in New York City. Likewise, there is no record of a performance in that city of Collins's 1929 secular oratorio *Hymn to the Earth*, despite its having been written for New York's Society of the Friends of Music, perhaps because of the onset of the Great Depression.

> [The auditorium of the American Academy of Arts and Letters in New York was the location for the recording sessions for the last CD of the Collins project, 23 September 2009. A work recorded there, the *Allegro* of his *Sonata Op. 2/14* for violin and piano, was composed by Collins during his early years. It was perhaps familiar to Stoessel, who may even have played the violin part. During the recording sessions, the assistant producer informed all present that she often was able to sense presences from beyond the world of the living. She had felt such a presence come near her when this Collins work was being recorded. Only during research of this essay did I learn that, in 1943, Stoessel died of a heart attack while conducting an orchestra on the American Academy of Arts and Letters stage.]

Porgy and Bess

Oddly, Collins's journal entries make no mention of Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*. Revised after it opening performances in Boston, the "folk opera" was staged again in New York City during the autumn of 1935. Just months later, in February 1936, *Porgy and Bess* had its third performance run and Chicago premiere. Collins did however write in a journal entry of 29 March 1939:

> My father-in-law's [Oscar Mayer] birthday. We had a party with much champagne and kissing … I played the "Rhapsody in Blue" for a select circle of jazz hounds and felt silly doing it. I can't make up my mind about the piece–whether or not it can be played in public as a piano solo and on the same program

> with Beethoven. … I see in it a pioneering spirit in the use of new rhythms. If someone can use jazz to flavor big, powerful ideas he will be the first great American composer– "Der Amerikanerische Beethoven" as Hans Letz [the Alsatian violinist] said one evening in Halensee [an area of Berlin, nearby the *Hochschule* where Collins had studied three decades earlier].

Just three months later, Collins had made his decision about performing Gershwin, journaling on 28 June 1939:

> My summer recital took place this afternoon; I played Beethoven Op. 2, No.3, the *Moscheles* and *Fetis Etudes* of Chopin, *La Vallee des Cloches* by Ravel, *Dance* by Hindemith, and my own "Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel" and *Nocturne*, and Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*. …The theatre was filled with a very musical and appreciative audience and I was in fine form, having prepared the program perfectly. After the concert Frieda [Mayer, his wife] and I went to the Pizzeria and celebrated by having beer and spaghetti. … I think I am the first person to have played Beethoven and Gershwin on the same program. Some of my more serious colleagues chided me for the desecration, but I think I am justified considering the present popularity of jazz and the season of the year.

Opera in English Movement

Another American music influence on Collins's professional career was the "Opera in English" movement. His professional experiences with this movement began during his years with the Century Opera in New York, and resumed after World War I in Chicago, home of Eleanor Everest Freer. Collins made these arguments in his journal on 2 December 1921:

> I hope the day will soon be here when we shall have opera in English. That day will arrive when an American composer writes an operatic masterpiece–the text and music by himself. Then our language will be found to be expressive and poetic translations of all opera will be made and we shall [know] something about what is going on, on the stage. We must of course become more emotional in our daily lives and in our conversation. "Good bye" must become as expressive as "Addio" through the pang of regret which it will cause when we use the word. How naïve America is! We agitate against opera in English as it thereby might lose some of its atmosphere–it would come down to us and we despise anything which treats us in a friendly manner. It must be foreign, unusual, eccentric, and above all must not be understood for to be understood is to lose people's interest. How disappointed we are when we hear the details of our hero's private life. He has a wife and children, his landlord raised the rent. Heavens, he is like other people. Likewise we do not want to have our opera understood, it would be like singing the Preface [of the Catholic Latin Mass] in English. But some day we shall be educated in the ways of the heart and shall not shrink from the display of feeling. Then we shall welcome the opera as a friend and a brother whom we understand and who loves us. Then we shall no longer gape and stare as though it were a dromedary or a king cobra but shall demand to understand every word of it in our own beautiful language.

Technology has in some halls now made this question moot, allowing each audience member the choice of accessing a translation, or ignoring it, while all can listen to the opera in its original language. Still, it is interesting to read Collins's thoughts on the subject, which perhaps more importantly reveal his humanity and some essential American qualities.

Other

In addition to Chicago's opera scene, Collins took in other music entertainments, including musicals, revues, and cabarets, as he apparently also had done while in Europe:

> **30 April 1928:** Heard a playlet, or rather a musical comedy called "Good News" tonight. I had not been in the theatre in a long time so it all seemed very strange. I was impressed by the youth of the chorus girls; they all seemed to be eighteen or nineteen years old and full of animal spirits. Some of the jokes shocked me! That is, I suddenly realized that our revues had caught up with the Folies Bergeres. I noticed a double meaning to many of the lines *a la* Jurgen. All these quips the actors smirked so as to help the audience get along but there was only an occasional twitter from some sophisticated corner of the house. There were also many homosexual jokes aimed at the chorus men, and impossibly big brute of an orchestra leader who showed his figure from every possible angle. The world moves faster, youth is wilder and the American public is openly acknowledging the fact that sexual intercourse plays an important part in "the life" of the average citizen.

> **10 November 1922:** Missed two evenings because I came home full of whiskey one night and full of Rhein wine the following night. This is my birthday–a day associated with regrets and gloomy thoughts of unfulfilled ambitions.
>
> **29 September 1923:** September is gone and what was to have been one of the most profitable months of my life has brought me scarcely anything. I expected to write the first movement of my piano concerto, but instead I have spent the last few golden weeks in drinking and carousing. For the first time in my life I have been the victim of bad companions and have learned how utterly fascinating and damaging they can be. Night after night I threw my work to the winds in favor of the gin buck and the all-night cabaret. I thank my ignorant youth that I did not learn these things when I was a student in Berlin.

Libretto Influences

Why was the Civil War chosen as the historical setting for his opera by Collins? It would be natural to expect that *Daughter of the South* owes a creative debt to George Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* or Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*, given their chronological proximity and cultural impact. Collins seems however to have been influenced mostly by his own life-long interest in the American Civil War, largely a product of the composer's familial heritage.

Born to Irish-American immigrants almost a generation after the "War Between the States," Collis trained as a composer largely in Berlin, and was directly acquainted with Wagner's *mythos* via employment as an assistant conductor for the Bayreuth festival. While none of those experiences led directly to *Daughter of the South*, each did nonetheless influence, positively or negatively, the composer's decisions regarding his only opera. Others influences may be identified from passages in the Collins's own letters and diary, as well as events contemporary with the composer's life.

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The earliest hint of the future opera is found in one of the composer's music notebooks from around 1920, with the words "Technical Stunts" written by the composer on the front cover. In his diary entries during this period, Collins mentions near daily work on counterpoint. These musical exercises were part of his continuing efforts to educate himself in the art of composition. One set of exercises appears to have been considered a finished composition by Collins, since he provided section numerals and dated it. The sixth "technical stunt" is a contrapuntal treatment of "Dixie." The short piece of music thus presages by some 19 years a similar treatment of the unofficial anthem of the Confederacy, at the end of Scene I of *Daughte*r. [The first recording of this set of musical exercises will be released with the title *Six Technical Stunts in Canonic Form* on Volume 10 of the *Music of Edward Joseph Collins*.]

The following year, and several months after his marriage, Collins was also pondering what dramatic ideas would be appropriate for an opera written by an American composer such as himself. A fragment of a journal entry reveals that the dramatic idea for *Daughter of the South* came to the composer about a month after he had turned thirty-five.

Collins, whose high school studies were interrupted by his European music training, was musing about what self-directed studies he would need to acquire to craft an opera libretto. Collins begins with broad ideas, while eliminating certain specific themes. Then, noting that he had recently attended a performance of Leoncavallo's opera *Zazà*, Collins continues to reflect on the appropriate topic for an American opera:

> [missing section] … bits could be boiled down to produce a masterpiece. A knowledge of dramatic literature is necessary. I must begin with the Greeks and get a general idea of the world drama down to the present day. Ideas may be picked up in stories of Balzac, Edgar Allen Poe, or Maupassant. With the dramatic instinct awakened I shall begin to see the climaxes and interesting situations in daily life, not to forget the movie, which now and then might suggest an idea for a plot. With the decay of the court and church much that was picturesque is lost to the stage. That inspiration of the poets, his satanic majesty, is also losing his prestige, as are crusaders and knights in general. The king does not impress and the court jester is simply outlawed. I do not want any dragons or giants but I am not sure about water nymphs, gnomes and all sorts of pretty spirits. … **An American story of pre-colonial Virginia [or] of a Southern beauty who loved a Northern boy in 1861 would be nice** [boldface added]. I am sick of Indians for a while. [24 December 1921]

Although he had helped prepare an early performance of Charles Wakefield Cadman's *Natoma* during his *Century* days, Collins thought little of the composer, one of the foremost proponents of the "Indianist" movement that was sometimes in vogue in American classical music from the 1880s until the 1920s. In several journal entries, Collins expresses antipathy to the exploitation of Indian music by some of his contemporaries, perhaps having decided that this music was an aesthetic dead-end for composed music to be presented in concert halls.

The War Between the States

Collins had an unusual passion for the American Civil War. The composer's fascination with that national tragedy is evidenced in several journal entries. On 30 May 1922, Collins wrote:

> Decoration Day. Saw the parade. A major general surrounded by a staff of 40 or 50 mounted officers rode down the street with an expression on his face much as Alexander the Great might have worn on entering a conquered city. Crowds of Jews, Irish, Poles, Italians *et al* gaped at him from the sidewalk. Most impressive were the veterans of the Civil War. Their ranks are thinning fast and a few more Decoration Days will find the breed extinct.

And on 4 November 1930:

> Today I came across one of the heroic names of my earliest youth– the name of Stonewall Jackson. Why did I as a child thrill at the thought of him? It was probably because he was a genius and I suspected it. There is something about genius which resembles a radio wave: it is omnipresent and needs but the detector. As a boy I knew little about "Stonewall" other than that he had been a general in the Confederate Army and had been killed accidentally by some of his own men. But throughout my life he has been a Romantic figure to me; mention of his name invariably gave me the greatest pleasure. Maybe he was related to me. (He came from Ulster and perhaps [his people] were neighbors of my mother's people.) … [missing section]

It is unknown if Collins knew that it was an Irish-American soldier who killed Jackson, at a location not far from where *Daughter of the South* was set. Virginia's 1st Regiment, one of the Confederacy's Irish troops (the Union also had Irish units), with their legendary resistance during the battle of Blackburn's Ford, helped create the Stonewall Jackson legend. Another Irish force of the South, the 1st Virginia Battalion, also called the Irish Battalion, brought the legend to its end. Serving as provost guard for the Army of Northern Virginia, in the dark of night during the winter of 1862-63, one of its Irish guards failed to recognize General Jackson returning to his bivouac—and shot him.

On 22 March 1939, amidst renewed complaints about the loss of individual freedom that he felt had accompanied the response of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's administration to the Depression, Collins wrote this entry:

> There is something sad about the passing of an era, something poignant about the shattered idols which served us so long and so well–as we thought. At our feet in the public square lie the sacred pieces now jeered at and spat upon. The readjusting goes on day and night leaving in its wake broken and disillusioned hearts. The saddest of these "readjustments" is the political and social upheaval following a war. Such a one occurred in the South after the Civil War. Manners, "breeding," family, tradition, had been everything and overnight this was all "gone with the wind." Aggressiveness, irreverence, the nouveaux riches, disregard for social position–all these qualities were suddenly in the saddle and all those gentle souls who tried to preserve the finer things were swept aside. Nature refused to interfere, she even refused to shed a tear because the "good old days" were based on the status quo–prosperity and security to the point of stagnation. The poor human being is eager to be lulled to safety; he wishes the stars would cease their flight through space. But they will not.

Collins was drawn to related histories and novels about the American Civil War. Those included Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*, published in 1936 and winner of the 1937 Pulitzer Prize. On 31 December 1939, Collins mentions he had "spent the last several days reading 'Gone with the Wind'" and on 2 January 1940, the composer wrote:

> Having waded through the thousand and some pages of "Gone with the Wind" I got back to my decadent Ballet–Suite and finished the "Propos Mysterieux" [second movement of the *Ballet–Suite: Masque of the Red Death*]. The best seller of the decade gave me a great deal of pleasure. Since I was a little boy I have been interested in everything connected with the Civil War; one of my earlier impressions was the sight of Uncle Peter [Collins] in his blue uniform with the gold buttons. He came down from Eden Valley, Minn. to attend an encampment of the G.A.R. [Grand Army of the Republic] in Chicago and visited us in Joliet. I remember the scar on his forehead where a bullet almost got him at Antietam Bridge. Then too, since writing "Daughter of the South" I have had the greatest sympathy with the Confederates even though their "glorious cause:" would now be considered preposterous. Then too when Frieda and I drove to Palm Beach [Florida] a couple years ago we went through Jonesboro [Georgia] and were trying to figure out where Tara was.
>
> Miss Mitchell, who wrote "Gone with the Wind" has made out a very good case for the South but Northerners and Irish are barbarians and slatterns. The book contains many beautiful and poignant paragraphs but there is a sameness about it all and a too elaborate explanation of the character's reactions. It is too long and too obvious. After all, the artist makes a few revealing strokes and allows the reader's imagination to fill in the rest. In other words, a great writer would describe Scarlett walking up the stairs in such a way that we would feel the anguish in her heart, but how can we feel it when Miss Mitchell tells us in several pages exactly what Scarlett is feeling and thinking, not to mention that the perspiration is running down from her armpits etc., etc. By the way, Scarlett is not a credible person. No one so smart and attractive could have such vulgar taste in furniture.

Gone with the Wind was released in 1939 as a film winning ten Academy Awards. On 11 May 1940, Collins wrote in his diary of an outing to see the screen version with his wife: "Last night Frieda and I went to see the famous movie "Gone with the Wind" at Hartford [near Cedar Lake, WI]. … I enjoyed every minute of G.W.T.W. dealing as it does with the Civil War."

These diary entries indicate that Collins had already composed his opera *before* he read or saw *Gone with the Wind*. The entries also reveal something of the dramatic aesthetic that Collins brought to his opera's libretto, including an appreciation for minimal character development and stage direction.

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Based on his writings, it seems likely Collins viewed the Civil War as the violent outcome of a deep cultural conflict between Northerners and Southerners, and as necessary to preserve the Union.

The Natural Realm

Another important influence on Collins's libretto was his love of Nature. Collins was not a fan of camping, and seems to have had no interest at all in wilderness experiences; he thoroughly enjoyed cities and the access to culture that they provided. Still, a single journal entry, from 14 March 1939, reveals how much importance Nature had for the composer:

> Classicism ended with the beginning of the nineteenth century. It ended when emotion rather than architecture became the essence of art. It has been said that as soon as romantic music is known and accepted the world over it becomes classic. Thus Chopin and Schumann have "graduated" to more austere heights. I cannot accept this idea … [a]n Allegro by Haydn or Mozart is a delightful thing but not inextricably tied up with our hopes and fears and longings like a [Chopin] Nocturne or the "Mondlicht" [Schumann]. I'm afraid I don't appreciate the godlike in art. I am hopelessly in love with Mother Earth.

From his youth, Collins found walking through the countryside restorative, as well as vitally important for his creative muse. Collins wrote of ambling for hours from his Joliet home along the railroad tracks, and of his frustration in France during the war with restrictions on his walking there. Later in life, when he summered in Wisconsin, walks in the rural countryside brought music inspiration or, sometimes, compositional solutions. Even a stroll on the sidewalk along the road by his home on Chicago's north side could inspire. On 24 March 1939, Collins wrote in his journal of one such experience:

> Late this afternoon I walked down Sheridan Road, I heard my first robin of the year. He was singing deliriously and I listened enthralled. He was in a tree right off the street and I tried to see him, but just

> then the light at the corner changed and fifty cars thundered by. When that awful clatter dies away Mr. Robin was no more to be heard; he probably was disgusted with the competition and flew away to some forest preserve where there are no men and their horrible contraptions. I was tempted to write a poem about the first robin but desisted as I knew some satire would creep in about the way his song was interrupted. However, I gave the idea to [daughter] Louise and she turned out one of her charming efforts. The sweetest line was, "His song was diganfied." The weather is back to normal (that is–it is raw and disagreeable). We had two or three balmy days and quick as a flash, the robins and lilac buds were here. Then came the old Chicago March wind which lasts through April and May. Now we are freezing and feeling low in spirits and especially because I have been practicing the piano so much. I see that one thing only can make me happy and that is composition. Man can save his soul through creative effort; when I am composing I am in tune with the infinite. I seem to possess a kind of detector which makes me conscious of sounds in the air which are not audible to me when I am struggling with arpeggios and octave passages.

Lilacs and robins make appearances in the *Daughter*'s libretto, as does the snowball bush, a hybrid viburnum that flowers relatively early. The real impact of these harbingers of spring, after a long, hard northern winter, is difficult to convey to anyone who lives in a sunnier clime. But in the opera, Collins seems to use them, and Nature in general, as symbolic of a world that is "right" as opposed to one that is wracked by war. Thus the young lovers sing (Tracks 9 and 10):

> **Robert:** We shall be calm and find repose in the beauty around us. While our souls are seared; The moon is rising, And shedding her blue light, On the snowball bushes; While our hearts are numbed, The lilacs are in bloom, And filling the night, With their languorous perfume; While hatred engulfs the land, Warm winds are gliding thru the branches and whispering to the young leaves; Birds and streams are stilled, The fields have closed their eyes, And are dreaming of love, Are dreaming of love
>
> **Mary Lou**: I too shall close my eyes, And dream of love of love, And you shall tell me again; Of the moonlight on the snowball bushes, And the odor of the lilacs; I shall hear the winds, Gliding though the trees and whispering to the young leaves; The streams will speak to me and I shall see the fields, Silent, Silent and dreaming of love; Night will enfold me, And the mysterious stars will come down to me
>
> **Robert**: Then sleep and dream; So I too be in your dreams

Their love and the nature around them are as one, a reality so beautiful as to be dreamlike, until distant thunder is mistaken for the guns of the recently declared war.

> **Mary Lou**: It has disturbed my dream; Gone is the moonlight on the bushes; Gone is the odor of the lilacs; I cannot hear the winds; Nor understand the language of the leaves; The streams are dull and glassy; The fields are dead; Heavy clouds have obscured the stars; naught remains but man's folly.

War cuts off people from Nature and even the rest of the universe. After hostilities break out in *Daughter of the South*, the "natural" order is best found in dreams, dreams that are more real than life with all its human folly.

African-American Cultural Influences

Large numbers of Irish began arriving in Illinois during the 1830s, where among other things they quarried stone and built canals, including one near the composer's birthplace in Joliet. The immigrant Irish worked long, dangerous hours, living in crowded shantytowns that were even less sanitary than the then notoriously filthy Chicago. Many Irish laborers died of diseases such as cholera and typhus.

Early Years

Like other Illinois cities, Chicago segregated and lynched the Irish, as it had done and would do with other waves of immigrants, including African-Americans who came north after the Civil War. The most recent arrivals often came into conflict with those who had only begun to climb out of poverty, and both groups were, directly or indirectly, forced to live apart from those better off.

Collins likely had little if any direct personal contact with African-Americans during his youth, because of the resulting *de facto* segregation. It is quite possible he was unaware of developments even in those aspects of Chicago's African-American cultural life that came closest to his own:

> Parallel to Harlem, Chicago supported its own black artistic renaissance. The Umbrian Glee Club (1895–) would give performances in Orchestra Hall, while Pedro Tinsley founded a Choral Study Club in 1900 that performed European choral works. Two years later, Chicago Local 208 incorporated within the American Federation of Musicians, the first black musicians' union to do so. Chicagoans N. Clark Smith and J. Berni Barbour established the first black music publishing company in 1903. Smith also formed an orchestra (1902–5) and composed a *Negro Folk Suite* (1924). William Hackney produced annual "all-colored" composers concerts in Orchestra Hall (1914–16), and in 1919 Nora Holt founded the National Association of Negro Musicians, which held its first convention in Chicago. The 1920s saw the formation of the South Side Opera Company, while the 1940s produced the Chicago Negro Opera Guild. [Encyclopedia.ChicagoHistory.org]

World War I brought change, on the one hand undermining nascent globalism, on the other bringing African-Americans into new relationships both with their fellow citizens and with Europeans.

During World War I

On 18 May 1917, Congress passed the Selective Service Act, authorizing the registration and draft of all men between 21 and 30. Some 700,000 African-American men volunteered for the draft on the first day, while over two million ultimately registered. Despite restrictions on the use of blacks in combat units, about 40,000 African-Americans fought in WWI.

Black musicians in the military spread an appreciation for jazz both to Europe's civilian population and to their brothers in arms. Indeed in a letter home on 28 December 1918, Collins wrote laconically:

> Christmas Eve night was a busy time for me. After supper I gave a concert at the officer's hut with Stoessel. We played classical music and the officers seemed to appreciate it; only once a little chap showed his train of thought when he hazarded the request for the 'Darktown Strutters Ball' just after Stoessel had played a minuet by Beethoven.

African-American musician James Reese Europe played a central role in introducing American jazz to France and the rest of Europe. After a stint in the trenches on the Western Front, possibly the first involving African-American troops, the 369th Infantry regimental band, conducted by Europe, traveled throughout France early in 1918. Later, during the Armistice, John Philips Sousa appointed Collins, to a position with oversight of military bands. Collins wrote home on 8 February 1919: "I have to chuckle at the way I get by; I become an officer without going to an officer's training camp and lead the combined bands without being a band leader." Those bands perhaps included Mr. Europe's famous ensemble.

If so, Collins likely would have enjoyed the music immensely, based on what he wrote to his family in Joliet, from France, on 3 October 1918:

> Last night we had a regimental band from the neighborhood – that is – an American band which is billeted near this town. I had heard them at Camp Dodge and recognized their ability and last night confirmed my impression. The[y] got off some jazz stunts that set the boys wild.

During his military training at Fort Dodge, the composer had an experience of an altogether different sort, recalled by Collins on 12 January 1928 in a journal entry. His daughter Louise Joan had been born recently and, earlier that day, the electrocution of Ruth Snyder and Judd Gray had been stayed. Collins wrote:

> Ruth has a nine-year old daughter and an old mother and these are the real victims of the tragedy. What will the little girl's train of thought be when she understands life and realizes that her mother and her mother's paramour murdered her father and were executed by the state? I seem to see Ruth herself first as a little child then growing up and walking to her fate. When I was a soldier at Camp Dodge [Iowa, 1918] I saw four negroes hanged for rape and the sight sickened me. Just before the trap was sprung they

> began to sing "Alleluia" in real negro spiritual style. The division stood at attention and the soldier to my right fainted while the one in front of me roared laughing. Well, enough of crime and death; I have a free day ahead of me and shall turn my thoughts to music and poetry.

Collins was likely recalling Iowa's only triple-execution, following conviction by an Army court martial of soldiers for the rape of a seventeen-year old female.

Post-World War I

Following the Armistice, racial violence during the summer of 1919 spawned serious riots in the United States, including Illinois. In his influential book *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, historian C. Vann Woodward wrote:

> The war-bred hopes of the Negro for first-class citizenship were quickly smashed in a reaction of violence that was probably unprecedented. Some twenty-five race riots were touched off in American cities during the first six months of 1919, months that John Hope Franklin called 'the greatest period of interracial strife the nation had ever witnessed.' Mobs took over cities for days at a time, flogging, burning, shooting, and torturing at will. When the Negroes showed a new disposition to fight and defend themselves, violence increased. Some of these atrocities occurred in the South—at Longview, Texas, for example, or at Tulsa, Oklahoma, at Elaine, Arkansas or Knoxville, Tennessee. But they were limited to no one section of the country. Many of them occurred in the North and the worst of all was in Chicago. During the first year following the war more than seventy Negroes were lynched, several of them veterans still in uniform.

Chicago's riot occurred between 27 July and 3 August 3 1919, during the heat of summer. Collins makes no mention of it, but on 11 March 1921 he noted in his journal:

> We have the Grand Army of the Republic, unhappily only a few hoary old men left, but everyone a hero, whose hands we would reverently kiss because they are the hands of some of Lincoln's soldiers, a defender and preserver of the United States. … Recently there was a mass-meeting held in New York to protest against the use of black troops on the Rhine, something which this country must regard with horror.

On 27 July 1922 Collins wrote: "When religion and intolerance are rampant I feel sick at heart. That is the reason I cannot enjoy anything by Sherwood Anderson or Carl Sandburg." Yet he also chided himself for his own prejudices, or at least those of which he was self-aware, including his low opinion of fellow Irish-Americans. Other biases were less apparent to him. Only five months later, on 16 December 1922, Collins writes:

> Heard a negro entertainment tonight. Their dancing is a remarkable display of energy and rhythm but their singing is awful. I heard a soprano whose voice sounded like the highest notes of a clarinet played out of tune and a contralto who was more of a baritone. But when they wiggle and clog they are irresistible. One wench had a figure like Jim Fitzsimmons [a horse trainer of the time]–long legs and magnificent shoulders. I realized tonight that gracefulness is the expression of culture and old civilization.

But that is followed by this 17 January 1923 journal entry:

> It is difficult to read the papers and not give way to gloomy thoughts. The French have invaded peaceful Germany and there is a mountain of hatred growing up between the two peoples. They are both human beings of the same race even and cannot live next to one another. They must kill–in other words commit suicide. The Turks are killing Christians–thirty of the latter were killed in one batch yesterday. English airplanes are bombing half-civilized asiatics and many villages have been wiped out. The Ku Klux Klan in our own country has beaten two young men to death and the drug habit has a stranglehold on one tenth of our population. Most of these atrocities are the result of racial and religious hatred and if today patriotism and religion could be torn out of human hearts what a happy world it would be! Internationalism after all is our only hope.

Two journal entries written by Collins around the time of the opera reveal more about the composer, through his recounting of experiences with individual African-Americans:

> **17 May 1939:** Today I gave a lesson to a young Negro who played me the G Major Concerto of Beethoven. The boy is seventeen years old, as black as coal and has a long pointed head covered with kinky hair. He

> wears glasses which gives him a professional look and seem out of place. When he smiles he shows enormous rows of ivory. So much for his appearance. The amazing thing to me was that he played the Beethoven Concerto beautifully. From his features is easily possible that one-hundred years ago his ancestors were beating the tom-tom in the jungles of the Belgian Congo, were kidnapped, taken to the United States and sold as slaves. Now their descendant plays a Concerto by Beethoven technically and musically better than most of my white students. I was forcibly reminded of Edward Albert Wiggam's "Decalogue of Science" wherein is expounded the doctrine of inheritance as the most important thing in one's life, in contrast to the idea of environment which is of no importance (!). I understand that this Negro boy is an honor student in school and an all-round dependable character. What are we going to do with types like these? Due to his talent and love of learning he is entitled to associate with our best white boys and girls, but his color makes him an outcast. I understand that our Negroes in Chicago (probably a quarter of a million souls) are living in dire poverty and filth and that despair is breaking their spirits. I wish to heaven Roosevelt would stop worrying about Hitler and the Jewish refugees and open his heart to the plight of our own people. My heart goes out to the unfortunate, deserving black man.
>
> **15 December 1939:** I used to think that he who has lived much and suffered much is tolerant and forgiving, but how about the proud man who has suffered a great indignity at the hands of say a Swede, a Jew or a Negro? He is not human if he does not bear a secret grudge against all Swedes, all Jews, or all Negroes. He may reason with himself that all Swedes, etc., are not scoundrels but his heart is not convinced. I have always had a great pity for the Negroes because of the cruelties inflicted upon them, but lately a Negro whom I liked and trusted turned out to be such a liar and a thief, that I have momentarily turned against all of them. This fellow has the overly polite and apparently sincere manner of an old slave from the South and I thought him the soul of honor. I looked upon him as a St. Bernard that would protect children or give its life in defense of its master. But Matt turned out to be an old devil.

Pre-World War II

In July of 1939, Collins wrote of wishing to revise his libretto. He seems to have been driven by a desire to improve the opera's dramatic arc (see ***Composing Daughter of the South***, below).

One wonders also, however, if the composer had heard about the controversy that had arisen with the script for *Gone with the Wind* (which he did not see until 1940, according to Collins's journal). Randall Kennedy, author of *Nigger: The Strange Career of a Troublesome Word*, writes:

> Referring to blacks derogatorily as *niggers*, however, was the custom to which blacks objected most strongly. In 1939, when David O. Selznick was in the throes of producing *Gone with the Wind*, he received hundreds of letters from blacks warning him to remove all "nigger" references from his upcoming film. The letter writers were concerned because the novel on which the film was based was full of such references. So, too, were early drafts of the film script. Initially Selznick sought to solve the problem by promising that the N-word would not be spoken by any white characters, but once he had been made aware of the intensity of blacks' feelings, he resolved to prohibit its use entirely and took pains to describe his decision. A form letter declared that his studio had been in "frequent communication with Mr. [Walter] White of the Society for the Advancement of Colored People, and has accepted his suggestions concerning the elimination of the word 'nigger' from our picture. (p. 114, R. Kennedy)

Quoting from *Dictionary of Afro-American Slang*, a book written in 1970, Kennedy continues:

> For some observers, the only legitimate use of *nigger* is as a rhetorical boomerang against racists. There are others, however, who approvingly note a wide range of additional usages. According to Professor Clarence Major, when *nigger* is "used by black people among themselves, [it] is a racial term with undertones of warmth and good will–reflecting ... a tragicomic sensibility that is aware of black history."

Kennedy later adds these observations about use the N-word:

> Historically a signal of hostility, it can also be a salutation announcing affection, as in "This is my main nigger." (pp. 36-37, referencing Smitherman's *Black Talk*).
>
> A candid portrayal of the N-word's use among African Americans may be found in Helen Jackson Lee's autobiography, *Nigger in the Window*. It was Lee's cousin who first introduced her to *nigger*'s possibilities. As Lee remembered it, "Cousin Bea had a hundred different ways of saying *nigger*; listening to her, I learned the variety of meanings the word could assume. How it could be opened like an umbrella to

> cover a dozen different moods, or stretched like a rubber band to wrap up our family with other colored families. *Nigger* was a piece-of-clay word that you could shape to express your feelings. (pp. 37-8)

Then there is the matter of the origin of the speaker, and how that affected intra-African-American usage of the N-word. Early in 2009, opera singer Keel Watson reviewed the Collins libretto before agreeing to create the character of Jonah for the first recording *Daughter of the South*. After speaking with his father, who had been a sharecropper in the American South, Mr. Watson shared with this author some of his father's experience of the N-word, as used by fieldworkers from the Caribbean. Mr. Watson also provided a relevant entry in the online edition of the 1911 version of Encyclopedia Britannica:

> There is a different dynamic in Caribbean usage, as Frederic Cassidy, the noted authority on Jamaican English, has observed: "The feeling of the Jamaican Negro that he was far above the African is reflected still in many expressions. The word *niega* , which the *OED* enters under *neger* , but which is usually spelled *nayga* or *naygur* in the dialect literature, is used by black people to condemn those of their own colour…. *Naygur* is often tantamount to 'good for nothing' and *neegrish* is 'mean and dispicable'"

The very well read Collins may have been familiar with such reference books, as well as the writings of his contemporaries on the N-word, before he wrote the libretto for *Daughter*. For instance, in the 1925 book *N***** Heaven*, Carl Van Vechten wrote:

> While this informal epithet is freely used by Negroes among themselves, not only as a term of opprobrium, but actually as a term of endearment, its employment by a white person is always fiercely resented. [http://encyclopedia.jrank.org/articles/pages/751/Nigger.html]

Gershwin vs. Collins

Gershwin did research for *Porgy and Bess* in Charleston South Carolina, visiting nearby James Island. There, as well as on Sapelo Island to the south, Gullah communities had the best-preserved African cultural traditions. Gershwin knew of these traditions, and went there to learn more about them, toward bringing authenticity to his American folk opera.

Collins on the other hand, seems not to have made any study of African-American culture, nor to have deployed any particular dialect for the characters Jonah or Melda in his libretto for *Daughter of the South*. Prior to this recording, Susan Sweeney, Professor of Voice at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Department of Theater and Drama, and a dialect coach for actors and opera singers, reviewed the Collins libretto, toward offering advice for the singers and choir. Prof. Sweeney then wrote to this author, offering this analysis:

> I get no sense whatsoever that this is written to represent Gullah black English, which has many peculiarities of vocabulary and grammar found nowhere else other than Sierra Leone, Africa. This language reads to me exactly the same as the language written for the blacks in [the Kern musical] *Showboat*, which takes place in the Mississippi Delta, but really, I would label it as a sort of general southern slave / rural black dialect that you find in lots of novels and plays set in pre- and post-Civil War southern states. [23 January 2008 email communication to the author]

With his aesthetic goals for *Daughter* so radically different from those of Gershwin, Collins apparently was satisfied to draw upon more his more diffuse experiences of African-American culture. Some of these are known from his writings; still others may be surmised from the historical record.

The Irish and Africans: An Intersection?

As an Irish-American, Collins may also have had his own cultural experiences with the use of the N-word, and brought those to bear on the *Daughter of the South* libretto. The Wikipedia entry for "Irish Americans" gives some hints of what his experience may have been:

> The Irish took over half a century to become accepted as members of the U.S. White endogamous group. According to the 1860 edition of American Encyclopedia: A Popular Dictionary of General Knowledge, "[The Irish race shares] inherited features such as "low-browed and savage, groveling and bestial, lazy and wild, simian [ape-like] and sensual...." Scholars of the time described such uniquely Irish race-

> distinguishing features as eye and skin color, facial configuration, and physique.[7] Irish immigrants were so harshly discriminated against due to their Catholic religion that they kept their children from attending public schools, preferring that they remain illiterate rather than be subjected to what they saw as Protestant indoctrination. As late as 1881, English historian Edward A. Freeman (1823-1892) opined that the United States "would be a grand land if only every Irishman would kill a negro, and be hanged for it." As recently as 1920, Irish-American exogamy was 20 percent--less than half the outmarriage rate of today's Puerto Ricans. As recently as thirty years ago, some people sincerely believed that they could spot an Irishman trying to pass for White. Indeed, to this day scientific papers occasionally include "Irish" in lists of non-White ethnicities. See, for example, "the Parekh Report's use of the term 'black, Asian and Irish'."

Perceptions typical before Collins's time, and still common during his life, continued for decades thereafter. For just two examples: "The Jewish, the Italian and the Irish people were the niggers of the white world" (*Atlantic* magazine; December 1972, p. 91); "The Irish are the niggers of Europe, lads" (Irish novelist Roddy Doyle's book *The Commitments*; 1987, p. 13).

Did any of this Irish-oriented usage of the N-word come to bear on Collins as he wrote his libretto for *Daughte*r? Perhaps, but it seems rather that his focus was on the romantic relationship between Mary Lou and Robert, complicated by their births, respectively, in the American South and North.

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How does all this ramify for Collins's opera, and the characters of Jonah and Melda, slaves on a Southern plantation?

All of the characters in *Daughter* certainly embody Collins's personal aesthetic stance regarding the importance of letting the audience fill in the dramatic details. Even the central personalities, Mary Lou and Robert, are sketched lightly. Jonah and Melda, decidedly secondary characters, still make an impression.

The composer's biographer, Erik Eriksson, possessed a wide-ranging knowledge of opera. On 27 January 2008, less than six months before his death from cancer, Eriksson prepared a casting analysis for *Daughter of the South*. While perhaps over-estimating the age of the characters, Eriksson wrote:

> Several of the roles require voices of real substance, heavy lyric or even dramatic in caliber. Skilled articulation of the words is required to bring urgency to the story, to allow the music to register its full force. Thus, the descriptions below of what is required of each character's voice and histrionic abilities:
>
> Melda: Mezzo-soprano. Melda (age 45-55) is a good deal more than a caricature of a Black slave woman. She has been very close to Mary Lou and the Colonel's family and is clearly a valued person – and one with some authority within the [slave] community. Hers must be a warm, rich, well-knit mezzo capable of caressing her comforting music, yet with sufficient spark to shine in her exchanges with Jonah.
>
> Jonah: Lyric Baritone/Bass-baritone. Jonah (age 35-45), too, is a character of some authority, not as knowing as Melda, but with his own sense of self and the hope born of prospects of freedom. His is the firm, virile voice of optimism.

Perhaps Collins was correct to avoid study of African-American culture simply for use in his opera, avoiding a more complicated artistic agenda for *Daughter of the South*. He perhaps wisely composed and wrote instead about those aspects of a historical event with which he had the most personal experience: The implications of war for family relationships.

Music Influences

The music of *Daughter of the South* shares many identifiable qualities with Collins's other compositions for large ensembles, yet also makes more direct use of music styles from the popular culture of the 1920's and 30's, especially jazz and blues. Some of this may be attributed to the subject matter of

Daughter. Also, classical composers often use a relatively more accessible style for opera, a genre that–with its theatre, visual art, and dance elements–inherently draws an audience interested in more than just music.

Daughter makes frequent use of music that, although derived from varied cultural sources, would have sounded familiar to many in the audience.

African-American

George Gershwin's preparation for the composition of *Porgy and Bess* included a stay in Charlottesville, South Carolina. During excursions to nearby James Island, the composer gained some familiarity with the African-influenced music of the Gullah community. For his American folk opera, Gershwin also drew on other African-American genres with which he had become acquainted, such as blues, work songs, and spirituals, as well as European opera forms such as the aria.

Collins seems not to have undertaken any specific study of African-American music for his opera. However, by the time of the opera's composition in 1939 Collins had for over two decades been witness, both in Europe and in the USA, to the rising influence of African-American folk, jazz and spiritual music. The composer's ear for this evolving tradition and other popular music of the times must have impressed Collins's fellow Chicagoan, poet Carl Sandburg. For his 1927 book *The American Songbag*, the three-time Pulitzer Prize winner commissioned Collins's arrangement of the ballad *Frankie and Johnnie*.

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Daughter of the South opens with a boisterous instrumental passage, which quickly sets the stage for the opening exchange between the plantation slaves Jonah and Melda. To a far greater extent than any of his other large-scale works, Collins makes use of "folk" modes throughout his only opera. The opening music's energetic pentatonic melody is paired with a rhythm associated with the cakewalk of blacks.

This "cakewalk" rhythm (short-long-short-long-long) is related to the Latin American *clave*, which in turn is part of the *habañera*, a rhythmic figure identified by composer Jelly Roll Morton and others as adding a "Spanish tinge" to early jazz. Altogether, the music that starts the opera is evocative of the American rural South and plantation life, at least as popularly perceived by urban Northerners, certainly in Collins's time, and perhaps still today.

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Based on Edna Ferber's 1926 novel, the history-making *Showboat* opened on Broadway in 1927, and was made into a film in 1936. Although there is no mention made of this American musical in the writings of Collins, it is almost certain that he was familiar with its music, composed by Jerome Kern, including its perhaps most popular song, "Ol' Man River." About twenty-five seconds into "When ha mammy dies" (Track 2), Melda sings with feeling of her devotion to Mary Lou. When the words "ole man ribber flowin' along" are sung, there is a deft tip of Collins's melodic hat to "Ol' Man River." Kern's song, by its gentle syncopations and modal melodic material, was meant to be evocative of rural black music. Thus Collins's paraphrase here could perhaps be described as a "twice-removed" nod to African-American music.

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In the Scene I "ballet" (Track 5), the *Allegro barbaro* employs syncopations and repetitive rhythms toward a generalized primal quality, inviting comparison with passages in Stravinsky's *Le sacre du printemps* (*Rite of Spring*).

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Later in this track, Collins introduces a quiet contrasting melody evocative of African-American spirituals, redolent with bluesy inflections. By the time of opera's composition, Collins was delving

deeply and enthusiastically into spirituals, eventually making rather complex piano or orchestral arrangements of several. In his journal, on 9 April 1939, Collins wrote:

> Easter Sunday. (Seventy years ago today Lee surrendered to Grant at Appomattox. It also was a Sunday). In the morning finished "Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel." (The other day I brought an amazing collection of Negro spirituals and am going to make piano pieces of them).

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In Chicago, Collins could have heard some of the world's talented most jazz musicians. As jazz musicians such as Louis Armstrong and "Jellyroll" Morton migrated north to the Windy City in the 1920s and during the Depression, they ignited a distinctive jazz style, augmenting the contributions of native Chicagoans, including Benny Goodman.

Collins's son, Edward Jr., recalls his father visiting Chicago's "black and tan" clubs, along with family members and musician friends. One of these evenings is recalled in the composer's 21 February 1940 journal entry:

> By rights I should have gone early but hearkening to one of my destructive traits of character, I made a sortie to the south side in the company of a wild friend and spent most of the evening carousing with Negroes. This is very fascinating because you, as a white, are treated with great deference and the musicians almost jump out of their skins to please you. At one point, the drummer plays a long solo and I was actually afraid that he would break his neck.

In 1922, Armstrong quickly became a sensation among his fellow Chicago jazz musicians, playing with his mentor Joe Oliver's *Creole Jazz Band* at Lincoln Gardens (located at 459 East 31st Street, on the city's south side). 1930 was likely the first appearance by Duke Ellington in Chicago, followed the next year by an extended engagement at the south side Savoy club.

Yet neither Armstrong nor Ellington is mentioned in Collins's writings. His biographer Erik Eriksson noted that Collins appreciated the skills needed to be a "jazz" player, once confiding to his journal that, had he the chance to begin again, he might choose to become a popular artist like Eddie Duchin. Collins also admired Ray Noble, who he felt was "the best dance maestro we have" (16 December 1940 journal entry).

It seems likely that Collins was perhaps drawn more to the technique and entertainment skills of white musicians such as Duchin and Noble, and their jazz-inflected arrangements, than to the jazz that was being taken to new levels of artistry by African-American geniuses such as Armstrong and Ellington.

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Collins also was aware of how the "jazz" that African-American soldiers had introduced to Europe at the end of World War I was influencing European music. Writing in his journal on 28 October 1927, Collins complained: "I read today the phenomenal success of 'Johnny spielt auf.' This new jazz opera has swept Germany and here I am studying "Lohengrin!"

Celtic

Porgy and Bess and Gershwin's other compositions were influenced by both rural southern black music and the urban jazz of New York City. In melodies for songs such as "It Ain't Necessarily So," some also hear influences from the liturgical music of Gershwin's own Jewish religious heritage.

Born to Irish immigrants, Collins's Celtic heritage can be heard in *Daughter of the South*, intersecting with his passion for the Civil War, his Romantic sensibilities, and his sense of humor.

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Noted Civil War music expert and writer Nick Contorno identifies two authentic melodies that were employed by Collins: *Dixie* and *The Girl I Left Behind* (*Me*). The composer combines these at the end of Scene I (Track 12), evoking instrumentally the marshalling of the troops, Confederate and Union, for the newly declared war. Contorno admiringly notes that Collins combines the melodies in an artful way that is marked by "skillful orchestration, with craftsman-like yet playful treatment of motives."

Both these tunes also have Celtic roots, which is appropriate given the significant involvement of Irish-Americans in the armies on both sides of the Civil War. Moreover, Collins's own Irish-American relatives fought in the War Between the States, serving in the Union army; as veterans, they made a distinct impression on composer in his youth. Also, given Celtic traditions of storytelling and music-making, Collins may have actually heard performances of Irish-influenced Civil War music by the hearth or on the porch of his own home or those of relatives.

As mentioned above, Collins's interest in the Civil War tune *Dixie* was manifested early on, in a composition exploring contrapuntal techniques. With melodic ancestors in specific English song and Scottish dance tunes dating from hundreds of years ago, *Dixie*'s jaunty music likely explains why it was a favorite of Abraham Lincoln. Despite its use as an unofficial "national" anthem by the Confederacy in a civil war that killed and wounded so many, at the turn of the 20th century *Dixie* was still identified in some reference books as the most popular song in America.

Even African-American composers such as Eubie Blake used the tune to signal a Southern setting or person in their music, albeit sometimes with irony. Composed in the 1850s by an Ohio minstrel, ironically perhaps in collaboration with African-American neighbors who hailed from a plantation in the lowlands of Maryland, *Dixie*'s lyrics about the imagined pleasures of plantation life, even for slaves, explain why it became the unofficial anthem of the Confederacy. Alternative pro-Abolition lyrics were soon deployed by Northerners, as were versions satirizing the romanticized re-imaginations of plantation slavery in the original lyrics.

Like *Dixie*, the other Civil War era tune used in the opera, *The Girl I Left Behind* (*Me*), has long-ago Celtic roots, with a melody that dates back at least to late 16th century England. The lyrics, dating back to an Irish song collection of the 1700s, tell of a soldier leaving tempting foreign beauties to return to his hometown gal. If known to Collins, as seems likely, those lyrics probably resonated with Collins, veteran of a World War I deployment in France. A favorite song of both the Union and the Confederacy armies, use of *The Girl* in *Daughter of the South* is thus packed with emotion, especially considering the Northerner Robert's forced separation from Mary Lou.

Heard in colonial America, following the American Revolution the tune for *The Girl* was played by the new democracy's Continental Army. During the Civil War, *The Girl* was played by the armies of both the Union and the Confederacy. (The tune for *The Girl I Left Behind* makes an appearance in at least two other classical compositions: the Irish and British composer Hamilton Harty's *An Irish Symphony*, and the American Roy Harris's *Symphony No. 4* or *Folk Song Symphony*.)

Thus in *Daughter of the South*, the use of *The Girl I Left Behind* is packed with many meanings. By combining *The Girl* contrapuntally with *Dixie*, Collins added still more import, perhaps reinforcing Jonah's horror that Robert would be fighting Col. Edmond. As the two melodies are twisted melodically and warped by dissonance, Collins may have also intended to convey something of his own experience of the inevitable terrors and absurdity of war, no matter how noble the cause.

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Following a reprise of the *Allegro barbaro* materials, and a little over eight minutes into this "ballet" (Track 5), Collins recycles the music from his jaunty 1938 piano solo composition *Cowboy's Breakdown*. The "snap" (short-long) rhythm and melodic features are characteristic of the jig, which may remind some listeners about the influence of Celtic culture on the American South. Collins does not provide any specific stage

direction for this music, perhaps in keeping with his aesthetic stance about how the creative artist best engages the imagination of the audience. Still, it is easy to imagine the white men and women of the plantation or its neighboring homes dancing to this jig, perhaps as a competitive response to the dancing of the plantation's slaves.

At the close of the "jig," Collins quotes the popular music "motto" known now by most Americans as *Shave and a Haircut – Two Bits*. The tune dates back at least to the popular 1899 song *At a Darktown Cakewalk*. About forty years later another song that became popular ended with this same tune setting the words *Shave and a Haircut—Shampoo*. Somehow, as often happens with folk or popular song, the last word was replaced by "Two bits," slang for the US 25¢ coin known as the quarter. *Shave and a Haircut* makes another, more recent operatic appearance in Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story*: "Gee, Off-i-cer Krup-ke, Krup you!"

(In later years, *Cowboy's Breakdown* became Collins's signature encore, arranged both for solo piano and full orchestra. The composer's son, Edward, Jr., recalls his father's performance of the piece with the around 1941, during a Chicago Symphony Orchestra Young People's Concert; the *Breakdown* was so popular that the encore was repeated. The composer never failed to play it at parties.)

European-American
The waltz must have been a compositional genre that came very easily to the composer Collins, even when he was young; in the marginalia of a music sketchbook from the 1920s, he scribbled that the waltz genre could always be relied upon, even when inspiration was absent.

As danced in Europe, the waltz was intended to create a dizzying release from reality, each pair of dancers rotating within a larger rotation of all dancers around the perimeter of the ballroom, where the shadows sometimes provided cover for a certain discreet intimacy.

Fittingly, Collins deploys the waltz genre twice in the opera's first scene, when Col. Randolph (Track 3) and Mary Lou (Track 10) sing of their more happy dreams and hopes, soon to be confronted by the darker realities of life and the nightmares of war.

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From European-American military music, Collins quotes "Taps," about five minutes into Mary Lou's lament about war and the suffering of women (Track 13). Traditionally played at military funerals on the bugle cornet, which have a darker tone than the trumpet, here the woeful tune is set by the composer even more darkly, in the horns.

Elsewhere in *Daughter*, Collins evokes the fifes and drums to which Civil War armies often marched, at times scoring the opera's music for two piccolos.

Death also makes an appearance in another part of *Daughter*. Here Collins reinforces his words describing the ghosts of soldiers and civilians killed during the war, sung by Mary Lou, with a "March funébre" (Track 16). The music is scored as an *equali*, a genre for four equal instruments, performed at the funerals of prominent Europeans during the 17th and 18th centuries. The orchestra's low brass section, three trombones and a tuba, stands in for the traditional trombone quartet.

Roman Catholic
Raised as Roman Catholic in Illinois, in the opera Collins also draws on this rich religious heritage.

Toward the end of Scene I, Mary Lou sings to her fiancé Robert: "But Death is abroad, And his icy finger, May chill you glowing heart" (Track 10, "I too shall close my eyes"). At this point in the score, the composer deploys the melody of *Dies Irae* (Day of Wrath), a medieval *sequence* from the Roman Catholic Requiem Mass.

Dies Irae would have been intimately familiar to Collins from his youthful years as organist for his parents' church in Joliet.

**Collins (far right) and spouse Frieda (far right),
with Capuchin monk, family and friends at Wisconsin's Holy Hill,
a Roman Catholic cathedral ca. 1920**

The Composition of Daughter of the South

As mentioned earlier in this essay, *Daughter of the South* had its creative roots in the early 1920s. The first specific musical impulse appeared then, with the "Technical Stunt" providing contrapuntal treatment of the melody for *Dixie*. The core dramatic idea –"a Southern beauty who loved a Northern boy in 1861"– appears in Collins's journal late in 1921.

All the Collins music manuscripts and memorabilia will be deposited in Chicago's Newberry Library, allowing scholarly research. Until then, only tentative statements about the genesis of *Daughter of the South* are possible. Yet much can be learned from the available journal entries, the most relevant, printed below, allow tentative statements about the composition of the opera.

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There is no historical evidence that *Daughter of the South*, or any other Collins composition, was written in response to a commission. Collins was however sometimes motivated to compose by the performance talents of individual performers, conductors, and ensembles (e.g., Ernestine Schumann-Heink, Frederick Stock, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, etc.). Not a few Collins compositions bear dedications, while the extant source scores for *Daughter* do not. Therefore the opera does not seem to have been inspired by a particular opera company or conductor.

Collins wrote several works specifically for entry in competitions, writing enthusiastically in his journal of the public adulation and prize money that would reward a winning composition. There is however no evidence that *Daughter* was inspired by, or submitted to, any competition. After completion, *Daughter of the South*, did win an American opera award for the composer, the *Bispham Memorial Medal Award*. But that was an honor Collins seems neither to have sought nor expected, and indeed he wrote of the award with a mix of appreciation and indifference.

Born to struggling Irish immigrant parents, Collins was dependent on sponsors for his early piano studies in Chicago and his later education in Europe, thereafter remaining keenly aware of financial matters related

to his profession. During his years as a student in Berlin, in letters to his family in Joliet, Collins noted somewhat incredulously that almost all of the performances in the major halls there were financed by artists' managers, or by the artists themselves. He seems to have sought success primarily for the better artistic control and quality of cultural life it would have provided him, and secondarily for the potential financial resources and independence, including benefits for his own children as well as his impoverished Joliet relatives.

In the late 1930s, Collins might have had occasion to hope that the *Chicago City Opera* would produce his *Daughter of the South*. After all, despite the second phase of the Depression, in 1938 the company produced 30 operas in 46 performances, in the following year 27 operas in 44 performances, and, in 1940, 23 operas in 37 performances (Marsh and Pellegrini). The start of World War II would have dashed those hopes, bringing with it the financial failure of the *Chicago City Opera*.

During the Depression, Collins was forced to consider lowering his artistic standards and mused anxiously in his diary about composing for new media, such as radio, or even writing in a more popular style. That latter impulse may have carried over to *Daughter*. Despite its differences from *Porgy and Bess* and *Gone With the Wind*, Collins opera certainly worked the same themes as those very popular works.

Other smaller compromises may have been made. Collins wrote a humorously sarcastic rant in his journal on 12 November 1929: "And cursed by ye, barbarians of an audience with your incessant coughing and your applause when the tenor hits a high one!" Ten years later, Collins wrote one of those crowd-pleasing high notes for his opera's tenor, Robert.

Still, rather than compromise on quality in the opera's public presentation, the composer resisted a campaign by well-meaning admirers to present a semi-staged concert version. Collins was convinced would result in an artistic disaster, and critical reviews.

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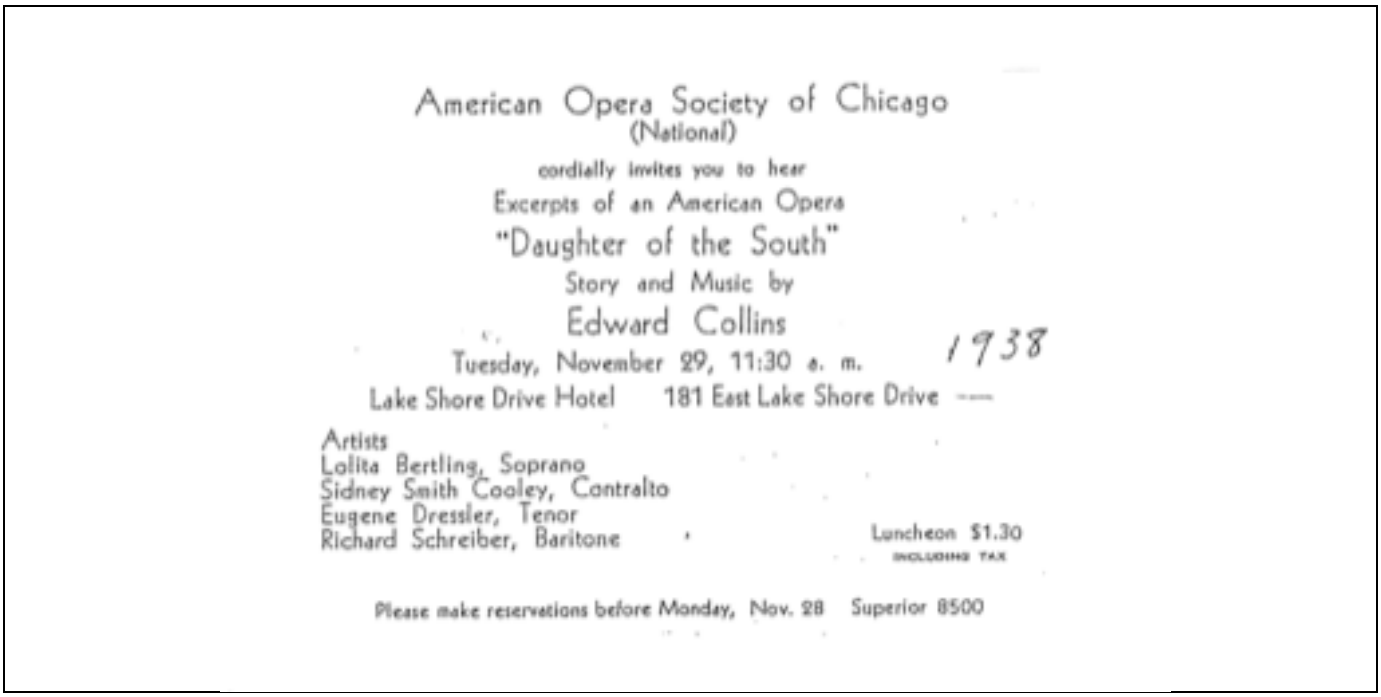
In 1938, substantial portions of *Daughter of the South* were performed at the composer's home. Later that year, members of the *Opera Society* were invited to hear excerpts from the as yet unfinished opera.



American Opera Society of Chicago
(National)
cordially invites you to hear
Excerpts of an American Opera
"Daughter of the South"
Story and Music by
Edward Collins
Tuesday, November 29, 11:30 a. m. 1938
Lake Shore Drive Hotel 181 East Lake Shore Drive
Artists
Lolita Bertling, Soprano
Sidney Smith Cooley, Contralto
Eugene Dressler, Tenor
Richard Schreiber, Baritone
Luncheon $1.30
INCLUDING TAX
Please make reservations before Monday, Nov. 28 Superior 8500

The *Society* had been co-founded by the composer Evelyn Everest Freer Archibald in 1921 as the *American Society for Opera in Our Language* (i.e., English). Thus Collins was in one sense reconnecting with the artistic stance he encountered during his 1912-13 stay in New York City, where the Century Opera company had specialized in performing "opera in English."

At this luncheon performance in the Lake Shore Hotel's Arts Club, attendees heard this program:

AMERICAN OPERA SOCIETY - NATIONAL

Presents

"DAUGHTER OF THE SOUTH"

Opera in One Act and Two Scenes

Text and Music by
EDWARD COLLINS

Cast of Characters:

Col. Edmond Randolph of Virginia (Baritone)
Mary Lou Randolph, his daughter (Soprano)
Robert Warren, a young man from the North (Tenor)
Esmerelda, Mary Lou's Mammy (Mezzo Soprano)
Jonah, head slave (Bass)
A confederate sergeant (Baritone)
Detachment of confederate soldiers.
Male and female slaves and pickaninnies.

Excerpts sung by -
LOLITA BERTLING, Soprano
SYDNEY SMITH COOLEY, Mezzo-Soprano
EUGENE DRESSLER, Tenor
RICHARD SCHREIBER, Baritone

MR. COLLINS at the Piano

PROGRAM

I. Dialogue of Melda and Jonah
(Ah hears Marse Lincoln gwine a free all de slaves)

II. Dialogue of Col. Randolph and Mary Lou
(Yes 'tis true there are storm-clouds everywhere)

III. Welcome to the guests by Col. Randolph
(Welcome, dear friends, lovely ladies and gallant men of the South)

IV. Two dances from the negro ballet.

V. Love scene - Mary Lou and Robert.

VI. Mary Lou's aria.
(Again the year has come to the spring)

VII. Melda's lullaby
(Now close dos eyes an' don' be 'fraid)

IIX. Robert's aria
(During these four eternal years)

IX. Finale Quartette
(Oh cherished land)

Afterwards, a reviewer now known only by his initials wrote:

> Edward Collins has written an American opera concerned with the period of the civil war, with the locale in the south. It is a big work based on an effective libretto which he has written himself, and a concert version of it presented twice within the last week in Chicago, drew forth huzzahs from Chicago's musical elite. The first performance at the Collins home was followed by a more formal presentation at the Arts Club for the American Opera Society November 29.
>
> The soloists–Lolita Bertling, soprano; Sydney Smith Cooley, contralto; Eugene Dressler, tenor, and Richard Schreier, baritone–were aided by Mr. Collins himself at the piano.
>
> The cast is made up of White and Colored people. The book, commencing with the day the Civil War is declared, carries through the period to the day peace is signed. A love story which involves a Southerner and a Yankee has a strong dramatic element, and Mr. Collins has employed an unexpected sense of theatre to enhance this story. The introduction of a vivid ballet, brilliant choral effects and use of the Colored superstitions, add much to the drama. Musically, the work is extraordinarily well done. There are grateful arias, arresting ensembles and a brilliant use of original thematic material.
>
> The soloists fitted satisfyingly into the roles assigned them and enhanced the music so effectively that both audiences felt a keen desire to see and hear them in a complete performance. – L.W.N.

Late in 1940, a third concert performance of excerpts from *Daughter of the South* was presented. This second presentation took place at the Cordon Club, "founded in 1915 by women who had studios in Chicago's Fine Arts Building, which was then the center of the city's fine arts community; the club was created to foster independence and to 'guard and protect self-expression beyond domestic bounds.'" (from *Alma Birmingham Papers* catalogue description, University of Illinois at Chicago Library). The composer again accompanied singers, and performed instrumental sections of the opera, on the piano.

That same year, Collins apparently tried to promote his opera to at least one major opera company. His daughter Marianna contributed program notes for a performance of Collins's *Hymn to the Earth* by the *William Ferris Chorale* on 2 June 1989. Her notes stated that, sometime in 1940, the composer performed *Daughter of the South* for the Metropolitan Opera's general manager Edward Johnson.

[In 1939, Mary Lou's aria also became the occasion for one of the rare times when Collins's career as a composer intersected with a wind band. There had been at least three previous occasions: During his WWI service, Collins had written the *March of the 88th Regiment* (originally titled *Over the Top*) for his fellow doughboys. Appointed a military band director by John Philip Sousa at the close of the Great War, Collins on his return stateside from military service briefly conducted a Chicago band. On 31 July 1932, Collins wrote in his journal that "under the inspiration of the $400 a week offer [from a radio advertiser] I sat down a tore off a band march." Unfortunately, neither the 1940 opera aria arrangement nor any other Collins composition for wind band has as yet been recovered; all that remains are fragments of a composition for winds (likely from the score for *Who Can Tell?*) titled "Gypsy March."]

Collins on His Opera

The following Collins journal entries provide valuable insights on the composer's motivations in writing the opera, as well as details about *Daughter of the South's* composition and performance.

> **29 December 1922** Talked with a playwright tonight–a fellow who struggled along without enough to eat until he finally wrote something which made a great hit. Now he is very wealthy and a celebrity; everyone has heard of you and admires you. The world is kind and there is an exquisite feeling of triumph which makes life a beautiful dream. It is all the result of letting your imagination free rein and not spending too much time on side issues.
>
> **21 February 1925** Went to the symphony concert tonight. Igor Stravinsky conducted a number of his own works. I was enthralled. His is the position in the musical world I covet. How wonderful to feel that you are the possessor of genius–that you are one of the elect! His life must be a succession of ecstatic

experiences. The genius is the only independent person on earth because he craves nothing of this world. He is above riches, publicity or adulation; he goes on his own way convinced of his mission. This means [he] associates only with the finest orchestras and the most gifted people in all countries. He has the freedom of the bird and the strength of the lion.

1 January 1939: This will be my big year; the gods have told me so. This time next year I shall be famous and rich–the latter not for myself but for those who love me. They will have money and they will be happy, but I shall have the world at my feet and shall be hailed as a genius.

3 January 1939: Thank heaven! The holidays are finally over. … During the last ten days we went from one cocktail party to another often many times out into the country and today I wish all my friends to the devil for having invited us out so much. School reopened this morning but I did not go back to the conservatory. Spent all day working on "Daughter of the South." Am on page 240 of the score and shall be through with it in four or five days. It is nice writing for the orchestra but what an expenditure of time! Last August at Door I was sometimes able to do four pages a day but in Chicago I never do more than two or two and a half. I sit home thinking what to do with the harp and am often stuck. Early next week I shall write "finis" to it and get at the piano vocal score. That will not take long and then I shall feel like a free man who is liberated from prison.

14 January 1939: Finished the orchestration of the Daughter of the South" this noon. Page 252. Now I must check up on the vocal score and the stage directions before I can finally feel liberated from this work that has cost me so much time and worry. It will be with a feeling of relief that I shall turn my thoughts to something new. This afternoon I heard "Don Giovanni" from the Metropolitan with a wonderful cast. I was overwhelmed by the work. This is surely Mozart's masterpiece. It gathers momentum up to the final scene where it probably transcends even Beethoven and Wagner in dramatic power. How subdued we are in the presence of genius! It become a miracle, a revelation and we are struck dumb. Criticism is ridiculous."

11 April 1939 Life is becoming so complicated. Dorothy is going to graduate from high-school in June. For some time she has been going out with young men and I cannot suppress a little pang when she comes in late after some party. Next year she will go away to school and after that she will marry. Then I shall be a grandfather! I feel so poorly equipped for all this; in the first place she will be financed by her grandfather and that will be a great humiliation to me. If I were a businessman with a good bank balance and a home of my own I would not be so apprehensive of the future, but what can a struggling composer do? Now we have the beautiful home in Fish Creek and I am swamped. Through the unsettled conditions throughout the world and my urgent need of money, I have turned away from idealism in art; I will do anything to gain fame and possibly wealth. I am even willing to write popular music or to work in Hollywood. Years ago I would have scoffed at the idea of making a compromise with Tin Pan Alley. But times have changed; why write music that breathes religion and love when bombs are dropping from the sky and whole nations are in agony?

11 July 1939 The man who has life by the horns (to be polite) is he who does the things which make him happy. At first thought this might look like a selfish rule of conduct, but I mean it in a constructive sense. Just now I am in the throes of making a decision which has kept me "troubled in mind" for some time. Some people want me to give a performance of my opera at a local theatre; now I am not satisfied with "The Daughter of the South." The libretto needs to be revised in the first place; I wrote the music as I went along which I have found out is a fatal procedure. In other words I created situations to fit the music and thought up new incidents as soon as I had caught up with myself. I see now there is no working up to a big climax; the action is a chapter out of everyday life of certain characters in trying times. I did not do as I should – have the big moment to start with and work away from it in both directions, finishing the text before I set myself to creating the music. That is the first objection to this performance. Then they want to have a bona fide theatrical representation with costumes and *mise en scene* which is very funny considering the limited resources. There is nothing funnier than an opera put on with home made scenery and inexperienced actors, even though the latter have beautiful voices. What makes the decision harder is the fact that this group, the Lake View Musical Society, is honestly trying to help me, a local composer, put on an American work. I appreciate their sympathy but when I see the dear old ladies in the chorus, I could burst out laughing. The third and perhaps most important objection is that I am working on other things which must finish and I am unhappy at having to quit them and go back to 'The Daughter."

18 July 1939: My day at home. Arose at 9:30 after being out late. I intended going to the band concert in

grant Park because a Miss [Olive] Arthur was scheduled to sing Mary Lou's aria from Daughter of the South with band accompaniment but it rained during the day and was still pouring at eight o'clock, so supposing the concert would be called off, I continued to sit around at "Earl's" [probably a Northside tavern] and waste the evening. Arrived home about 2:30 A.M. At the breakfast table Elsie told me that the concert had taken place in spite of the weather. I called Miss Arthur who informed me that my aria went beautifully and that it was loudly applauded by the twenty-five people sitting in the rain. I was hoping that the concert would be definitely postponed as I could see no possible success for my music; I gave the bandmaster orchestra parts and he tinkered with them so that band musicians could play them. Then came the question of the modern difficult idiom and one short rehearsal, the soprano singing through a microphone, the band not near the microphone, the noise of the wind off the lake, etc., etc. I felt the performance would be a joke and now I hear from some friends who were there that it was good. Well, I shall be very curious to hear it next week when it is to be repeated.

26 July 1939: The band concert which had been marred by the rain on the eighteenth took place this evening. Miss Arthur called at the [American] Conservatory about ten A.M. to tell me that she had already had her rehearsal and that my aria went very well. I was amazed and refused to believe it; it seemed impossible that the band musicians could take the string parts and make them sound like anything after only one rehearsal. I dreaded hearing the piece but there was no escape. Invited Elsie [his sister-in-law and Rita [her best friend] to the Cliff Dwellers for dinner at 6:30 and on the way to the bandshell we picked up Carl Alwin [an immigrant conductor, whose real name was Oskar Pinkus Alwin]. What with parking some distance away we arrived late but finally some ushers put chairs in the press section for us and we were comfortably seated by the time Miss Arthur came onto the stage to sing "Again the Year." I was agreeably surprised; the band accompanied very discreetly and the conductor had the tempi just right. The one disappointment was the vocal part which I heard from the front and from one of the amplifiers on the side of the field. But Frieda heard it [the radio broadcast] in Fish Creek and Ann [Collins's sister] heard it in Joliet and both said the voice came through very beautifully.

Collins was only the fifth composer to be awarded the David Bispham Memorial Medal. The medal is now in the Collins archive as part of the Midwest Manuscripts Collection of Chicago's Newberry Library (www.newberry.org).

17 October 1939: This noon I received the David Bispham medal for my "Daughter of the South." It is very beautiful and although realize that many other American composers of no talent have been given this same honor, I still cherish it. After the luncheon we went to the Presbyterian Hospital and visited Ruth Ross [a wealthy heiress from Sheboygan, Wisconsin] who is there for a minor operation. She kissed the medal and was genuinely happy for me. There is a woman! In the evening Edgardo Simone [a sculptor] had a stag party at his studio. After mostaccioli and wine we repaired to the floor above where a fellow showed movies of normal and decidedly abnormal sexual intercourse. The "best" ones were of course from Paris. About ten o'clock Frieda called for me, much to the amusement of the men at the party. Such is life in the gay 30's that a man's wife calls for him at a very early hour and he leaves without a murmur.

6 November 1939: After the opera we met Carl Alwin [a refugee conductor from Vienna] and went to an Italian restaurant where we ate preposterously fattening food and drank beer (!). Alvin likes my "Daughter of the South" and is going to recommend it to [Henry G.] Weber, the director of our opera. I

guess I should have been enthusiastic about he idea, but I was not, knowing conditions here and everywhere else. In case my father-in-law guarantees the house they will give me one very inadequate performance; this latter means one orchestra rehearsal and one rehearsal with the entire company–the soloists, of course to be very "cheap"; i.e. young Americans of no experience. Next morning the critics would roast the piece.

2 January 1940: Then too, since writing the "Daughter of the South" I have had the greatest sympathy with the Confederates even though their "glorious cause" would now be considered preposterous. Then too when Frieda and I drove to Palm Beach a couple years ago, we went through Jonesboro and tried to figure out just where Tara was.

3 February 1940: I stuck to my knitting all forenoon, that is– my Mozart [piano practice]–and after lunch listened to "Lucia" on the radio, but not for long. I pressed Marianna into service and she made me a nice new copy of my radio script. Tried to take a nap in the afternoon, but got to thinking of my Mozart Sonatas and how long it is going to take me to get through all of them, so jumped up and practiced until about six. Then I dressed and went to the radio station. It was a cute experience. I talked for ten minutes on the problems of the composer and Mr. Randall complimented me very much; said my performance was "almost professional"–whatever that means. Mrs. Frank Logan preceded me with a talk on Picasso and a young woman followed me with a short harangue on the little theatre. As it came time for me to go before the mike I became very nervous and the script trembled terribly. After finishing each sheet I dropped it on the floor, but so noisily that Mr. Randall cautioned me. Half way through the speech he shoved a big sign in front of me with "slower" on it. My family in Joliet said it was very good, but Laszlo said my false teeth spoiled it, which was a very interesting criticism in that I have no false teeth.

4 February 1940: Up at 8:30 and all unstrung from the evening before. Took a walk for a half hour which purified me somewhat and allowed me to get back to my Wolfgang Amadeus. After dinner I took a man's sized siesta and felt myself again. Practiced for two hours and then went to Evanston for an hour where I rehearsed Mary Lou's aria from the "Daughter of the South" with a soprano who intends to sing it for the Lake View Musical Society. I recommended Olive Arthur, but the program committee refused to pay her $10 which I stipulated. Rehearsed Mary Lou's aria with soprano who intends to sing it for the Lake View Memorial Society. Strange the miserly attitude of the public toward musicians! … Well, this young person has a nice voice but has singer trouble which means she is dumb and unmusical. I could have slapped her on several occasions when she couldn't get a simple interval and when she made the same rhythmical errors a dozen times in succession. But she is not worried: she can sing (and hold) the high B at the end and she knows that is the only thing her audience will be interested in.

12 February 1940: Arrived at the Conservatory around nine and taught until noon. Mrs. Baker (soprano) came to my studio about 12:20 to rehearse "Again the year, etc…" she had learned it fairly well during my absence in Florida, but her voice turned out to be squeaky and also lacked certain valuable qualities of the heart. We went to the concert about three o'clock. I gave a short off-hand talk on the historical background of "The Daughter of the South" and then Mrs. Baker sang the aria. The women of the Lakeview Musical Society gave us quite an ovation. Rushed back to the studio, thus missing the tea and all the talk. Also missed (as usual) some old dame who "knew me in Joliet when I was a little boy."

16 October 1940: In the afternoon I taught a little and listened to several singers who want to learn my ill-starred "Daughter of the South."

20 November 1940: I am again having singer trouble.

23 November 1940: I spoke to [Chicago City Opera conductor and music director] Henry Weber in the lobby; he was snooping around with a rather worried look. I hear that the season is disastrous from the money angle– $30,000 deficit for the first ten performances.

30 November 1940: After breakfast I worked on the last movement of my [third] piano concerto but found nothing worth writing down. … In the afternoon I lay down for a few minutes but was roused by a call from Mrs. Singleton who chided me for not getting the music of 'Daughter of the South' to several of the singers. So for the rest of the afternoon I copied words and music - much against my will. This opera adventure is getting me down. I told the women I was dead against it but true to their sex they are being very tenacious and want to go through with the original plans. Well, they will find out what they are up against and will let me have my way and perform the opera in a concert version.

> **4 December 1940:** An uneventful day. Practiced the "Fantasie Pieces" by Schumann all day … (In the afternoon I rehearsed "Daughter" with a soprano and tenor. For the first time in my life I have a tenor who is smarter than a soprano. This fellow has rhythm and a fine musical instinct. She has no rhythm and no musical instinct).
>
> **5 December 1940:** Went to the Conservatory early and gave eight or ten lessons. At 4 P.M. went to the Cordon Club where excerpts of the "Daughter" were sung. They sounded well. I played part of the ballet - the jazzy part. The dumb soprano turned out fine. She sang with big voice and expression and was fairly accurate. The tenor, on the other hand, was scared to death and his voice sounded tight and small. I over-accented to try to rouse him, but he wouldn't let himself go. These tenors all have a weak streak. They are of course somewhat effeminate, but it is not the effeminacy of women who have a great deal of nervous energy in a crisis. The tenor is a coward.

After *Daughter of the South*, Collins would compose other works, including the *Ballet-Suite: Masque of the Red Death*, which was entered in a St. Louis competition, and thus likely created with at least some consideration by the composer of potential financial reward.

In 1942, three years after the opera's completion, Collins also penned possibly his finest work, the monumental *Concerto. No. 3*. The composer himself played the very demanding piano solo part at its Chicago Symphony Orchestra's premiere in 1943; Hans Lange conducted, replacing the recently deceased Frederick Stock.

Unlike opera, with its more costly production overhead, the symphony orchestra was still a viable cultural venture, despite the challenges of World War II to the USA economy and thus the arts.

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Around the time he was completing the opera, Collins occasionally began to experience ill health. Following a trip to Florida, with his wife Frieda and youngest son "Eddie," Collins wrote on 3 March 1940:

> I went to bed early because I worried about my cold. During the trip I coughed incessantly and during the nights no one got any sleep. Finally it hurt me to cough and I was sure I had pneumonia. Driving for two days throughout the cold rain and fog did not help matters.

The next day's journal entry reads:

> Quoting Mary Lou, I awoke with an "ache in my breast." Not pneumonia (for during the night I perspired and my cold is better) but just the old-fashioned heart-ache. … "was in bed by ten thirty. Again hot lemonade and again ten grains of aspirin.

Two months later, in May 1940, Collins suffered the first of three heart attacks (the last, in 1951, was fatal). It seems likely that this too may have caused him to set aside whatever hopes he may have had for a stage performance – by music forces up to his artistic standards – of his "ill-starred" *Daughter of the South*.

The Restoration of Daughter of the South

Following the death of the Collins's widow Frieda in 1965, descendants saved most of the composer's music that was in possession of the family, depositing some copies at Chicago's Newberry Library. To keep the music available for performances, most of the scores and parts were placed in the guardianship of William Ferris and John Vorrasi, and stored in Chicago's Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, base for the William Ferris Chorale.

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When the project to restore the music legacy of Collins got underway in 2001, it was thought that the music for *Daughter of the South* had been lost. Fortunately, with some effort, all of Scene I was recovered

and much of Scene II. However, about forty-two pages of the full score– all from Scene II– remained missing (see shaded section of libretto in the CD booklet).

Once all the extant original music having been edited and digitally engraved, there was some consideration of recording the opera with just these materials. On the other hand, it seemed likely that a fully restored opera would have a better chance for performance, and tat argument won out.

Fortunately, there were good clues as to how to proceed with an artistically sound restoration. First, the duration of the 262-page full score was estimated to be about 65 minutes, from which it could be deduced that the missing 42 pages comprised about ten minutes.

Second, a piano-vocal score fragment provided the music for about one-fourth of the missing pages and also revealed portions of the dramatic arc: Robert, for some reason having returned to the plantation, is arrested by a Rebel detachment; the Confederate Sergeant, unconvinced by Mary Lou's assertion that Robert is not a spy, orders him taken away for execution, which he survives, appearing in the opera's *Finale*.

Third and last, the 1938 piano recital program for the opera indicated that the missing pages included an aria for Robert titled "During these four eternal years" as well as a Finale Quartette titled "Oh cherished land." For the latter, a piano-vocal score fragment existed, as did an aria sung by Col. Randolph on his return to the plantation following the defeat of the Confederacy.

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It was decided that all extant opera materials should be incorporated into its restoration, which would also need to plausibly connect the action between the two largest extant sections of Scene II, (from the end of Melda's lullaby to the choir's declaration "the war is over"). The composer's son, Edward Collins Jr., took on the responsibility of crafting a dramatic solution. He considered all the clues provided by his father's manuscripts and memorabilia. He also incorporated some of the actual Civil War experience of his wife Barbara's ancestor, a Union sergeant who had been captured and imprisoned in a tobacco warehouse, in Richmond, Virginia, eventually escaping and returning to his unit.

Librettist Charles Kondek then crafted a new libretto. He skillfully wove together all of these many extant, inferred, and invented strands, while also making organic literary connections to the original opera libretto. Motivation for Robert's return to the plantation also was provided, in the form of his need to reassure Mary Lou that he was still alive after four years of absence. Delivery of a Union flag to Mary Lou by Robert was included in the action, to provide a rationale for an exchange in the opera's extant *Finale*, where Robert and the Sergeant each sing of their army's flags.

Meanwhile, composer Daron Hagen reviewed Collins's music for the opera, as well as his other compositions. Hagen concluded that, with skillful editing of these sources, he could create a seamless restoration of the opera's music for the new libretto. The music for Robert's aria *During these four eternal years* was borrowed from *Thou changest thy garment*, the "winter" section of Collins's secular cantata *Hymn to the Earth*. Hagen also orchestrated, in Collins's style, the extant piano vocal-score fragments for the sections of the opera having to do with Robert's arrest and Col. Edmond's return to the plantation.

After Kondek's libretto was delivered to Hagen, he made only minor changes necessary for musical reasons. On 13 June 2008, Hagen wrote to this author:

> … there is, in fact, very nearly no 'freshly composed' material involved, but rather an integration of already extant musical ideas from the opera (something that [Edward Collins] would have been doing at this point in the opera anyway), with just a little bit of material from the *Hymn* [*to the Earth*] for variety.

In Closing

Its restoration and engraving completed, *Daughter of the South* was performed and recorded for the first time, in May 2009, sixty years after its composition by Collins. The recording was released internationally in 2010.

Marin Alsop conducts one of the May 2009 recording sessions for Collins's *Daughter of the South*
Royal Scottish National Orchestra, in the RSNO Centre's Henry Wood Hall, Glasgow, Scotland
PHOTO CREDIT: JON BECKER

A recording of *Daughter of the South*, as restored in 2009-10, is available on CD from *Albany Records*:
http://www.albanyrecords.com/mm5/merchant.mvc?Screen=PROD&Store_Code=AR&Product_Code=TROY1210&Category_Code=

The scores and parts for Collins's opera, with both the original libretto as restored and recorded, and an updated libretto option, are available on rental from *Subito Music*:
http://store.subitomusic.com/index.php?main_page=product_info&cPath=3_102_1038&products_id=6879