

Overture to *Plump Jack*

My opera *Plump Jack* tracks the fictional career of Falstaff in Shakespeare's Henry IV, setting the original text where practical. Falstaff brews merry mischiefs with the scapegrace Prince Hal, to the despair of king and court, but is banished "Not to come near my person by ten mile" when Hal becomes King Henry the Fifth. The overture is a synopsis of this story, quoting scenes of Falstaffian high jinks and of courtly grief by turn, along with a few idyllic episodes, interrupted by occasional distant fanfares warning of the banishment. If this last idea was filched from *Leonora #2*, then so much the better for its pedigree. At last the overture brings us to the banishment in full fortissimo, with the king's baleful sentence, and then closes with Falstaff's appeal for Hal's heart and ours: "No, my good lord,...banish Plump Jack, and banish all the world."

Gordon Getty, February 2003