



**The**  
**SCARECROW**

*A chamber opera in two acts*

**Music by Joseph Turrin**

**Libretto by Bernard Stambler**

# THE SCARECROW

## CAST

Mother Rigby – *mezzo-soprano*

Feathertop – *baritone*

Justice Goodkin – *tenor*

Polly Goodkin (Goodkin's daughter) – *soprano*

Governor – *bass*

Lady Governor – *mezzo-soprano*

Man 1 – *tenor*

Woman 1 – *soprano*

Man 2 – *baritone*

Woman 2 – *alto*

Man 3 (may be played by Man 2) – *baritone*

Woman 3 (may be played by Woman 2) – *alto*

Narrator (*optional*)

*1685; a town in the Massachusetts Bay Colony*

*Act I – Mother Rigby's yard*

*Act II – The great entry hall in the house of Justice Goodkin*

### *Notes by the composer:*

THE SCARECROW was originally composed in 1976 and made possible through a Bicentennial Grant from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts. I found reference to the short story “Feathertop” by Nathaniel Hawthorne in the short essays of Charles Ives. After reading the story, I decided that the material would make a wonderful chamber opera. I approached Bernard Stambler with the project, and discovered that he was familiar with the story and also felt it was good opera material. After completing the vocal score, and the untimely passing of Bernard Stambler in 1995, the work was placed on a shelf as other projects took precedent. Never orchestrated, the opera stayed in this incomplete state for many years.

In 2004 I decided to look through the score once again and try to at least get it into a respectable state so that I might be able to send it to opera companies. I decided to revise the work, which consisted of expanding various musical sections. Along with developing a more detailed musical treatment of Feathertop's transformation from a scarecrow to a human, I added an optional narration that would introduce each of the two acts. My reason for doing so, was that I wanted the audience to get some of the original bite that Hawthorne developed in his story about man's unworthy and despicable character. I also wanted the narration, specifically in act two, to explain the details that transpired between acts. For instance: Hawthorne himself gives no detail as to the relationship between Goodkin and Rigby, although we know there to be some sinister connection. The narration gives emphasis to this and explains how Feathertop gains entry into Goodkin's house. I also decided to underscore the narration with short musical preludes, which would set the mood for each act. I also composed an aria for Polly in Act II for which I wrote the text, in addition to an overture and a short instrumental interlude between acts.

As I began thinking about instrumentation, I thought of the many possibilities and combinations that were viable. I was at the Eastman School of Music in the spring of 2004 for a performance of my “Hemispheres” by the Eastman Wind Ensemble. Mark Scatterday, the director of the Eastman Wind Ensemble, suggested I think of winds, harp, and piano as a possible instrumentation. He also suggested I put together a consortium of colleges and universities to commission the scoring of the opera. After looking at the score I decided in a complement of 13 winds along with harp, piano, 2 celli, bass, and 2 percussion. As an option, cello 1 and 2 may be doubled for a total of four players.

The work is about 70 minutes in length and should be performed without intermission. I leave staging and sets up to the creative imagination of the director. Since there is so very little time between acts, the set design might be constructed as to make this transition as quick as possible.

As to the technical consideration: The creation and destruction of Feathertop present some thought and imagination. Transforming Rigby's inanimate scarecrow relies on the use of smoke that emits from the scarecrow's pipe, obscures the figure and is then quickly replaced by the living Feathertop. His destruction is in reverse. Consideration to lighting can play an important part in these illusions. As for the music, the score is fairly straightforward and vocally contains elements of both a dissonance declamatory style along with a more lyrical style.

I'd like to express my gratitude to the following consortium of schools: University of Texas at Austin, Eastman School of Music, Hartt School of Music, University of New Mexico, University of Michigan, Yale University, Michigan State University, University of Minnesota, Baylor University, University of North Texas, University of Oklahoma, Arizona State University and University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Special thanks to my friend Eric Rombach-Kendall for his help in organizing this consortium and for his encouragement, and guidance in making this project a reality.

*The Scarecrow* was a finalist in the National Opera Association's chamber opera competition in 2006 and also selected as a finalist by the Academy of Arts and Letters Richard Rodgers Committee in 2007. The premiere took place on February 24, 2006 at the University of Texas at Austin. Produced by the Sarah and Ernest Butler Opera Center. Directed by Robert DeSimone and conducted by the composer. A commercial recording is available on the Longhorn Music label recorded and produced by the University of Texas at Austin.

Review: “*The mood is set by a powerful overture, seamlessly flowing through its hypnotic sequences, the mystical beginning, dramatic middle and poignant end, which heighten the audience’s anticipation for masterful storytelling*” (The News-Gazette, Urbana-Champaign, IL – 4/29/2007)

## Synopsis

*Description:* Set in Colonial Massachusetts, *The Scarecrow* is an operatic adaptation of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *Feathertop: A Moralized Legend*. The story follows a living scarecrow who was fabricated by his “mother” and animated by the devil to take revenge against a hypocritical, well-to-do neighbor. The scarecrow beguiles the neighbor’s innocent niece, but becoming more human than his “mother” had intended, he falls in love with the girl. As the scarecrow discovers what it means to be human, he must determine his own fate. On one level, it’s a thoughtful piece about the redemptive power of love – on another level; it’s an existential examination of the theory that existence precedes essence.

### ACT ONE

#### **Setting: Massachusetts Bay Colony 1685: a shack in the woods**

Mother Rigby, a cunning and potent witch, who although is no longer a young woman, still retains an air of great force and beauty. One day, while smoking her pipe, and with nothing particularly important to do, she sets out to make a scarecrow for her garden. Rigby builds her creation from a broomstick, a bag of straw and a pumpkin for a head. She clothes him in the dress of a gentleman and crowns his hat with the longest tail feather of a rooster...deeming him “Feathertop”, As a final touch she dusts off an old jeweled medal, and after reminiscing of the day it was once given to her as a love token by Justice Goodkin she pins it onto Feathertop’s coat. At once she cries out to Dickon, her faithful hand servant from a darker world, “*Is he not a handsome scarecrow*”? She decides that Feathertop is just to fine a specimen to stand watch over the crows all day and asks Dickon if he would not be better suited for a game of mischief. Together they conjure a plan to take revenge against her hypocritical, well-to-do neighbor, Justice Goodkin.

Rigby calls out “*Dickon, a coal for my pipe*”! In one instant the pipe is lit, a pipe bestowed with the magical powers to bring about her handy work. She thrusts it into the mouth of her new creation and commands him to smoke. She commands him to puff the smoke as hard as he can, because his very life depends on it, and with each puff, he is filled with life, with human life. Finally he cries out to her “*Mother*” and Rigby is filled with joy. She instructs her boy to move and speak. He asks her why he is here and what he is meant to do. Rigby tells him that all of his questions will be answered in due time, and until such time when he gathers his own experience and knowledge, she will be his guide.

Rumor has it that Goodkin is hosting an elegant ball at his mansion this evening in honor of the Governor and his wife. With this in mind she tells Feathertop to make his way through town until he gets to Justice Goodkin’s mansion. With all the grace and charm she has endowed upon him, she is sure that Goodkin will invite this handsome stranger to the ball. She tells him to “*give some thought to Goodkin’s daughter, Polly*”. She also tells him that she cannot bear to miss this little event and plans to be there in disguise. But most importantly she warns him that he should never stop smoking his pipe, because if he does, he will return to a bag of straw. “*Attend to your pipe*” she says, “*and if it runs low, call out to Dickon and it will be filled*”. Finally “*beware of mirrors*” she says...*for they alone tell the truth.*” At once he finds himself reflecting on the ills of this new world he is now a part of and thanks Mother Rigby for his new life and his new found knowledge. With a grand bow, he takes his leave of Rigby

## ACT TWO

### **Setting: Justice Goodkin's mansion later that evening**

The guests have all gathered in the great entry hall of Justice Goodkin's mansion. It is a special occasion to honor the Governor's visit and an opportunity to discuss the political and social discontent in the colonies. Feathertop has indeed been invited and the guests cannot help but gossip about their brief encounter with

the elegant stranger. The smoke from that hellish pipe tobacco had transformed Feathertop into a wise and experienced man. Polly has become completely enamored with Feathertop's stories of travel and adventure. One glance at the medal pinned to Feathertop's chest was all that Goodkin needed in order to know exactly why this man has come and who had sent him. Goodkin knew it was time to pay his debt and feared that it would involve his daughter Polly. As promised, Mother Rigby comes to the ball elegantly disguised. Goodkin knows who she truly is but does not let on in fear that it might expose his former connection with the old witch.

The Governor suggests that they retire to the next room for some refreshments. Polly and Feathertop stay behind. She expresses her fascination with Feathertop's stories and how he seems to know the secrets of her heart, her longing for far away places, and her desire for love. The guests return and all sit down to discuss what they had come there for. The Governor is concerned with the discontent that plagues the colonists and hopes the evening will reveal some answers. Goodkin suggests that these troubles are caused by allowing Indians, Quakers and Anti-Baptists to live in close proximity. Feathertop strongly defends the Indians and says that until we understand their language, how can we possibly judge what it is they say or do? The Governor supports Feathertop's view and asks him if he would be willing to take on this task; to go among the Indian folk and make a wordbook. Feathertop decides to take on this mission and the Governor asks him to come see him when he is ready to leave.

This meeting has affected everyone. Each lost in their own thoughts, the Governor is hopeful that this young man can help lead the way to peace, and The Lady Governor is happy to see her husband so content. Goodkin thinks about Rigby and how she may not be so evil after all and Polly muses of her love for Feathertop. Feathertop continues to question the mystery of what his life is all about and thinks that maybe he has found love and purpose. Rigby realizes that although her scheme is over, her mischief might have actually led to good.

The Governor and his lady decide to leave. As Goodkin sees them out, Feathertop realizes that his pipe is running low; he calls to Dickon to refill it. In one sudden moment, as Feathertop reaches for the pipe he sees himself in a large mirror which has been hanging on the wall at the back of the entry hall. He steps back in horror at the sight of a grotesque scarecrow. Polly and Rigby become aware of something wrong, and move toward him. He tells Mother Rigby that he cannot go on knowing the truth of what he truly is. He looks sadly at Polly and then slowly empties his pipe --- walks over to the mirror for a last look --- he hurls the pipe to the ground. There is a great explosive puff of smoke - the man Feathertop vanishes, and the original scarecrow collapses on stage in front of the mirror. Polly shrieks a great shriek; the others rush in to her as the opera ends.

# THE SCARECROW

*A chamber opera in two acts  
Based on a story by Nathaniel Hawthorne*

Music by **Joseph Turrin**  
Libretto by **Bernard Stambler**

LIBRETTO

## SCARECROW OVERTURE

### Narrative Prologue I

(Introduction to Act I)

#### **NARRATOR**

*(This narration is optional and may be used at the discretion of the Director. The narration should be directed to the audience in a simple and straightforward manner. It is suggested that the delivery be done in darkness using only a pin-spot.)*

*(Underscored with music)*

The events you are about to witness, some say are merely legend, born of idle minds, gossip and sheer delusion. Whether fact or fiction the question here is that of human nature. Are we truly worthy, sincere and reliable creatures, or are we charlatans, void of substance, living in an empty and heartless world? If our condition is indeed despairing, and we attempt to mask with a smoky vapor the illusion of what we really are, is it possible to ever face the mirror of self-truth? I would like to believe that this is possible, and that what is wrong, can be righted by love, faith and a true heart. But allow me to leave this for you to ponder my friends.

## ACT I

*(1685; a town in the Massachusetts Bay colony. Mother Rigby's shack in the woods, shabby with a rather neglected garden. Odds and ends all about: discarded clothing, garden tools. The exterior of the house is shown, with a center window, and at the left corner, angled to the back, the doorway to the house. Mother Rigby is no longer young but retains an air of force and beauty. She is busy with all sorts of casual tasks.)*

## **MOTHER RIGBY**

When I was a young witch the women snarled at me for put-ting spells upon their men. The men they smiled ever so silently. Now that I'm an old witch the men look daggers at me for casting spells on cows and crops. The women smile silently. A young witch only needs her craft for mischief. She has other charms to force men to her will. But with time no craft will draw them to her arms. Yet, the world will always seek our charms and simples and curses. With out them women will not thrive, nor can men fill their purses. What an old witch suffers no young witch can ever know. Shivering, hungry, she will sit damning those who brought her low.

*(Mumbling and grumbling, she fetches things from the house; a pumpkin, a shabby old hat and broomstick.)*

In these latter wick-ed days there's little point to casting a spell. Women have learned so much from us that witch from non-witch is hard to tell. The women made my young days sad the men give me no peace today. My gar-den spells to weak to keep rabbits, woodchucks, crows, away. Ah well, no use weeping over the creases and wrinkles of time. No potion, lotion, cream or magic ointment can wave them a-way. At least let me try to keep my belly filled.

*(She starts to assemble her materials into a scarecrow. She leans the broomstick against the doorway of the house. Puts the disreputable pumpkin on top of the broomstick like a head and then looks around for something with which to dress up her creation.)*

The least I can do is to scare these varmints from my gar-den. Ah, yes.

*(She sees on the ground a large, beautifully colored tail feather from a rooster. She goes over and picks it up, walks over to the scarecrow and sticks it in its hat.)*

I crown thee Feathertop. A very handsome cavalier who needs just a touch of heart and sentiment.

*(She darts into the house and instantly comes out with a once-rich cloak on a small wooden bar, which fits across the broom just under the pumpkin head; she fits this on and then takes a small ornate dirty box from the pocket of her skirt. She blows some dust off the box and delicately opens it. With lingering affection she takes out a large jeweled but verdigrised medal and pins it on the left breast of the cloak.)*

There my lad the love token, given me by the noble Justice Good-kin.

*(Calling over her shoulder)*

Dickon, take a look, is this not to hand-some for a mere scarecrow? Give me a bit of help now and today we can strike a grand blow for liberty, decency, and the rights of women.

*(This next section is a dialogue between Rigby and, to us, invisible and inaudible Dickon: The orchestra speaks up for the missing member of the dialogue.)*

How? Let us think together. No, that will not do. That's better, but not quite right. We must make Justice Goodkin play a major part in this. That's it, that's it, or almost. Now put his daughter Polly at the center of the plot. Then we could have a lesson so that young woman need not....

*(But Dickon clearly interrupts her)*

No, that could.

*(Dickon interrupts her again. This time he gives her the plan in detail: She beams and whoops and pounds her knee in ecstasy as he unfolds the details)*

Ah then. First my pipe with some of your devils tobacco straight from hell.

*(Instantly a filled and lighted pipe is thrust from the doorway into her hand. She inserts the pipe into the pumpkin head)*

Puff now, puff a-way lad. Put all your wit and will upon it. Puff as though your very life depended on it.

*(For an agonizing moment, nothing happens - then an abortive, choked mutter accompanied by a tiny puff of smoke from the pipe; another and another mutter and puff, faster and greater. Growing faster and more furious. Then a great explosive crash and a blanket of smoke. Concealed by this burst of smoke, the scarecrow is pulled inside, and the living Feathertop takes the same position, leaning against the doorway. The smoke slowly clears. The puffs now come regularly. As they do he ceases to lean and shamle, gives himself a shake, stands upright and proud, though still somewhat dazed.)*

Ah yes, well puffed, my pretty lad. Don't just stand there, lazy one. Step forth! The world a-waits thee.

*(Rigby extends her arm to him. In obedience he extends an arm as if to reach Mother Rigby's outstretched hand, then the figure makes a step forward-a kind of hitch and jerk-then tottered and almost lost it's balance.)*

Steady my lad. Come! Another puff. Out of the very bottom of your heart, if any heart you have.

*(He draws in a small amount of smoke from the pipe. He blows it out. With this he becomes more confident and starts to carefully walk a few steps and then a few more. Mother Rigby watches with delight. With his new confidence the figure walks around the yard.)*

That's splendid, yes. You now have the aspect of a man. Have you al-so the echo and mockery of a voice? I bit thee to speak!

*(The scarecrow grasped, struggled, and at length emitted a sound.)*

**FEATHERTOP**

Ah, Ah

**RIGBY**

I beg your par-don.

**FEATHERTOP**

*(His speech is drawn out)*

M-o-t-h-e-r, M-o-t-h-e-r

**RIGBY**

Speak up my lad.

**FEATHERTOP**

What am I to say?

**RIGBY**

What ever comes in-to your head. Take another puff of smoke, you'll think of some-thing then.

**FEATHERTOP**

*(This time he draws in a large amount of smoke. He blows it out slowly.)*

I'm at your service Mother.

**RIGBY**

Well said my pretty one! Well said. You learn fast.

**FEATHERTOP**

You must tell me who am I, where did I come from, why am I here.

**RIGBY**

My dear young man, these are the questions we all ask. The questions every body desperately wants to be answered. From my greater age and wisdom, I could give you answers but they would be mine, not yours.

**FEATHERTOP**

Then what am I to do?

**RIGBY**

First you will obey my directions completely and en-trust yourself to my age and wisdom.

**FEATHERTOP**

And then?

**RIGBY**

In time you will re-place my experience with your own.

**FEATHERTOP**

How will I know when it is time for this?

**RIGBY**

You will know.

**FEATHERTOP**

But how can I make such an important decision?

**RIGBY**

You will not make that decision; life will make it for you. Someday something will happen to throw everything into focus. You'll see how every experience you have had is related to every other. It may be the look on the face of a man after you have said some-thing. It may be the line in a book. It may even be when you fall in love. Then you will know who you are, where did you come from and why are you here. You will see your-self and know from within.

**FEATHERTOP**

But how shall I get a-long un-till then?

**RIGBY**

Till you gather your own experience what I have learned will be with-in you. You will know when it's time to change from mine to yours.

**FEATHERTOP**

How then shall I begin?

**RIGBY**

Feathertop you were created for good deeds. First call on Justice Goodkin in all your splendor and see what mischief you can cause in his house-hold. He did great mischief upon me when I was young. I owe him somewhat. Anyone in town can direct you to Goodkin.

*(She points in the direction of town)*

This metal will give you en-try to his house.

*(The metal is now shiny and rich. He has been following with great smoke and attention.)*

What form your mischief will take I leave to your ingenuity.

*(He renders a deep bow.)*

The good Justice has a lovely daughter. Give some thought to her. Above all at-tend to your pipe. Without the powers of the smoke, smoke which comes not from the pipe but from the regions of hell. With out the smoke you will die. You expire. You re-turn to your elements. Puff a-way with out cease, and when you see that the fuel in your pipe runs low. Go a-lone to the corner and say in a low voice "Dickon, Dickon, Dickon, a pipe for Feathertop" it will be handed to you. Puff a-way and you live.

**FEATHERTOP**

Dickon is it?

**RIGBY**

Yes, yes but don't call him un-till you need him. He doesn't like unnecessary bother. Another thing or two: For thine own sake beware of mirrors. Some of them give back the truth of things. Not what you want to see, nor what others want to tell you. And do no be surprised to see me this evening. I do not want to miss what will hap-pen at Justice Goodkin's tonight.

I shall be differently attired but you will recognize me.

**FEATHERTOP**

*(Clears his throat and in a moment of glib and suave.)*

Thank you. Thank you, my charming lady. I treasure your every word and consider your wishes the deepest obligations of my soul. I see a-head of me a world of man-y problems and few solutions. The way lies open for me to per-form great deeds.

*(With a sweeping bow he sets out down the road and exits)*

**RIGBY**

*(In a paroxysm of glee.)*

Treasure your every word, obligation of my soul, deeds of great-ness. Un-less he develops a conscience that broomstick will go far in this world.

*END OF ACT I*

**SCARECROW INTERLUDE****Narrative Prologue II**

*(Introduction to Act II)*

**NARRATOR**

*(This narration is optional and may be used at the discretion of the Director)*

*(Underscored with music)*

Feathertop having made his way into town has caused quite a stir on the street as to whom this very elegant and handsome stranger could be. He soon finds his way to Justice Goodkin's house. Gladly would poor Master Goodkin have thrust his dangerous guest into the street; but there was a constraint and terror within him. This respectable old gentleman, we fear, at an earlier period of life, had given some pledge or other to

the evil principle, and perhaps was now ready to redeem it. His pretty daughter Polly had caught a glimpse of the glistening stranger while he was standing at the front door and eagerly ran down stairs to meet him. With such sinister prognostics manifesting themselves on all hands, it is not to be marveled at that Goodkin should have felt that he was committing his daughter to a very questionable acquaintance. He cursed, in his secret soul, the insinuating elegance of Feathertop's manners, as this brilliant personage bowed, smiled, put his hand on his heart, inhaled a long whiff from his pipe, and enriched the atmosphere with the smoky vapor. On this very evening Goodkin and his daughter were having an elegant party in honor of the Governor and his wife. Polly insisted that Feathertop be invited. Goodkin of course complied. The truth appears to have been that Mother Rigby's word of introduction, whatever it might be, had operated far more on Goodkin's fears, than on his goodwill.

**ACT II**

*(The great entry-hall in the house of Justice Goodkin. Down right, an archway to a small room where, perhaps visibly, food and drink are provided. Up right, the entrance to the ballroom. Against the wall at the back, just left of the center, a great mirror extending to the floor. The stage area has two or three chair-and-table groupings to which people come for a few moments respite from eating and dancing. Two couples enter the hall; they are over-heated and over-excited. The women fan and chatter. The men fan and pass their handkerchiefs languidly over their faces.)*

**WOMAN 1**

Did you ever see such splendor, such majesty? I've never seen the likes such a hand-some lad. Power and authority in his very walk, that golden face. Something exotic in his ancestry. China no doubt or Arabia.

**WOMEN 2**

Ah, but I mistrust him. These splendid lads are just the ones to do ye dirt, and do it royally.

**WOMAN 1**

Keep your poison to your-self Mistress Powderly! Can't you see the truth in his eye?

**MAN 1**

Ah yes, those clothes were not bought by one who'd need to cheat young girls.

**MAN 2**

Or old hags either. I've often had a thought Mistress Powderly.

*(He leans over to sniff her) sniff - sniff*

**MAN 1**

I had the same thought.

**MAN 1 & 2**

That when ever you're a-round there's a smell of brimstone in the air.

*(Indignant, she flounces off to the ballroom)*

**WOMAN 1**

And yet there was some-thing puzzling a-bout Monsieur Feathertop.

**MAN 1**

I heard his name as Herr Feathertop.

**MAN 2**

And I as Signor Feathertop.

**MAN 1**

That great medal on his breast. How it gleamed and twinkled and seemed to glow from with-in.

**WOMEN 1**

That tobacco he was smoking in that pipe he never put down. I've not smelled anything like it.

**MAN 2**

And yet some-how it was familiar.

*(They shrug over these mysteries and walk back to the ballroom. The Governor comes from the ballroom, followed by his wife, Justice Goodkin Polly, and Feathertop)*

**GOVERNOR**

*(Pompously)*

You make some wise observations a-bout the planters in Barbados. How life on the is-lands differs from our own southern colonies. But Signor Feathertop. What would you have the crown do a-bout it?

**FEATHERTOP**

The crown sir must learn to distinguish. Your Barbados planter is rich and arrogant. But speak one word of authority and he crumbles. Your planter in the colonies is blood brother to the farmer. He knows his strength, his worth and never takes a weak position.

**GOODKIN**

Monseigneur Feathertop are we not to serious for ballroom conversation? The ladies you know.

**POLLY**

*(Polly is fascinated, unable to take her eyes from Feathertop)*

Father please. Never has this house, held a man with such rich experience. Such travel to the corners of the earth I never heard of. Should we not all benefit from this? Governor, or gentlemen, gentlemen, or ladies.

**LADY GOVERNOR**

Justice Goodkin your daughter speaks wisdom. Women remain children because they are treated like them. Even when they be-come grandmothers our duties are clear. To bake, to boil, to roast, to stew, to wash, and iron, scrub, and sweep, and in our idle moments to knit and sew.

**POLLY**

Have not some of us the minds and talents of men.

**L. GOVERNOR**

I see a day when women will be judges and governors as well.

*(Even she joins the laughter over this and the momentary tension is released)*

Signor Feathertop you have a champion in Polly. I join her in begging you to continue.

**FEATHERTOP**

My la-dies I thank you. But our good Justice may be to the point. There are better occasions for such things. My travels have given me some small gift of wisdom, which I burn to share.

**GOODKIN**

*(who turns sardonic when frightened)*

And that burning is it like the pipe you burn so constantly. For-give my curiosity. It is shared by all, but only I dare ask.

**POLLY**

How dare you father? The habits of a gentleman are his own concern.

*(All are a bit uneasy, and welcome the interruption when a towns couple bursts in; she is excited, he reluctant and embarrassed)*

**WOMAN 3**

Where is she? Where is the old witch?

**GOODKIN**

What are you saying?

**MAN 3**

Your Honor, for-give her! She sees a fine lady coming to your ball and my wife imagines.

**FEATHERTOP**

Dickon! Dickon!

**WOMAN 3**

I imagine nothing. I saw her for all her fine feathers and trappings.

**FEATHERTOP**

Dickon, a pipe for Feathertop.

*(In the neighborhood of a convenient cabinet, a hand reaches from behind the cabinet to take the old pipe and give a new one)*

**MAN 3**

She imagines she saw old Mother Rigby.

**WOMAN 3**

I'm sure it was her. Who was forbid under penalty of death to come with-in the limits of town.

**POLLY**

Dear folk, I assure you, you are mistaken. I received every guest at the door. Each of them, with but one exception is well known to me and that one is vouched for by our honored guest-- Signor Feathertop.

*(Feathertop this instant rejoins the group. He bows)*

**GOODKIN**

Yes, dear folk look a-bout you. Do you spy Mother Rigby? Do you think she would dare enter the house of an officer of the law?

**WOMAN 3**

I saw her. I tell you I saw her.

**MAN 3**

I tried to keep her from coming here. She's been having dreams and fantasies a-gain like when we were young. It may be my fault. I have visited Mother Rigby, young Mother Rigby, perhaps more then once, and my wife she may have thought to be-come a witch her-self to keep hold of me. But now she only has fantasies. If old Mother Rig-by passed us by I would have been the one to recognize her.

**GOODKIN**

Good folk do stay and look a-bout for her and while you are here, take a share of our cakes and wine.

**FEATHERTOP**

You speak of old Lady Rokeby. I have known her all my life and never saw an action of hers not marked by truth and honor.

*(Mother Rigby enters from the ballroom. She is splendidly gowned and sweeps with imperious dignity. She is dressed to resemble the fine Lady Rokeby and no one suspects other then Goodkin that she is the old witch from outside of town)*

**WOMAN 3**

There she is! There's the witch!

**MOTHER RIGBY**

A witch yes. There's a bit of witch in every woman.

**GOVERNOR**

But are you Mother Rig-by? Who are you?

**RIGBY**

Who am I? Where did I come from? Why am I here? These are the questions all of us seek to answer. When young we have no answers. When old we care not for the answers we have found. Who am I now would matter less to you then it does to me. But have done with an old woman's philosophies. You are disturbed by some-thing.

*(There is something soothingly hypnotic in this non-response that leaves everyone a bit puzzled, but feeling that there has been some sort of reply)*

**MAN 2**

No.. No.. nothing at all. My wife had some wild thoughts that you resembled the old witch of the neighborhood. *(He is beginning to take her off when...)*

**GOVERNOR**

After this turmoil I need some refreshments, Come, my dear.

*(He offers his arm to his wife and leads her off in the direction of the refectory-room. Goodkin, Man and Woman follow him off. Polly and Feathertop have started to go but they look at each other and decide to stay. Polly looks away to adjust her dress, hair, ect.)*

*(Mother Rigby stays behind for a few moments. As Polly is looking away she says a few words to Feathertop and swiftly exits)*

**RIGBY**

That a boy, now keep it up. She can't take her eyes off of you. And above all remember your pipe. With out it your brilliant wit and charm will fade. And you'll be of no more substance then those at this party.  
*(Rigby exits)*

*(Feathertop walks over to Polly. She turns to speak)*

**POLLY**

At dinner you spoke of foreign lands. The glory of princes and the splendor of their courts. I have never traveled abroad nor in this land of ours. Yet, as you spoke I walked those streets I heard those songs. What magic did you work on me? Was it the spell of your words, your voice, or was it my own mind. A hunger for new sights, new sounds.

*(Polly sings the following music as if the action has stopped and she shares her inner thoughts. She moves away from Feathertop and sings to the audience as if a soliloquy)*

This feeling that I have is strange and new,  
My heart beats o so fast,  
My hands they tremble with excitement,  
My eyes fill with tears, for no reason,  
I gaze out the window for hours.

The thoughts of places far away,  
Of journeys never taken,  
The longing of someone to hold my hand  
And walk with me through starry nights and sun-drenched afternoons.

I dream that someday I'll find a way, and to fill this life,  
this hopeless life with joy. I know my day will come,  
When someone takes my hand, and gives his heart to me forever.

*(She moves back to Feathertop)*

Your words intoxicate me,  
Your eyes the mirror of the world,  
Your every gesture speaks wisdom and strength.  
Dare I say that I've waited for someone like you?  
Waited so long, waited so long, waited so long for you.

**FEATHERTOP**

Dear Polly to experience deeply as one travels this gives one the power to make strange people and places come a-live for others. Tell me, old Lad-y Rokeby, were you frightened?

**POLLY**

Yes, I was for a moment. But then, as I looked at her I felt a trust in her, a kind of kin-ship.

**FEATHERTOP**

Yes, there is a kin-ship. She once played a great role in my life. I know now you are to play a great role in my new life.

**POLLY**

I had a like feeling of a new life. What role did she play?

**FEATHERTOP**

It would be hard to describe. Even if I fully understood. I only know it was the role of creation. A role that began to define my mission in life.

**POLLY**

How noble. Tell me of it?

**FEATHERTOP**

It is to do what I can to bring down the arrogant and the un-just. Those unworthy to have power and those that wield it unworthily.

**POLLY**

How will you do this?

**FEATHERTOP**

That I do not know. I am seeking a way.

*(The Governor, his lady, Rigby, and Goodkin come back from the refectory-room)*

**GOVERNOR**

Earlier we were asking Signor Feathertop to tell us of the world. We are a narrow island in this colony.

**RIGBY**

Yes, Signor Feathertop has traveled widely and has observed with care. To what purpose do you ask his advice?

**GOVERNOR**

The colonists mutter and grumble. Discontent roams the land. Nor have I been able to search out the cause of it. Tonight I have come here, as I have to other parts. To see whether the chief men can tell me the reasons for this discontent.

**GOODKIN**

This grumbling that I hear incessantly, I ask the cause and get no answer.

**POLLY**

One farmer will tell us that his good crops bring him no content. Since his children turn wild and disobedient. His neighbor tells us all will be well with him were it not for the failure of his crops.

**GOODKIN**

A third farmer speaks of good crop, and children but a wandering wife who makes all good things worth naught.

**L. GOVERNOR**

Have men not been ever thus? They are not truly content till they have found some cause for grumbling so.

**GOODKIN**

True enough, but here is something more. I make inquiries. These men do not invent these troubles.

**GOVERNOR**

Please continue.

**GOODKIN**

We live with the Devil on our borders, and in our midst. The Indian's roam the wilderness ten miles away. Quakers and anti Baptists are in this very town. We tolerate these men but God's word is clear. The man who accepts other religions has no strong faith in his own. These Devil religions must not live near us. Just as the infection of the body may spread from sick to healthy so may the infection of evil spread from the pagan to the pure of soul.

**FEATHERTOP**

Today you kill a few Indians. You drive a few Quakers into the wilderness. But would these not be numbered in thousands and tens of thousands if your power were greater.

**GOVERNOR**

There are sober heads in the colony Signor. They are ready to listen.

**FEATHERTOP**

We live in uneasy peace with our Indian neighbors. A peace that cannot last.

**POLLY**

What will happen?

**FEATHERTOP**

We make true peace or there will be war and make the rivers run red with blood.

**L. GOVERNOR**

These are savages with neither mind nor instinct for good.

**FEATHERTOP**

Yet, if any stranger come among them, they give him food or what they have. When at night, I have fallen in travel upon their houses. Among them I have slept upon a mat of boughs or on the naked earth.

**RIGBY**

Tell me I'm curious what words do you know in the Indian tongues?

**GOVERNOR, L. GOVERNOR, POLLY, GOODKIN**

*(They give these words in a confused polyphony)*

"Wampum, Squaw, Wigwam, Musquash, Ashawey, Chincoteaque"

**FEATHERTOP**

And with these few words you would convert them to God by the testimony of the good Justice Good-kin.

**GOODKIN**

Yes, yes, the longer they live in their worship of the devil the deeper do they cast us in-to mortal danger.

**GOVERNOR**

What say you to this sir?

**FEATHERTOP**

It may be that the Indians are worshiping the devil. And so bring down on us the punishment of God. But it may be that in their own tongue they already worship the one true God. And it is this God, our God who sends these troubles on us, because in our ignorance we per-se-cute his red children. Does God speak naught but the English tongue. Till I know the Indians words I would not dare to say why God sends these plagues upon us.

**GOVERNOR**

Your right. These things must be discovered. Tell me sir, will you undertake this mission? Go among the Indian folk and make a wordbook, as I have seen the preacher's use for the ancient Greek and Hebrew. It may be a dangerous task, a thank-less undertaking.

**POLLY**

Signor Feathertop. You were seeking a use for your talents. No better use could be found nor a better man for the task.

**L. GOVERNOR**

*(Aside to Polly)* You speak eloquently my dear as if you are eager to share these dangers.

**POLLY**

Per-haps I am.

**FEATHERTOP**

I'll undertake this mission.

**GOVERNOR**

Done then. Come see me as soon as your read-y to start.

(SEXTET)

**GOVERNOR**

When this man came from out of no-where some-thing changed in my head and heart. When this man came from out of no-where, out of no-where out of no-where, some-thing changed in my head and in my heart. I do not know what happened I do not understand, I do not know, nor do I understand. The world be-came much clearer, be-came much warmer. Yes, the world warmer now and clear. What had been troublesome now seemed re-solved now seemed re-solved, now seemed re-solved. He gave me faith our problems could be answered and only he, only he could answer them, answer all my questions, only he could answer them.

**L. GOVERNOR**

I have known him for all these years. He's a man who has pondered every question. Yes, pondered every question. My man, some enchantment seized my man, has seized my man who pondered every question who pondered every question. Some enchantment seized my man, my man. Some enchantment seized my man, my man, my man pondered every question, pondered them for months un-till he understood. Then he spent more time to seek an answer. Yet here tonight I saw a miracle to night. I watched a problem shape it-self be-fore his eye's be-fore his eye's and find a man to solve it, be-fore his eye's.

**RIGBY**

I had in mind a cruel jest, a cruel jest that I had in mind, had in mind, oh so cruel, oh so cruel. Like a rapier touching an old wound, like a rapier. This time not thrust in-to my heart, thrust not in my heart but his. Thrust not in my heart but in his, in his. Let the heavens fall, let the heavens fall, let the heavens fall, let the heavens fall, heavens fall. I had planned this girl to be the tool of my vengeance, this girl. Who'd guess she'd turn in-to my image, younger and sweeter, purer, younger. Who would guess, in-to my image?

**GOODKIN**

Never, never in all these years has Mother Rigby, has Mother Rig-by done a deed of good. Has Mother Rig-by done a deed of good. Yet, I fear, I fear what may result from this latest trick, latest trick she's playing. Never have I known her, never to do a deed of good, to do a deed of good, of good. Per-haps this young stranger of hers has some good to do. A good we sorely need. But how can good come from evil, evil. How can this be, how can this be.

**POLLY**

I have wait-ed, wait-ed so long, yes, I have wait-ed for this man. Waited so long, so long. I have waited for this man. I have wait-ed long. Oh so long. My life was empty till now, my life was empty till now, my life was empty, empty till now. What wonder, joy, await for me, what wonder and joy. But my hap-pi-ness is touched by fear, touched by fear. For surely God never meant a life on earth to hold for long such bright splendor, such bright splendor, wonder and joy. Such bright splendor.

**FEATHERTOP**

I find my-self filled with doubts and fears, filled with doubts and fears, filled with doubts and fears. As in a forest. Where do I come from, where do I come from? What road will lead me out? I know not where, where I come from, nor what road will lead me out. And love, love shadows everything, shadows everything, everywhere I go. A mission has been thrust on me. Where can I find the power for this mission and for my love? Where can I find the power? As for my love, give me the strength.

(END OF SEXTET)

**GOVERNOR**

Come dear, we must be on our way.

**GOODKIN**

I'll see you to your carriage.

**RIGBY, POLLY, FEATHERTOP**

Good-bye and God be with you. Good traveling.

*(The three leave)*

**POLLY**

Lady Rokby, are you Mother Rigby?

**RIGBY**

Child why should you ask that?

**POLLY**

My father recognized you when you entered, he trembled. That is why I wait-ed to ask you.

**RIGBY**

Let me instead ask you this: If I were Mother Rigby, what would be the difference to you?

**POLLY**

Remember the ban forbidding your coming in-to town.

**RIGBY**

You evade my question.

**FEATHERTOP**

*(with an uneasy flippancy)*

Ladies, ladies, you leave me far be-hind. What does your question mean?

**RIGBY**

Why sir it means you! Does it not Polly?

*(Polly painfully nods yes)*

**FEATHERTOP**

I am deeper in mystery then before.

**RIGBY**

What ever I am, you Signor are deeply tied to me.

**FEATHERTOP**

Yes, of course of course. What then?

**RIGBY**

I have been watching lady Polly. While you spoke she would not miss a word. While another spoke her eyes were fixed on you. When I was young, such attention to one man meant but one thing. I am old now but the ways of women do not change.

*(TRIO)*

**POLLY**

Now I am sure of him and sure of all that's in the world. All it has of good and beauty. Now he loves me, now he loves me. Whatever once was harsh in this world will be straightened, and all the pain our hearts endure will vanish. When in this world we find that love. Now I am sure, sure of him, now I am sure of him, sure of him.

**FEATHERTOP**

This mystery of what I am and what I feel and what I do still eludes me, still eludes me. Shall I seek an answer, seek forever or shall I let the question go and take what life now freely gives. The love, the trust that surrounds me now, surrounds me now. And take what life now freely gives, take what life now freely gives

**RIGBY**

My scheme is over at last, but in its place is some-thing better, but in its place is some-thing better. Who knows how this toy I made for mischief be-came a living person, inspiring love and trust in all he meets. Let old hates die and new love live, let new love live. New love live. My scheme is over, over now. My scheme is over now, my scheme is over.

*(END OF TRIO)*

*(Feathertop notices that his pipe is running low)*

**RIGBY**

Yes, my dear, we are alike. Per-haps in all the colony. The only women who have some flesh between the neck and ankle.

**FEATHERTOP**

*(He walks over to the great, full-length mirror at the center back and calls Diccon...)*

Dickon! Dickon! Dickon!

**POLLY**

But this is the sin of Eve her-self. The sin that dammed all mankind.

**RIGBY**

No, no, my dear, to deny the passions is no other then to glorify and wallow in them.

**FEATHERTOP**

Dickon! a pipe for Feathertop.

*(At Feathertop's call a hand comes around the mirror to take the old pipe and extend a new one  
As Feathertop reaches for the pipe he sees himself in the mirror. He steps back in horror at the sight of a  
grotesque scarecrow)*

I am a fraud, a shadow with no more substance then a broomstick and pumpkin.

*(The other two become aware of something wrong, and move to him)*

My soul is vapor, my life a puff of smoke.

*(They are now near him)*

Polly, you think you love me: Love must come from the heart, and my love can only be a reflection, a shadow easily shattered. Shaken to pieces, but the pieces still without reality. Your love Polly can only destroy you: And this a-lone persuades me, that I cannot continue the illusion that I am.

**POLLY**

I'm so con-fused. What do you mean? All I know is that I want to be at your side, with every breath I take.

**FEATHERTOP**

The ruin of the mission lately thrust on me, and the ruin my dearest of you. Mother Rigby, Mother, I have seen the truth a-bout myself. To trap an-other in that truth, never! And when that other is a loved one to whose eyes this truth will come. This truth will slowly come. Never! Never! Never!

*(with great passion – we can see his inner struggle)*

**RIGBY**

My boy you are no worse then most men, who are hollow and empty with no more substance then you.

*(He looks sadly at Polly and reaches out a hand as though to touch her but then puts it up forbiddingly when she would approach him. Then slowly he empties his pipe --- walks over to the mirror for a last look - -- he hurls the pipe to the ground. There is a great explosive puff of smoke - the man Feathertop vanishes behind the mirror, and the original scarecrow collapses on stage in front of the mirror Polly shrieks a great shriek; the others are rushing in to her as the opera ends)*

*END OF OPERA*