

## FACEBOOK TRIBUTES

### CLAIBE RICHARDSON, THEATRE COMPOSERπ

[Frank Gagliano](#)

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**Kudos to CLAIBE RICHARDSON (COMPOSER) — (“*From The Bodoni County Songbook Anthology*” —24 April—Carnegie Stage).**

The late Claibe Richardson and I worked on another piece, “*Congo Square*.” Like “*Bodoni County*” it had my original book and lyrics. I created the characters and structure. It’s a tricky piece and I didn’t know if Claibe would be hemmed in by my dictating the entire blueprint. No problem. He was a genius at setting the music notes to each vowel and consonant and following the stresses of the speech and, making marvelous melodies of it all. Just before he died, his final composition, a suite based on his Broadway musical, “*The Grass Harp*,” was arranged by Jonathan Tunick, Stephan Sondheim’s orchestrator, and played at Carnegie Hall. Claibe attended. I couldn’t get in to New York to hear it. Claibe told me that the audience gave him a standing ovation. Apparently, Tunick was heard to compare Claibe to composer Harold Arlen — one of the giants of the Great American Songbook (“*Over The Rainbow*,” “*Blues In The Night*”). Very apt, in my opinion.

Claibe was such a theatre animal. He was also a great laughter. And he had a phrase he’d often use that would tickle me. He might not like someone, but if that someone died or a partner of that someone took sick, Claibe would always send a consoling note or would call — then, he would say to me— in his slight Texas twang — “Frank, I did the handsome thing.” . . .One of the reasons I wanted to remount *Bodoni* was to reintroduce this great melodist to a theatre public. Here, in Pittsburgh, Claibe — in this production—I think we did “the handsome thing” by you. RIP old collaborator.apt, in my opinion.

Claibe could set anything to theatrical song. In the early days he made a good living composing for the big Las Vegas Industrial shows of the period. Elaborate musical productions. I went to one of his rehearsals in New York — for a car company. I seem to remember that the production number was for hub caps.

This time out, I discovered in the Bodoni score a closing piece I didn't remember existed — different words for a repeat of the beautiful, *“And The Song Takes Over.”* We also had Jonathan Overview's beginning, driving, piece — *“The Sounds You Hear.”* I did remember that one, but we never recorded it, so I had to deal with it as something newly minted. We did both pieces at Carnegie Stage, in this production of *“Bodoni County.”* Both worked.

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