

# Adaptation to the Musical Theater Form

by

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## Introduction: “A Mighty All”

The practice of adapting librettos based on previously known properties in other media is not an evil one, nor is it new. The only “trick”—and it is a neat one if it works—is to recognize what properties contain the germs of useful ideas and then what needs to be accomplished in conversion. That is all; but it is a mighty all.<sup>1</sup>

Since the very beginning of musical theater of any kind, the adaptation of existing stories to the form has always been popular. As John Kander, a composer best known for the musicals *Cabaret* (1966, adapted from the play *I Am a Camera* by John Van Druten, which was adapted from the novel *Goodbye to Berlin* by Christopher Isherwood) and *Chicago* (1976, adapted from a play of the same name by Maurine Dallas Watkins, which was based on true events), points out in his essay “Musical Theater Has Always Been a Theater of Adaptations,” even the work that is generally accepted as the first musical play in history, an opera called *Dafne* that was written in 1597, was an adaptation of a Greek myth.<sup>2</sup> He goes on to say that from *Dafne* to today, the writing of musical theater adaptations has not just been common, it has actually been *more* common than the writing of original musicals<sup>3</sup>. The 1910s, ‘20s, and ‘30s, he says, are a brief exception to this rule, but the only musical from that period that is still well known and regularly performed today is *Show Boat* (1927),

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<sup>1</sup> Lehman Engel, *Words with Music: Creating the Broadway Musical Libretto*, updated and revised by Howard Kissel (New York: Applause Theatre & Cinema Books, 2006), 284.

<sup>2</sup> John Kander, “Musical Theater Has Always Been a Theater of Adaptations,” in *Playwrights, Lyricists, Composers, on Theater*, ed. Otis L. Guernsey Jr. (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1964), 145.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 146.

which is an adaptation of the Edna Ferber novel of the same name.<sup>4</sup> I assume he does not consider *Anything Goes* (1934) to count as an original musical from that period that is still performed today because the book has been rewritten so many different times over the decades due to the weakness of the original libretto.

Adaptations are not only more prevalent than original musicals; they also tend to be more popular with audiences.<sup>5</sup> Lehman Engel claims that while there have certainly been many unsuccessful adaptations, there have *only* been two “successful and lasting” original librettos: *Lady in the Dark* (1941) and *Company* (1970).<sup>6</sup> Kander adds to the list *Of Thee I Sing* (1931), *Follies* (1971), and everything by Gilbert and Sullivan,<sup>7</sup> and, without getting into the last decade or so to avoid works that may not be as lasting as they seem, I personally would add *Hair* and *Grease*. In contrast, at the time that Lehman Engel wrote his book *Words with Music* in 1972, “Out of the dozen or so longest lasting musicals, six were based on plays, seven on collections of short stories, three on motion pictures, three on biographies, three on novels, one on a single short story, and one on history.”<sup>8</sup> The trend has not faded in the past four decades: in that time, thirteen new shows have arrived at the top of the list of the longest running musicals in Broadway history, and the only one that wasn’t an adaptation was a jukebox musical.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 146.

<sup>6</sup> Engel, *Words with Music*, 285.

<sup>7</sup> Kander, “Musical Theater Has Always Been a Theater of Adaptations,” 147.

<sup>8</sup> Engel, *Words with Music*, 293.

<sup>9</sup> Jennifer Nason-Brown, “Long Runs on Broadway,” *Playbill*. March 23, 2014. <http://www.playbill.com/celebritybuzz/article/75222-Long-Runs-on-Broadway>.

Why are adaptations so much more prevalent and popular in musical theater than original works? Their popularity with audiences could be attributed to people's loyalty to stories they already love, and, in turn, it is easy to see how the risks and expenses associated with producing a musical would mean that, from a producer's standpoint, it's safer to pour money into something that has already been proven to be commercially successful and has a fan base. This fact alone would account for the prevalence of adaptations in musical theater—unfortunately even writers have to take the jobs that pay, especially in today's economy.

However, there are also plenty of successful adaptations have been based off of stories with little commercial value (like myths or long-forgotten works in any medium) or even source materials that were commercial failures or will be controversial. In these cases, the shows' popularity with audiences cannot be explained by people's love of seeing the stories they love told in new ways, and their popularity with writers can't be blamed on fear of writing a show that won't be commercially viable. As such, there must be another reason, or another many reasons, to write a musical theater adaptation of a pre-existing story.

Of course, while not every writer is looking to make the most money, there are some who choose projects in order to build an image. Andrew Lloyd Webber, for example, has said that he was aware of the controversy *Jesus Christ Superstar* (1971, based off the Bible and the book *The Life of Christ* by Bishop Fulton J. Sheen) would

cause and was “looking for something that will bring you attention.”<sup>10</sup> Later in his career, he became concerned that the press had lately “depicted him as aloof, distant, and shy about expressing his affection for people, even his new wife.”<sup>11</sup> As a result, he decided to adapt *The Phantom of the Opera* (1986, based on the French novel of the same name by Gaston Leroux), which, with a dramatic love triangle at the center of the action, “he hoped would be his romantic declaration.”<sup>12</sup> It didn’t hurt that he could cast the beautiful wife to whom the press had accused him of being cold as the lead. The Lord Lloyd-Webber, however, is the exception, not the rule. Most writers of musical theater are not so openly fixated on calculating career moves.

Putting aside the motivations of money and fame, in this essay I will explore the decision-making process a writer undergoes when embarking on a musical theater adaptation. I will begin by examining the general benefits of writing an adaptation over an original work at all, and then will move on to the reasons one should or should not choose to adapt a given story to the musical form. In particular, I will discuss four types of adaptations that come out of different motives for selecting the story: the adaptation that is more suited to musical theater than its original form, the adaptation that springs from true passion for the source text and therefore attempts to recreate it, the adaptation that deviates so far from the source material that it tells a different story, and the adaptation for which the source text is chosen based on potential for spectacle or music rather than interest in the story. After identifying

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<sup>10</sup> Andrew Lloyd Webber quoted in Jessica Sternfeld, *The Megamusical* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 18.

<sup>11</sup> Sternfeld, *The Megamusical*, 226.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

these types of adaptations, I will examine the specific features of different types of stories and source materials that make them particularly well-suited or even feasibly adaptable to the musical form and, conversely, the challenges that other features provide that may make a work unsuitable for adaptation. In so doing, I will show why musical theater writers so often choose to write adaptations and the rules they follow for selection of material to increase their chances of writing something that works.

## **“Versions of Each Other”**

Personally, I suspect that there are actually very few stories to tell—only new people to tell them and new moments in social history from which to look back at the same old stories. And, in a way, that’s as it should be since we’re all really variations on a theme, versions of each other—adaptations, really.<sup>13</sup>

More often than not, the reason a writer chooses to write a musical, as opposed to a novel or a screenplay or anything else, is simply that ze is a person who writes musicals. But why do so many writers of musical theater choose to adapt pre-existing stories rather than invent their own?

Writers themselves have been providing a certain answer for approximately the last century. “I have no book sense,” Cole Porter famously said.<sup>14</sup> Though a remarkable tunesmith and clever lyricist, he had very little interest in things like story arcs and character development, and as a result, most of his shows, though popular in

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<sup>13</sup> Kander, “Musical Theater Has Always Been a Theater of Adaptations,” 148.

<sup>14</sup> Cole Porter quoted in Joseph P. Swain, *The Broadway Musical: A Critical and Musical Survey* (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2002), 139.



his day, have flimsy librettos that have not held up well over time.<sup>15</sup> To this rule, there are two exceptions: *Anything Goes*, which, as I mentioned earlier, has been rewritten with nearly every revival, and *Kiss Me, Kate* (1948), which is adapted from *The Taming of the Shrew*. After Rodgers and Hammerstein had burst onto the scene with *Oklahoma!* (1943) and *Carousel* (1945), both adaptations themselves, and changed what the public desired out of a musical, Porter realized he needed to start working with stronger books if he wanted to remain relevant. “The librettos are much better and the scores are much closer to the librettos than they used to be. Those two made it harder for everybody else,” Porter said.<sup>16</sup> With no interest in coming up with an original story or even writing an adaptation as dramatic as *Carousel*, Porter sought a comic story that had been proven to work. The obvious answer of a trustworthy comic playwright was William Shakespeare, and the result was *Kiss Me, Kate*. Porter was not the first to use the immortal humor of the Bard as the basis for a successful musical; Rodgers and Hart, who “knew they were in the business of composing music and writing lyrics, not composing plot,” had turned *Comedy of Errors* into the successful musical *The Boys from Syracuse* (1938) ten years previously.<sup>17</sup>

Even today, some writers feel the same way. Lynn Ahrens, the lyricist and, in some cases, librettist responsible for adaptations including *Once on This Island* (1990, based on the novel *My Love, My Love; or, The Peasant Girl* by Rosa Guy), *Ragtime* (1998, based on the novel of the same name by E.L. Doctorow), and

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<sup>15</sup> Swain, *The Broadway Musical*, 139-40.

<sup>16</sup> Cole Porter quoted in Swain, *The Broadway Musical*, 141.

<sup>17</sup> Irene G. Dash, *Shakespeare and the American Musical* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 1.

*Seussical* (2000, based on the works of Dr. Seuss), among others, once said, “Musical theater writers are generally not playwrights. The blank page is scary for us.”<sup>18</sup>

For other writers, it’s not so much a question of a perceived lack of ability as it is one of efficiency. Stephen Schwartz, composer of adaptations like *Godspell* (1971, based on stories from the New Testament), *Pippin* (1972, based on the life of Pippin the Hunchback), *Working* (1978, based on the book by Studs Terkel), *Children of Eden* (1991, based on stories from the Old Testament), and *Wicked* (2003, based on the novel by Gregory Maguire), explains:

The reason it’s harder [to write an original musical] is because first you have to [...] make up a story that has really good characters and dramatic action, all the things that would make for a good play or a movie or a good book, and then you have to make it into a musical. So it’s an extra step. It’s a lot easier when, you know, George Bernard Shaw has done some of that work for you.<sup>19</sup>

Not only can using a pre-existing story expedite the writing process by minimizing the work to be done, it can also improve it by helping to add clarity. Stephen Sondheim, most of whose works are adaptations, explains that he arrived at the idea of adapting fairytales for *Into the Woods* (1987) because he knew he wanted to write

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<sup>18</sup> Lynn Ahrens quoted in *The Art of the American Musical: Conversations with the Creators*, ed. Jackson R. Bryer and Richard A. Davison (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 22.

<sup>19</sup> Stephen Schwartz, “Stephen Schwartz on Adaptation of an Existing Story for a Musical,” *Musicalwriters.com*, 2006, <http://www.musicalwriters.com/write/stephen-schwartz/starting/adaptation.htm>.

a quest story and there were simply “too many possibilities.”<sup>20</sup> “When you have infinite choices and no point to make,” he says, “every plot is possible and every character arbitrary except for the principals.”<sup>21</sup> Through the choice of source text Sondheim and his collaborator, James Lapine, were able to find their point: they realized that fairytales are dangerous in that they never display the consequences of the characters’ actions and are therefore misleading to children, and decided that while the first act would tell fairytales in a traditional way, the second would follow up with what happens after happily ever after<sup>22</sup>. The finale song, “Children Will Listen,” while perfectly justifiable within the narrative, serves an additional purpose as a warning about the danger of fairytales, the danger the show itself seeks to combat and subvert. Lapine, who also collaborated with Sondheim on *Sunday in the Park with George* (1984, inspired by the painting “Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte” by George Seurat) and *Passion* (1994, adapted from the film *Passione d’Amore*, which was adapted from the novel *Fosca* by Iginio Ugo Tarchetti), points out that the narrowing of possibilities that adaptation provides is particularly useful from a collaborative standpoint because “you have a common source—you know the characters, you’ve seen it, you’re working off the same notion.”<sup>23</sup> Even in the case of *Sunday in the Park with George*, in which the source material provides no plot to

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<sup>20</sup> Stephen Sondheim, *Look, I Made a Hat: Collected Lyrics (1981-2011), with Attendant Comments, Amplifications, Dogmas, Harangues, Digressions, Anecdotes, and Miscellany* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011), 57.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>23</sup> James Lapine quoted in Miranda Lundskaer-Nielsen, *Directors and the New Musical Drama: British and American Musical Theatre in the 1980s and 90s* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 194.

speak of, the style of the painting and the people present in it gave the two men an undeniable common ground to start from.

## The “Why?” Musical

A desire to write musical theater and an idea are not enough. The question remains whether the idea should be made into a musical—whether it can even work as a musical. If the writers do not have strong reasons to believe that the idea is better as a musical than as a play, a novel, a film, or something else—that having it performed onstage with singing and dancing will enhance the idea rather than dilute or ruin it—then they would be wise to forgo it and look for something else.<sup>24</sup>

Though musical theater writers past and present have provided plenty of reasons to write an adaptation in general, no adaptation can truly work if there is not a good reason that that particular story needs to be a musical in particular. When a writer chooses to write an adaptation that does not fit that two-sided criterion, the result is what many writers call a “Why?” musical: “a perfectly respectable show, based on a perfectly respectable source, that has no reason for being.”<sup>25</sup> As Sondheim points out writers write these shows due to “attractiveness of the source material, how easily it could sing, how effectively it could be staged, which actor would be perfect for the leading role.”<sup>26</sup> Howard Kissel adds that in most cases the execution of the adaptation

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<sup>24</sup> Allen Cohen and Steven L. Rosenhaus, *Writing Musical Theater* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 17-18.

<sup>25</sup> Stephen Sondheim, *Finishing the Hat: Collected Lyrics (1954-1981) with Attendant Comments, Principles, Heresies, Grudges, Whines and Anecdotes* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 143.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

is even good, and on a surface level, the show seems to achieve its goals.<sup>27</sup> And yet, the shows are not, as Kissel says, “inspired;” they fail to “recreate the vitality of the original.”<sup>28</sup> He and Sondheim agree on the reason: there is nothing about the original material that needs to be sung; music cannot do anything for the story that the original author did not already accomplish in his own medium.<sup>29</sup>

However, there are exceptions to this rule. Sondheim suggests two other appropriate reasons a musical theater writer might choose a story for adaptation. “‘Why?’ musicals can be good only if they’re truly transformed or if they’re the result of genuine passion for the original material,” he says.<sup>30</sup> He reiterates later that “the only reason to write a show is for love.”<sup>31</sup> In the case of the “truly transformed” adaptation, the show is still being written for love of something (a point, a form, a style, a collaborator, a character or setting or single plot point, etc.); that something is just not necessarily the story that is told in the source material. The source text is simply a jumping off point—a means to limit the endless possibilities so that decisions will be less arbitrary or so that a bit of the work is already done.

What possible reasons are there to write a “Why?” musical other than love? The most obvious are “convenience or the desire to turn a quick buck, ” which are so obvious they do not merit further discussion, but they can be as unusual as something like filial obligation, as in the case of Sondheim’s own *Do I Hear a Waltz?* (1965,

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<sup>27</sup> Kissel’s commentary in Engel, *Words with Music*, 309.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 310.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*; Sondheim, *Finishing the Hat*, 143.

<sup>30</sup> Sondheim, *Finishing the Hat*, 143.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

adapted from the film *Summertime*, which was adapted from the Arthur Laurents play *The Time of the Cuckoo*), which he wrote with Richard Rodgers as a favor to his mentor, Oscar Hammerstein II, after Hammerstein's death left Rodgers without a writing partner, a reason so oddly specific that there is nothing else to say about it.<sup>32</sup> In the 1980s and '90s, however, advances in the film and music industries provided new reasons to adapt certain source texts that had a far more wide reaching impact: the result of these new reasons to adapt certain source materials was some of the most popular, albeit not necessarily critically acclaimed, musicals of all time.

### **“Things Only a Musical Can Supply”<sup>33</sup>: The Anti-“Why?” Musical**

While “Why?” musicals can in some situations still be successful, a musical that *must* be a musical has a higher likelihood of working as long as the execution is good. No adaptation, however, can truly *need* to be a musical, or else it couldn't already exist in some other form. Therefore, as Allen Cohen and Steven L. Rosenhaus point out in their book *Writing Musical Theater*, the opposite of a “Why?” adaptation is one in which music “enhance[s] the story in some way not present in the original. This can only be the case if the original is not in its most suitable medium, and if a new version with songs and dances can add to it something better, or at least different.”<sup>34</sup> In order for music to “enhance the story,” William Hammerstein, son of Oscar Hammerstein II, says, “Making a musical must not be merely adding the music,

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Tina Landau quoted in Scott Miller, *Rebels with Applause: Broadway's Groundbreaking Musicals* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001), 159.

<sup>34</sup> Cohen and Rosenhaus, *Writing Musical Theater*, 19.

but the finished product must reveal something different, new transforming.”<sup>35</sup> For this reason, Cohen and Rosenhaus say, “The best musical adaptations have rarely been based off the best plays or movies. [...] With a first-rate play, there is less room for an adaptation to improve or add.”<sup>36</sup>

According to Cohen and Rosenhaus, this phenomenon proved true in the case of *Raisin* (1973, adapted from the play *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry), in which “the adaptation neither added nor changed anything fundamental. As good as the songs were, most of them were simply slotted into the story by replacing the equivalent original dialogue, with nothing significant changed.”<sup>37</sup> Of course, this didn’t seem to bother the Tony voters; the show was nominated for Best Book and Best Score and won Best Musical.

*Raisin*’s questionable success as an adaptation aside, there are cases in which even the writers are surprised when an already successful source material seems to make for a good adaptation. Such was the case for bookwriter John Weidman when David Shire and Richard Maltby, Jr. approached him with the idea of making a 1996 musical of the film *Big*. “I initially didn’t think it was a good idea. Not only is it a famous movie with a star performance in it, but it was done beautifully. The film was a completely finished piece of work as far as I was concerned, and I didn’t see a

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<sup>35</sup> William Hammerstein quoted in Stephen Citron, *The Musical From the Inside Out* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1991), 94.

<sup>36</sup> Cohen and Rosenhaus, *Writing Musical Theater*, 19.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

reason to do it over,” he says.<sup>38</sup> In the end, however, Shire and Maltby wrote a song that convinced him that “there’s an emotional approach to this that music will provide that will make telling the story again worth doing.”<sup>39</sup> Unlike *Raisin*, however, it did not win any Tonys, though it was nominated for Best Book. Of course, whether the Tonys can be taken as any indication of merit is unclear.

If the only way to write what I will call an Anti-“Why?” adaptation is to choose a story in which “musicalization” actually changes or improves the telling of the story, how does one tell which stories *will* be improved by musicalization? Many musical theater writers seem to agree: the key is choosing a story full of emotions. Marsha Norman, the librettist responsible for the recent adaptation *Bridges of Madison County* (2014, based on the Robert James Waller novel and the film of the same name) as well as *The Secret Garden* (1991, based on the Frances Hodgson Burnett novel of the same name), *The Red Shoes* (1993, based on the film of the same name), and *The Color Purple* (2005, based off the Alice Walker novel of the same name), explains,

There’s a limit to what you can do in text in terms of the big, deep emotions. [...] It is very hard to show joy on the stage. Cartwheels! You can’t do that. The thrill of writing musicals is you can get to that point where you have to stop talking, and then you can sing, as opposed to plays, where you get to that point where you have to stop talking and then it’s the other person’s turn.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> John Weidman quoted in Bryer and Davison, *The Art of the American Musical*, 268.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Marsha Norman quoted in Suzy Evans, “Bridge of Tears,” *American Theatre*, February 2014, <http://www.tcg.org/publications/at/issue/featuredstory.cfm?story=4&indexID=41>.



Tina Landau, the librettist of *Floyd Collins* (1996, based off a true story), agrees that “in a musical a character breaks into song when his emotion becomes too big for spoken words. That’s why *West Side Story* [1957, based on *Romeo and Juliet*], *Carousel*, and *Sweeney Todd* [1979, based on the play of the same name by Christopher Bond] had to be musicals; spoken words cannot contain emotions that large.”<sup>41</sup> When Tony meets Maria for the first time, he hardly even *has* words for what he is experiencing; he mostly just repeats her name. But the music does the work for him; it communicates what he is feeling more clearly than words ever could. This is not to say lyrics are unnecessary. On the contrary, every emotional response to any situation has two parts: thought and feeling. Lyrics account for one, and music for the other. The story can be told without music, as it is in the source text, but it is just that much harder to make the audience understand the extent of what the character is feeling. As Jason Robert Brown, Marsha Norman’s collaborator on *The Bridges of Madison County*, says, “With just text, it is so hard to push that boulder up the hill. Music just flattens the hill for you. The boulder just starts rolling. And then you have to be very careful about the power that that thing has.”<sup>42</sup>

Of course, there are also practical reasons that a musical can be the best form for a story. For example, Tina Landau points out that “musicals are the only contemporary theatre form in which the soliloquy still feels normal. [...] In *Floyd Collins* [1996, based on a true story], with the main character stuck in a cave, usually having no contact with the outside world, the only way we can get inside Floyd’s

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<sup>41</sup> Tina Landau quoted in Miller, *Rebels with Applause*, 159.

<sup>42</sup> Jason Robert Brown quoted in Suzy Evans, *American Theatre*.

head is through soliloquy.”<sup>43</sup> Other than a need for soliloquy, another reason a story may make the most sense as a musical is if the story is about music. Margo Lion, the producer of *Jelly’s Last Jam* (1992, based on the life of Jelly Roll Morton) knew that she wanted to tell a story of “how jazz came to be.”<sup>44</sup> It’s only natural that this story would be at its best as a musical.

## “One That Grabs Me By the Throat”

“I’m always in bookstores and in movies looking for stories. I look for a wonderful story that I can’t put down, one that grabs me by the throat,” Lynn Ahrens once said in an interview.<sup>45</sup> While there are plenty of people who adapt musicals with hopes of commercial success, she isn’t the only one to choose her projects based on passion. It only makes sense that if a writer loves a story, ze will want to get hir hands on it hirself, and that ze will want it to be shared with as many new people as possible. In Stephen Sondheim’s discussion of the “Why?” musical, he cites *My Fair Lady* (1956, based on the play *Pygmalion* by George Bernard Shaw) as an example of a show that “resembles its source almost identically” and therefore seems to break the rule that in a good adaptation, songs don’t just replace chunks of dialogue.<sup>46</sup> He claims that the reason the show is still able to be successful is that the writers truly

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<sup>43</sup> Tina Landau quoted in Miller, *Rebels with Applause*, 159-60.

<sup>44</sup> Margo Lion quoted in Lundskaer-Nielsen, *Directors and the New Musical Drama*, 196.

<sup>45</sup> Lynn Ahrens quoted in Bryer and Davison, *The Art of the American Musical*, 11.

<sup>46</sup> Sondheim, *Finishing the Hat*, 143.

loved the story they were telling, though he does not indicate how he knows this, or how one could know that all *unsuccessful* shows were not passion projects.<sup>47</sup>

In many cases, however, the writers have spoken out about their passion for particular projects. *Sunday in the Park with George*, according to Sondheim's collaborator, James Lapine, "really came from being intrigued by an image."<sup>48</sup> In the case of *Evita* (1978, based on the life of Eva Peron), lyricist/librettist Tim Rice says he "was as captivated as the descamisados [the lower-class 'shirtless ones' that Eva Peron claimed as her followers]."<sup>49</sup> When asked "What makes [*The Bridges of Madison County*] right for musical theatre?," Jason Robert Brown responded:

If you ask Marsha [Norman, librettist], she'll always tell you that she writes for the "trapped girl," and Francesca suddenly and very obviously became that, and that would be why she responded to it. Whereas I'm always the person who's on the outside; I'm always the person who's standing around wondering what the hell all you people are doing but also not wanting to participate in it. There's a lot of that in this piece. Robert is very much that guy for the show. So I think that our own particular neuroses and obsessions complement the material very well. We've both had the experience of being asked to adapt stuff, and we look at it and say, "I cannot find a way into this." And then someone goes off and makes a lot of money doing it. *The Bridges of Madison County* wasn't a book I had ever read, and it wasn't a movie I had ever seen but I knew that yes, that's something I know how to find my way into.<sup>50</sup>

At no point does he actually answer the question of what makes the story right for musical theater. Instead, he describes why the story was right for *him* and his collaborator. The fact that he sees having "a way into" the story as the most important

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> James Lapine quoted in Lundskaer-Nielsen, *Directors and the New Musical Drama*, 191.

<sup>49</sup> Tim Rice quoted in Sternfeld, *The Megamusical*, 100.

<sup>50</sup> Jason Robert Brown quoted in Suzy Evans, *American Theatre*.

factor in choosing a project shows that Brown, at least, truly prefers passion projects, to the point that the question “why should this be a musical?” sounds to him like “why should I write it?,” and the only acceptable answer is, “because I connect to it.”

Sometimes the motivation to adapt a certain story is not the passion of the writers alone but recognition of what will spark passion in the audience. As Alain Boubil, the man responsible for the book and French lyrics of *Les Misérables* (1980 French version/1985 English version, based on the Victor Hugo novel of the same name), said, “In order to be able to have musical theater performed in France, a country where the genre does not exist, you have to touch something that is deep in the heart of the people.”<sup>51</sup> As a Frenchman himself, he was not excluded from the passion for this story, which is so well known in France that the French version assumes a background knowledge of the story and is even less clear than the English version, but while he might have been passionate about another, this was the one he could depend on the people to love.<sup>52</sup> Its success outside of France was an unanticipated perk.

## **The “Truly Transformed” Adaptation**

Many musical theater adaptations take plenty of liberties in the conversion process. The most extreme example is *Sunday in the Park with George*. The story is completely invented; it has nothing to do with the actual life of George Seurat. The inspiration was the image, and one would be hard put to argue that any image *needs*

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<sup>51</sup> Alain Boubil quoted in Sternfeld, *The Megamusical*, 177.

<sup>52</sup> Sternfeld, *The Megamusical*, 180.

to be a musical. The source material is not a story that would be better communicated in the musical theater form—or at least it wasn't until Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine made it one. The image was a jumping off point, but the writers transformed it into something completely new, something that *did* need to be a musical. That is where they went right.

In other, less extreme cases, the writers choose to change the tone or the themes or the setting and keep the plot and characters. The examples Sondheim provides include *Oklahoma!* (based off the play *Green Grow the Lilacs* by Lynn Riggs), in which Rodgers and Hammerstein made “a play about homosexuality and the loneliness of the early Western settlers” into “a paeon to American pioneering and expansion,” and *Carousel* (based off the play *Liliom* by Ferenc Molnar), in which the same team transformed a “Hungarian play about Budapest lowlifes” into “a parable about undying love in a cozy nineteenth-century New England fishing village.”<sup>53</sup> The plot is similar; the point it makes is different.

By changing the source text significantly, the writer is able to avoid entirely the question of whether or not the material would truly be better as a musical than left in its original medium—the musical doesn't have to be better than the original, it just has to say things the writer wants to say that the original could have but didn't. For this reason, the “totally transformed” adaptation is often the best approach to source texts that are already great. While one can stick closely to a magnificent source text, motivated by passion, and hope for the best, as in the case of *My Fair Lady* (which,

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<sup>53</sup> Sondheim, *Finishing the Hat*, 143.

despite ending differently from the play *Pygmalion*, exactly mimics the ending of the 1938 film version, which George Bernard Shaw also wrote), it is a risky move and can be very limiting. When the point is different, the writers still get to skip the step of coming up with a story, but they don't have to be better than the original to justify having written the show at all, and they can say and do whatever is most important to them. Cole Porter and Samuel and Bella Spewack didn't have to write better than Shakespeare to write the backstage musical *Kiss Me, Kate*; Porter just had to write witty songs, just as he wanted, and make them make sense for the on- and offstage lives of a company of actors whose lives happen to be paralleling the silly musical version of *The Taming of the Shrew* that they happen to be performing. Nor did Arthur Laurents and Leonard Bernstein and Sondheim have to write better than Shakespeare to write *West Side Story*; they wanted to delve into the dangers of ethnic prejudice in a contemporary New York and the place of love in such a world—the Romeo and Juliet story was simply the vehicle. As if the change of setting weren't enough, the decision to leave Maria alive at the end says loud and clear, “this is our story, not Shakespeare's.” Though *Romeo and Juliet* works just fine as a play, *West Side Story*, populated with not just leads but a full cast of characters who have so much fear and anger and desire pent up inside of them that their emotions have no choice but to come out in music and movement, never would have.

### **Filmic Spectacle and Rock Concert Mentality**

In response to Lehman Engel's strict set of rules as to what makes a story appropriate for adaptation to the musical form, which will be discussed below,

Howard Kissel insists that “nowadays a different dramatic logic applies.”<sup>54</sup> The narrative potential of the story itself is no longer the only reason to adapt a work; the potential for moments of spectacle and show-stealing songs can be enough of a reason to write a show.

Kissel attributes the movement toward spectacle, which he places in the 1980s and ‘90s (commonly known in musical theater as the British era, the British invasion, or the era of the megamusical), to advances in film technology.<sup>55</sup> If people enjoyed watching explosions on their television screen at home, imagine how much they would like to see a chandelier fall (*Phantom of the Opera*) or a helicopter land (*Miss Saigon*, 1989, based on Puccini’s opera *Madame Butterfly* and a photo from the Vietnam War) right before their eyes! And so the goal became to create “a brilliant succession of stage pictures. In a visual age the broad sweep matters more than dramatic consistency,” so stories for adaptation began to be chosen for those visual moments rather than their narrative arcs.<sup>56</sup> As evidence, Kissel cites set designer Robin Wagner, who claims to have sometimes been hired for “musicals in which the score was not yet complete but the scenic demands were already in place. The producers had determined the material’s potential for spectacle and that had taken precedence over its dramatic needs.”<sup>57</sup> Jessica Sternfeld, however, disagrees with Kissel. She insists that “there is no reason to believe that the source material was chosen based on its visual possibilities. Lloyd Webber chose *The Phantom of the*

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<sup>54</sup> Kissel’s commentary in Engel, *Words with Music*, 307.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 308

<sup>57</sup> Robin Wagner quoted in Kissel’s commentary in Engel, *Words with Music*, 309.

*Opera* for its romantic story, not its falling chandelier.”<sup>58</sup> Besides, “impressive effects were no guarantee of success.”<sup>59</sup> For every *Phantom* there was a monumental flop like *Via Galactica* (1972).

The rise of spectacle also seems to be linked to the rise of the visionary director (Kissel mentions Julie Taymor, Sir Peter Hall, and Trevor Nunn as examples)<sup>60</sup> over the director-choreographer, though which led to the other is hard to say. Though Kissel doesn’t mention the possibility, I’m inclined to wonder if that change is also due to the influence of film, in which the director has such a different role. Regardless, if the kind of director working in the commercial world changed before the rise of spectacle, it is possible that the reason for the rise of spectacle had more to do with who was directing than with writers choosing source texts based on the potential for special effects.

As the concept of visual moments gained import, so did the idea of musical moments. Influenced by “the theatricality of rock concerts,” Kissel claims musical theater writers began to write whole musicals for the purpose of exploring a few great song ideas, even when the narrative was weak between those moments.<sup>61</sup> *Les Miserables*, for example, “was originally conceived as a series of numbers that crystallized key moments in the plot. In such a context the interstitial material was secondary.”<sup>62</sup> These songs are the auditory equivalents of *Miss Saigon*’s helicopter.

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<sup>58</sup> Sternfeld, *The Megamusical*, 80.

<sup>59</sup> Kissel’s commentary in Engel, *Words with Music*, 309.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 307.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 308.



Some shows, like *Phantom*, employ both of these new phenomena, and to the disadvantage of the story: Andrew Lloyd Webber, Charles Hart, and Richard Stilgoe “have not created a compelling narrative but rather a series of arresting moments,” some of which are visual and some of which are musical, Kissel says. “Dramatically speaking, however, a lot of dots are not connected.”<sup>63</sup> Of course, this is not necessarily a good reason to write off an adaptation as unsuccessful. True though the accusations of weak storytelling may be, Sternfeld has a point when she charges Kissel with ignoring the emotional responses of audiences in his devaluation of megamusicals.<sup>64</sup> Critics may take issue with the poor storytelling, but *Phantom* wouldn’t be the longest running show in Broadway history if its “moments” weren’t enough to satisfy the audience.

## The Key Elements

Whether a writer has chosen a story out of passion or because it makes a good starting point for an intended transformation or due to certain exciting moments or even because it appears that it would be enhanced by music, there comes a point at which ze must ask himself, “does this story have the elements that make a story amenable to adaptation to the musical form?” In his book *The Musical from the Inside Out*, Stephen Citron goes so far as to say, “It may sound simplistic, but perhaps the whole difference between a hit and a flop lies in the choice of material.”<sup>65</sup> In this choice, Lehman Engel suggests that there are five crucial elements that a story must

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 309.

<sup>64</sup> Sternfeld, *The Megamusical*, 81.

<sup>65</sup> Stephen Citron, *The Musical from the Inside Out*, 93.

have (or be conducive to the introduction of) in order to have any potential to be a good musical: feeling, subplot, romance, particularization of character and situation, and comedy.<sup>66</sup> Since the time Engel wrote *Words with Music*, many successful shows have disproven the need for subplot, romance, comedy, and even to a degree particularization of character and situation. The need for the element of feeling, however, has remained largely intact. Even Engel acknowledges that feeling is the element that truly is the key: “In choosing material the adaptor should locate those factors capable of immediately grabbing the audience’s attention and empathy: Why should they care?” he asks.<sup>67</sup> “The situation, or a character, alone or within the situation” are usually the most effective vehicles for feeling, according to Engel and others.<sup>68</sup> Allen Cohen and Steven L. Rosenhaus agree that “the true essentials of a good show” are “sympathetic characters and a story with strong emotion.”<sup>69</sup> Other factors that can make a source text good or bad for adaptation to the musical form may include the ease with which a certain variety of source material can be adapted, the universality of the themes or the timeliness of their relevance, the appropriateness of the tone of the story for a musical, the quantity of action and interaction involved, the scope of the story, and the pace at which the story moves.

### *Variety of Source Material*

In terms of types of source material, the options are endless. Though there is the occasional musical inspired by a painting, or, in the case of *How to Succeed in*

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<sup>66</sup> Engel, *Words with Music*, 285.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 286.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Cohen and Rosenhaus, *Writing Musical Theater*, 21.

*Business Without Really Trying* (1961), a satirical self-help book, more often musicals are based on short stories, novels, films, plays, historical events and people, myths or legends, and epic poems. Each type of source text has its benefits and its disadvantages.

Some, such as Citron and Cohen and Rosenhaus,<sup>70</sup> assert that dramatic works such as plays or movies are the easiest to adapt because the writers “have had many problems solved for them; they already have characters, conflict, action that develops and builds through varied scenes, and so on.”<sup>71</sup> At the same time, one of the most common changes that must be made in the adaptation of a play is the practice of “opening the proscenium” (staging scenes that were just reported by a character to have happened in the source play), so the musical does not retain the play’s structure anyway. Even within the category of “dramatic works,” films and plays are vastly different, and each has different things to offer: films have short, fast-paced, action-packed scenes, which in many ways are more like scenes in musicals than the scenes of plays, which tend to be longer and filled with talking rather than action, are, but films often have elements that would be very challenging to stage, whereas plays are guaranteed to be stage-able.<sup>72</sup>

When the source text is “something that had not been organized previously in dramatic form,” like a novel, short story or group of sort stories, or epic poem, “the

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<sup>70</sup> Citron, *The Musical from the Inside Out*, 95.

<sup>71</sup> Cohen and Rosenhaus, *Writing Musical Theater*, 41.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

librettist was freer to create the form best suited to all musicals, as well as his own.”<sup>73</sup>

In addition to having greater freedom to find a dramatic structure that works for the adaptor rather than being distracted by the original, events that would occur “off-stage” in a play are usually described in great detail in a novel, which makes them easier to stage in a musical because there is more information. However, fiction has its challenges. Novels have no limitations in terms of scope because they can be picked up and put down at the reader’s leisure, but musicals adapted from long, epic novels (*Les Miserables*, for example) are often criticized for being long and slow and boring.<sup>74</sup> Other pieces of fiction may not contain the basic elements of drama, such as “action, conflict, characters who change, variety, the dramatic arc or some other workable structure, “ let alone musical drama, and can be “difficult to translate into theatrical terms” because “much of what the main characters experience is internal—psychological and emotional.”<sup>75</sup> Of course, in a way this makes them more suited to be musicals than they would be to be contemporary plays, because of the opportunity for soliloquy songs, “but to have more than a couple of these in a show would create monotony.”<sup>76</sup>

Adaptation from real life comes with its own set of challenges. If scope is problematic in adapting novels, it is even more so in adapting reality, which is far more limitless and could include a single person’s entire life or a period of history that spans centuries. The “bio-musical” provides little structural guidance, as

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<sup>73</sup> Engel, *Words with Music*, 304.

<sup>74</sup> Citron, *The Musical from the Inside Out*, 95.

<sup>75</sup> Cohen and Rosenhaus, *Writing Musical Theater*, 52.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

“people’s life stories rarely lay out in a way that resembles the dramatic arc or other convenient plot structures,” and historical events often provide even less, as there are often many choices for who the central character could be.<sup>77</sup> Additionally, the audience may have some knowledge of the person or the events involved, which can limit the liberties that can be taken without the changes becoming distracting to the audience, and sometimes the subject’s estate has even placed restrictions on what the writer may use or change.<sup>78</sup> Given these facts, it can be no surprise that there have been, according to Cohen and Rosenhaus, only three successful bio-musicals, *Annie Get Your Gun* (1946, based on the life of Annie Oakley), *Gypsy* (1959, based off the life of Gypsy Rose Lee and her mother, Rose), and *Fiorello!* (1959, based on the life of Fiorello LaGuardia), the first two of which are extremely loose adaptations of people whose life stories aren’t known in detail by the majority of people and the third of which has not held up well over time, and only one successful historical musical, *1776* (1969, centered around the signing of the Declaration of Independence).<sup>79</sup> One might add *Assassins* (1990, centered around nine different successful and unsuccessful United States presidential assassins) to the list, but its basis on historical events is even looser than any of the others, as it puts several different stories in conversation with each other. Despite the challenges of adapting reality, however, there is one major advantage to it: “Anybody who overcomes odds to make a successful life will create that glowingly elevated feeling so necessary at

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 52-53.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 53.

the end of a musical evening.”<sup>80</sup> As anyone who becomes famous has to overcome the odds of banality to do so, historical figures come with a built in guarantee of that satisfaction, perhaps made all the more exciting by the audience’s knowledge that the story at hand is at least partially true.

The last type of story that is commonly adapted is the myth or legend. Like works of written fiction and true stories, they lack inherent dramatic structure, but, also like the story based on the life of an extraordinary person, they guarantee events of mythic proportions. Cohen and Rosenhaus claim that “Another problem with this material is that in many myths and folktales the focus is not on characterization but on incident, and many of the characters do not have the depth of the characters in the best drama and fiction,” but whether this is truly a problem or an opportunity for the writer to write whatever kind of character best suits the point ze is trying to make is a matter of opinion.<sup>81</sup> Similarly, myths are often very simple stories that would require much expansion (in terms of depth or scope) to fill up an entire musical, which can a blessing and a curse. Cohen and Rosenhaus also suggest that one of the disadvantages of adapting a myth is “the difficulties of representing supernatural beings and events onstage,” but I find it very hard to believe that this challenge has ever actually deterred any real theater artist.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Citron, *The Musical from the Inside Out*, 100.

<sup>81</sup> Cohen and Rosenhaus, *Writing Musical Theater*, 59.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

### *Larger Than Life Characters*

Once the writer has weighed the costs and benefits of adapting a certain type of text, ze must turn hir attention to the story itself. For many writers, larger than life characters are the first thing they look for when deciding to adapt a story. Sheldon Harnick said of Fiorello LaGuardia that he chose him as a subject for a musical because “he was such a colorful character, so emotional a character, that there did seem to be music inherent in the man,” and Margo Lion, producer of *Jelly’s Last Jam*, said something similar about Jelly Roll Morton.<sup>83</sup> However, not everyone believes that larger than life characters are necessary. For James Kirkwood, librettist of *A Chorus Line* (1975, based on the lives of real Broadway dancers), the most important thing was that his subjects had “warmth,” and for Joseph Stein, librettist of *Fiddler on the Roof* (1964, based on the book of short stories *Tevye and his Daughters* by Sholem Aleichem), the key to a good source text was not each individual character but “an honesty about the relationship of people to each other.”<sup>84</sup> Cohen and Rosenhaus suggest that what matters is not that the characters of the source text are larger than life but that they are “amenable to larger-than-life *treatment*.”<sup>85</sup> They quote Oscar Hammerstein II as saying that the smallest story can feel important “if the characters are examined closely enough... and if the narrative of the incident is told with enough depth and human observation.”<sup>86</sup> Hammerstein’s own work

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<sup>83</sup> Sheldon Harnick quoted in Bryer and Davison, *The Art of the American Musical*, 81; Margo Lion quoted in Lundskaer-Nielsen, *Directors and the New Musical Drama*, 196.

<sup>84</sup> Citron, *The Musical from the Inside Out*, 99.

<sup>85</sup> Cohen and Rosenhaus, *Writing Musical Theater*, 18.

<sup>86</sup> Oscar Hammerstein II quoted in Cohen and Rosenhaus, *Writing Musical Theater*, 18.

provides an excellent example: Laurey from *Oklahoma!* is not larger than life; she is a perfectly average farm girl. And yet when we watch the show's famous Dream Ballet, her internal struggle between Jud and Curly becomes vitally important to us. She cares that much, so we care that much, even though when taken out of that situation there is nothing extraordinary about her.

### *Emotional Content*

*Oklahoma!* is not the only musical that depends on intense emotions; they are the most widely-accepted crucial element of the musical theater. As Lehman Engel says, "in the consideration of material for adaptation the element of feeling is first."<sup>87</sup> Cohen and Rosenhaus agree that "It is not the subject matter but the emotional content and the skillfulness of its treatment that determine how good a show will be."<sup>88</sup> They point out that the emotion can be "serious or humorous," just so long as there is enough of it for the characters to sing about, and just so long as the audience has reason to care about the characters.<sup>89</sup> The key to enough emotion, they say, is high enough stakes.<sup>90</sup> Jason Robert Brown agrees. He describes a situation in which a contemporary play that had done very well Off-Broadway was suggested to him for adaptation, and though it would have worked very well structurally, the characters' "issues were so little and the stakes were so small that [he] knew that if they were singing about things like that, you wouldn't buy it as an audience member. You'd think we were putting too much weight on it. Singing, ultimately, magnifies

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<sup>87</sup> Engel, *Words with Music*, 285.

<sup>88</sup> Cohen and Rosenhaus, *Writing Musical Theater*, 18.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.



everything you're feeling; when you sing it, it becomes epic."<sup>91</sup> There are no clear rules for what stakes are high enough for musicalization. Writers like Brown simply have "an instinctive sense of what makes characters sing."<sup>92</sup>

Jack Viertel, a major Broadway producer who has had a hand in producing literally dozens of musical adaptations, suggests that emotions alone are not enough to make a character work for musical theater—the character also has to be willing to express those emotions and act on them, because

Musicals are largely about unrepressed energy. You can't write a musical (as far as I can tell) about a passive hero. You can write a musical about a hero who's a jerk (look at *My Fair Lady*) but he has to want something—and to want it so badly that he wants to open up his mouth and sing about it right away. That's not true of plays. You can do a play where a guy doesn't know how to express himself. And you can easily do a movie about a guy who's walking down the street and something happens to him. But in a musical, somebody has to want something or the game's not worth playing.<sup>93</sup>

There is a small subset of writers, however, who disagree that the emotions must be robust and the stakes must be high. William Finn, a composer and lyricist known mostly for original works but most recently for the 2013 musical adaptation of the film *Little Miss Sunshine*, points out that "Musicalizing something inherently nonmusical seems a very dramatic action—arrogant, humorous, whimsical, yet serious. It says: 'We are in the business of making the world sing.' It's almost

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<sup>91</sup> Jason Robert Brown quoted in Bryer and Davison, *The Art of the American Musical*, 34.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Jack Viertel quoted in Lundskaer-Nielsen, *Directors and the New Musical Drama*, 206.

revolutionary.”<sup>94</sup> One of his former students from the New York University Graduate Musical Theatre Writing Program, Joe Iconis, who is considered by many to be one of the most up-and-coming new voices of musical theater has followed in his footsteps: in an interview about his adaptation of the 1988 preteen novel *The Plant That Ate Dirty Socks*, he said, “I’m most interested in telling stories and giving weight to people who wouldn’t normally have that weight given to them. [...] I love writing about people who maybe don’t have those emotions and maybe wonder why they don’t have them.”<sup>95</sup> His characters are not necessarily less sympathetic, but their stakes are lower and their emotions more contained, thereby proving that even the most basic rule of musical theater adaptation has exceptions.

### *Timeliness or Universality*

Another factor a writer must take into consideration is the source material’s relevance to a modern audience. As Stephen Citron says, “Besides developing story and character, a musical must have a *theme* or *concept*. And that theme or concept should be close to the public’s mind when the show is presented.”<sup>96</sup> There are two ways to ensure that a theme will be “close to the public’s mind”: pick a source text with a theme that is universal, or choose one that is particularly timely.

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<sup>94</sup> William Finn quoted in Lundskaer-Nielsen, *Directors and the New Musical Drama*, 167.

<sup>95</sup> Joe Iconis quoted in Alex Seedman, “Why rising musical-theater writer Joe Iconis hates the ‘jukebox musical,’ *Capital*, October 3, 2011, <http://www.capitalnewyork.com/article/culture/2011/10/3595833/why-rising-musical-theater-writer-joe-iconis-hates-jukebox-musical>.

<sup>96</sup> Citron, *The Musical from the Inside Out*, 98.

A timely musical is not necessarily one with a contemporary setting. Thomas Meehan, the librettist of *Annie* (1972, based on the comic strip *Little Orphan Annie*), chose the 1930s as the temporal setting for his musical (the source material of which had existed since the '20s and was set in no particular time), due to the (apparently accurate, judging by the show's popularity) belief that a hopeful musical about the Great Depression would resonate well with an America stuck in the middle of a recession and a futile war.<sup>97</sup> In the 1940s, "many people responded to tender romances which transcended time and space, such as *Carousel* and *Brigadoon*."<sup>98</sup> *Carousel* was set seventy-five years earlier, and *Brigadoon* was a fantasy about a Scottish village that appears for a day only once every hundred years, and yet the themes were completely relatable to the many Americans who had been separated from their loved ones by World War II.

The tricky thing about timely musicals, however, is that "a show that is too dependent upon current events, ideas, and buzzwords, will be out of date by the time it closes, and possibly by the time it opens."<sup>99</sup> There is a reason that the popularity of *Jesus Christ Superstar*, which was dependent upon the "Jesus fad" present in American when it debuted, has not been nearly as lasting as many of Andrew Lloyd Webber's other works.<sup>100</sup> The challenge of timing is compounded by the fact that it takes musicals so long to develop, which means that "Being prescient, spotting a coming trend, sensing what is avant-garde and dealing with emergent issues is always

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 99.

<sup>98</sup> Cohen and Rosenhaus, *Writing Musical Theater*, 19.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Sternfeld, *The Megamusical*, 18.

a necessity in choosing a musical project.”<sup>101</sup> For this reason, it is certainly safer to choose to adapt a story with universal themes.

Engel suggests that for the high emotions he requires of a musical to be communicated to the audience, they must have a “universal quality” that “relates to general experience.”<sup>102</sup> Cohen and Rosenhaus agree, saying that although *Carousel* and *Brigadoon* initially became popular in the ‘40s due to their relatability to the specific themes of life at the time, “If [they] still live sixty years later despite their dated qualities, it is because they deal with concerns like love, hate, greed, pomposity, and frustration—human feelings that are always with us.”<sup>103</sup>

Universality is something that the oft-maligned “megamusical” does particularly well: “they are epic, sweeping tales of romance, war, religion, redemption, life and death, or some combination of these and other lofty sentiments. They do not tell contemporary stories of, say, New Yorkers with relationship issues.”<sup>104</sup> Though they are usually set in the distant past and often a foreign locale, they do not need to have specific parallels to the current situation the way that the “timely” musical does. They “grapple with such broad, universal issues that audiences tend to relate more to the concepts than the specific location” or the issues that were of import at that particular moment in history.<sup>105</sup> A great example of a musical that has become enormously popular despite its many flaws is *Les*

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<sup>101</sup> Citron, *The Musical from the Inside Out*, 98.

<sup>102</sup> Engel, *Words with Music*, 286.

<sup>103</sup> Cohen and Rosenhaus, *Writing Musical Theater*, 19.

<sup>104</sup> Sternfeld, *The Megamusical*, 2.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

*Miserables*, which retains the themes of “freedom and justice for the poor, crimes committed by good people for good causes, young love, relentless pursuit in the name of heavenly justice” from the novel upon which it is based.<sup>106</sup> Jessica Sternfeld suggests that “This combination of themes—overcoming social injustice, the call for freedom, the hope of a spiritual reward—is probably the most important factor in the success of *Les Mis*.”<sup>107</sup> The mastermind behind the musical’s presence on the global scene, producer Cameron Mackintosh, agrees: “Whatever their age, audiences all seem to appreciate *Les Miserables*’ sweeping emotions, its powerful depiction of the human character and, above all, its uplifting example of man’s ability to triumph over adversity,” he once said.<sup>108</sup> Even the originator of the story, Victor Hugo himself, predicted the story would not live and die in France. Over a hundred years before anyone thought to adapt the story to the musical form, he predicted its success, writing to his publisher,

Social problems go beyond frontiers. Humankind’s wounds, those huge sores that litter the world, do not stop at the blue and red lines drawn on maps. Wherever men go in ignorance or despair, wherever women sell themselves for bread, wherever children lack a book to learn from or a warm hearth, *Les Miserables* knocks at the door and says: ‘open up, I am here for you.’<sup>109</sup>

The musical version says the same thing to its audiences.

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 178.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 224.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

## *Tone*

According to some, however, *Les Miserables* should not have been successful at all, for what makes a source appropriate for adaptation is not its content but its tone. Citron suggests that “The difference, of course, is upbeat versus down. This is not to imply that a musical must have a happy ending [...] but simply that downbeat tragedy and hopelessness is best served in straight drama or theatrical opera. A musical, no matter how wistful, tender or moving *must* finally be ennobling.”<sup>110</sup> For Lynn Ahrens the issue is different: “I look for something that has a lyrical quality to it, which doesn’t necessarily mean that it has to have beautiful language. The only way I can describe it is that when I read something, sometimes the songs leap off the page and sometimes they don’t,” she says.<sup>111</sup> Perhaps it is a “lyrical quality” like the one she describes that made *Les Miserables* seem like an appropriate source text for a musical to its writers, despite its decidedly “downbeat” nature.

## *Action and Interaction*

Apart from vivid characters, emotional content, and tone, another factor that makes a source material good or bad for adaptation is the quantity of action it includes and the extent to which the characters interact. “The plays of O’Neill, Pinter, Chekhov, Ibsen, Strindberg, Anouilh, Ionesco, Albee, Sartre, Stoppard and Fugard all contain strong discussions that are stimulating to the mind but would be difficult to adapt, expand and transform into musical theatre.”<sup>112</sup> This is because they “depend on

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<sup>110</sup> Citron, *The Musical from the Inside Out*, 94.

<sup>111</sup> Lynn Ahrens quoted in Bryer and Davison, *The Art of the American Musical*, 11.

<sup>112</sup> Citron, *The Musical from the Inside Out*, 99.

‘talk’ and have little occasion for action and movement.”<sup>113</sup> Of course, even this rule has exceptions. Personally, I would add George Bernard Shaw to this list of great playwrights whose plays depend upon conversation rather than action, and yet *My Fair Lady* is considered by many to be a great triumph, and though Citron includes O’Neill on his list of playwrights that cannot be adapted, there exist two musical theater adaptations of his plays: *New Girl in Town* (1957, based on *Anna Christie*) and *Take Me Along* (1959, based on *Ah, Wilderness*). Neither was particularly successful, but they do exist. Even plays in which a decent number of things happen, however, can be inappropriate for adaptation if the characters don’t interact enough. As Citron says, “A musical that depends on the ‘interior’ development of a single character (Blanche Dubois in *A Streetcar Named Desire* is a perfect example) is bound to be static because it depends on ‘tone’.”<sup>114</sup> He does not mean “tone” as I have just been using it, as a general term, but rather intends the term to mean the *specific* tone of the play in question, which the story would not retain in the translation from play to musical.

The idea that the plays of the playwrights listed above are off-limits for adaptation to the musical form is often misunderstood to mean that there are plays that are “too good” for adaptation. Cohen and Rosenhaus suggest that the reason for *Raisin*’s failure was that *A Raisin in the Sun* was too well written, and go on to say that “It would be even more misguided to musicalize such great plays as *Death of a Salesman*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, or *Long Day’s Journey into Night*. To make

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

significant changes to the plays would be foolish because they are so good, but without changing them there would be no point to adapting them at all.”<sup>115</sup> While it is certainly true that those would all be terrible plays to adapt, it is for the reasons discussed above, not because they are “too good” the way they are. After all, *Romeo and Juliet* wasn’t too good to make a good adaptation. What Cohen and Rosenhaus are probably trying to get at, Citron puts in much more accurate terms: it is not that the play has to be flawed, per se, it “just should not be too complete, it should have room to open itself out into the musical form.”<sup>116</sup> Otherwise the songs just feel like they’ve been added in rather than like they are a crucial narrative element. Even a great play can be enhanced by music if it has the other necessary elements discussed in this section.

### *Scope and Pace*

The last elements that must be taken into consideration are the scope of the story and the pace with which it flows. The narratives of most musicals occur over a very short amount of time, usually not more than a week or two and sometimes as little as a few hours.<sup>117</sup> Sometimes a few months will lapse, but usually that time happens during intermission. I suspect that this is because time lapses are difficult to show onstage; the filmic technique of montage can translate, especially paired with a good song, but it’s hard to pull off, and people don’t attempt it often. The other reason that musicals often cover only a few days is practical: because music takes up so much time, there isn’t time to cover someone’s entire life story or a journey that

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<sup>115</sup> Cohen and Rosenhaus, *Writing Musical Theater*, 20.

<sup>116</sup> Citron, *The Musical from the Inside Out*, 99.

<sup>117</sup> Engel, *Words with Music*, 290.



lasts years, and writers recognize this. Sheldon Harnick, lyricist of *Fiddler on the Roof*, was originally approached with the Sholem Aleichem novel *Wandering Star*, but he and composer Jerry Bock and librettist Joseph Stein thought that it would be “too difficult to compress” because it spanned two decades and had dozens of characters and traveled all over Russia; they liked the writing, though, so they looked into the author’s other work, and found the much more manageable stories *Tevye and His Daughters*.<sup>118</sup> The exception to this rule against plots of huge scope seems, once again, to be megamusicals: Harnick’s description of *Wandering Star* actually sounds a lot like *Les Misérables*. Granted, that it is long and boring is the complaint most often levied against *Les Misérables*, but the writers were able to alleviate some of the problems caused by the scope by (sometimes) following some basic rules of musical pacing.

In a musical, the scenes must “rush after one another. [...] As the scene ends there is a specific promise of action. Something immediate will be.”<sup>119</sup> The show doesn’t necessarily *feel* fast-paced: Engel asserts that a show can still be “gentle,” because its “gentleness is a matter of quality but never of tempo. It is possible for a show to be gentle and swift [...]. They may not *seem* swift, but on examination they will reveal themselves as seldom pausing for breath.”<sup>120</sup> He further suggests that the reason a “leisurely musical” cannot work is because “pressure (sometimes hidden) is

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<sup>118</sup> Sheldon Harnick quoted in Bryer and Davison, *The Art of the American Musical*, 85.

<sup>119</sup> Engel, *Words with Music*, 290-91.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 292.

a necessary ingredient.”<sup>121</sup> Citron has another idea: he suggests that if book scenes in musicals moved as slowly as the scenes in most plays, they would seem anti-climactic after the songs; they have to keep the action moving forward with an intensity that isn’t too overwhelmed by the songs, which is something plays don’t have to worry about.<sup>122</sup> On the other hand, perhaps scenes need to move quickly because songs too often stop the action, and the show can’t last all night. Whatever the reason, any source text in which each scene does not propel the characters into the next one is likely to be problematic. On the flipside, however, stories that move *too* quickly, like farces, don’t usually work either, because the musical numbers feel like they’re interrupting the flow of the action and there is no time to get to know the characters the way one must in a musical. The only notable exception to this rule is *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* (1962, based on the plays of the Roman playwright Plautus), musical theater’s one great farce.

## **Conclusion: “The Development of the Idea”**

People forget there’s a great deal of difference between the *idea* and the *development of the idea*. *Oklahoma!* in essence is a bit trivial and naïve! Who will take Laurey to the box-social? But it’s a plot upon which a couple of very gifted men constructed the most human of stories. *Oklahoma!* resonates to so much that’s inside of us all.<sup>123</sup>

The “rules” discussed above for what one should and should not adapt to the musical theater form, while helpful, are not, in reality, anything more than guidelines. They

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Citron, *The Musical from the Inside Out*, 100.

<sup>123</sup> Tom Shepard quoted in Citron, *The Musical from the Inside Out*, 94.

are a good place to start if a writer is trying not to put too many obstacles in his own way, and they can give him a good idea of what challenges to expect, but one can follow every one of them and select the perfect source text and still write a terrible musical, and, conversely, one can pick what should be a horrible source text and write a masterpiece. When John O'Hara adapted his character Pal Joey from a series of short stories that had been published in *The New Yorker* for the musical stage (*Pal Joey*, 1940), he introduced a kind of protagonist that had never before been seen in musical theater. "Joey was a heel, a cad, a user, and a loser, not the kind of guy that populated musicals."<sup>124</sup> Worse yet, "Joey does not change over the course of the show. He doesn't learn anything. [...] His lack of growth breaks one of the cardinal rules of dramatic construction."<sup>125</sup> To the modern ear, this might not sound so bad; musicals have lead characters of all kinds who develop (or don't) in all kinds of ways. In 1940, however, a character like this was "utterly subversive."<sup>126</sup> If someone had been writing this paper at that time, the rules of the previous section would certainly have included a list of character traits that indicated that one could not possibly adapt the Pal Joey stories to the musical theater form without completely changing Joey's character. Fortunately, however, O'Hara "knew virtually nothing about musicals and he had no idea how utterly wrong his stories were for a musical comedy," and went right ahead and wrote the musical anyway.<sup>127</sup> Even more fortunately, his execution of the libretto was so skillful that the show was able to become wildly popular despite having such an off-putting protagonist, and antiheroes have been acceptable ever since.

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<sup>124</sup> Miller, *Rebels with Applause*, 19.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

The line between “won’t get an audience” and “groundbreaking” is a thin one, and it’s impossible to know which of the “rules” discussed in the previous section only seems sound because none of the exceptions have made a big enough splash yet. Seventy years from now, the idea that a musical cannot move at a leisurely pace may seem as absurd as the idea that one cannot center on an antihero.

When choosing a source text to adapt, it is certainly important to have a good reason, whether it be passion for the story or a desire for a general shape so that you can focus on whatever it is about the project you are passionate about or because the story needs music or even for the sake of a few inspiring moments. But as for the rules as to what texts will work as musicals... perhaps there really is only one: what Scott Miller calls the “ten-minute rule”—“you can do anything you want in a musical (or play or movie) if you do it within the first ten minutes, to establish the ground rules and clue the audience in to exactly what to expect for the rest of the evening.”<sup>128</sup> After that, it’s all up to the execution.

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

Finding Ariadne  
A New Musical  
By S. Dylan Zwickel

## CHARACTERS AND SETTING

ARIADNE—21, Princess of Crete

PHAEDRA—23, her sister

ICARUS—23, their best friend

ASTERION—22, Ariadne and Phaedra's half-brother; half-man, half-bull

THESEUS—24, Prince of Athens

GHOST 1—20s, female, the ghost of one of Asterion's past victims; the leader of the ghosts

GHOST 2—20s, female, the ghost of one of Asterion's past victims; the most honest of the ghosts

GHOST 3—20s, male, the ghost of one of Asterion's past victims; the most sympathetic of the ghosts

The island of Crete (a flourishing civilization), and subsequently a ship on the sea and the small, uninhabited island of Naxos. No particular time.

## PROLOGUE

*(ARIADNE appears on a cliff.)*

ARIADNE

GRASS STRETCHES TOWARD THE SKY,  
WIND WHISTLES THROUGH MY HAIR.  
DEW GLISTENS ON THE LEAVES,  
BIRDS SOAR THROUGH THE AIR.

SAILS GLIDE ALONG THE SEA,  
BREATHE WITH ALL I'VE EVER KNOWN.  
THE GULLS' CRIES ALL AROUND  
ARE THE LANGUAGE OF MY HOME.

THE LANGUAGE OF ALL I'VE WANTED TO LEAVE,  
THE LANGUAGE OF ALL I SWORE WAS NOT ME.  
THIS WORLD I'VE FELT TRAPPED IN,  
THIS ISLAND: MY LABYRINTH.  
TODAY ON THIS DAY  
MY LIFE BECOMES MY OWN!

Icarus? Oh, thank the gods. I've been looking all over for you.

*(ICARUS has entered.)*

ICARUS

What are you doing out here?

ARIADNE

Saying goodbye, I guess. To the island... it's funny the things you realize on the day you're to leave your home forever.

ICARUS

Like what?

ARIADNE

I don't know... that you've loved it all along? I feel as if for the first time I see this place the way Phaedra sees it every day, all twinkling lights. It's beautiful.

ICARUS

Ariadne—

ARIADNE

Come with me, Icarus.

ICARUS

My wings are drying. I can't move them right now.

ARIADNE

Then leave them.

ICARUS

They're almost ready.

ARIADNE

You can build new ones, better ones. Icarus, come to Athens with me.

ICARUS

I'm sorry.

*(Beat.)*

Sit with me a moment? Before you go?

ARIADNE

Theseus is waiting.

ICARUS

Ariadne—

*(HE tries to seat HER on a rock, as if to tell HER...)*

ARIADNE

CAREFUL THE GREEN GLASS,  
SOON TO BE SEA GLASS,  
LEFT HERE BY KIDS LIKE US.

No.

KIDS WITHOUT WORRIES,  
KIDS WITHOUT CARES.  
KIDS CONTENT TO STAY RIGHT WHERE  
THEY WERE BORN, AND THEY WILL DIE HERE.  
I'LL BE FAR AWAY.

ICARUS

YOU'LL JUST RUN AWAY

ARIADNE

HOW NOW COULD I STAY?

ICARUS

FROM THINGS I WOULDN'T SAY.  
THE AIR'S SO CRISP AND CLEAR  
'ROUND MY BRILLIANT PIONEER.



AND SHE WILL NEVER KNOW  
HOW I WISH SHE WOULDN'T GO.

Goodbye, Icarus. ARIADNE

Like this? ICARUS

How else? ARIADNE

Goodbye. ICARUS

Good luck. ARIADNE

*(ICARUS exits. The GHOSTS enter.)*

Well, that's unfortunate. GHOST 1

I was always rooting for you two. GHOST 2

Why are you still here? Asterion is— ARIADNE

We're going. GHOST 2

Don't worry. GHOST 3

Asterion is dead. You're supposed to be gone. ARIADNE

We're going. GHOST 1

It is a pity about Icarus, though. GHOST 2

She'll like Athens. GHOST 3

We loved Athens.

GHOST 1

Why are you still here?

ARIADNE

To help you tell your story.

GHOST 1

*(The three GHOSTS turn to address the audience directly.)*

LET US BE YOUR GUIDE.  
WE WILL BE YOUR STRING.  
FOLLOW US AND WE'LL TAKE YOU  
THROUGH THIS MAZE,  
THE YARN WE WEAVE.

GHOSTS

Think you can handle that?

GHOST 1  
*(To ARIADNE:)*

*(ARIADNE looks out at the audience.)*

ONE LAST BRIEF GOODBYE  
TO THE NEAR AND DISTANT PAST  
BEFORE I LEAVE IT ALL BEHIND...  
THEN I'LL BE FREE AT LAST.

ARIADNE

COME ON, NOW WE'LL SPIN TO  
ALL THE PLACES YOU HAVE BEEN.  
WITH ALL YOU'VE LATELY BEEN THROUGH,  
WHERE NOW TO BEGIN?

GHOSTS

The beach. Let's start with the beach.

ARIADNE

## THE BEACH

*(ARIADNE sits on the beach. SHE uses a sharp piece of shell to drill a hole in a piece of drift wood. The GHOSTS lounge nearby. ICARUS weaves around THEM, unaware of THEIR presence, occasionally picking up feathers and, after examining them closely, either discarding them or adding them to a small collection in his hand. HIS jacket sits discarded on a rock. PHAEDRA enters and picks up ICARUS's jacket.)*

PHAEDRA

Mind if I sit on this?

ICARUS

You go right ahead, Princess.

PHAEDRA

I feel like you're teasing me all the time. Ariadne's a princess, too, and you never call her Princess.

ICARUS

Ariadne doesn't act like a princess.

*(PHAEDRA and ICARUS look at ARIADNE. Feeling THEIR eyes on HER, SHE looks up from HER work. SHE glances at each of THEM, shrugs, and returns to the task at hand.)*

PHAEDRA

Well, aren't you going to ask me how my day was?

ICARUS

How was your day, Princess Phaedra?

PHAEDRA

It was lovely, thank you. One of the children in the school split his chin open playing a game, but with those new needles of yours we were able to get him all stitched up and he's expected to make a fine recovery.

ICARUS

They're Ariadne's needles, mostly, not mine. But I'm thrilled to hear that they were helpful nonetheless.

PHAEDRA

Have you two just been down here all day? Haven't you got enough feathers yet?

ICARUS

Not quite. I have to be very careful about which ones I use. If there's too much space between the strands—

PHAEDRA

Ariadne, darling, what are you working on?

ARIADNE

Machine for washing.

PHAEDRA

How clever! Ariadne, there's this boy, a fisherman's son—don't give me that look. I like to talk to him. I'm allowed to like to talk to him.

ICARUS

Where's your guard, during all this talking?

PHAEDRA

I'm not talking to you right now, Icarus. I'm telling Ariadne. Anyway, Arie, I've been bringing them food, because his mother's ill, and his sister wears her hair in this charming plait that would look absolutely stunning on you. Can I try it? You don't have to stop working.

*(PHAEDRA begins to twist ARIADNE's hair into a fishtail braid.)*

His eyes are the color of the sea, Arie. They sparkle just like it. I don't think he's very bright, but his eyes do sparkle beautifully. I hope my prince's eyes sparkle like that.

*(SHE finishes the braid.)*

There. That looks lovely. Look up at Icarus for a second, would you? Doesn't Arie look beautiful, Icarus?

ICARUS

Yes.

GHOST 1

Time to go.

ARIADNE

The labyrinth calls.

GHOST 2

Time to try to go.

PHAEDRA

Oh, not now. I just got here!

ARIADNE

I'm sorry. Asterion needs me.

PHAEDRA

Twelve hours a day? It never used to be this much.

*(Pause.)*

I don't know why you like it down there. It's so... dark.

ICARUS

How do you know? You've never been.

PHAEDRA

Neither have you.

ICARUS

Yeah, because he would kill me, not because I'm *afraid of the dark*. You're 23, Phaedra. It's time to get over it.

ARIADNE

The dark doesn't bother me.

PHAEDRA

I wish you'd let him alone just one evening and come with me into town. We can give our guards the slip and talk all night to boys with eyes like the sea!

ARIADNE

Phaedra, I have to go.

PHAEDRA

I know nothing can come of it; don't think I'm so foolish as not to know that, but it's fun just to talk. I've got my boys I like to talk to, and Icarus has his girls, so you—

ICARUS

I don't!

PHAEDRA

Oh, please, you're all they talk about, the girls down in town.

ICARUS

That isn't true.

PHAEDRA

It is.

Phaedra—  
Look!

ICARUS

ARIADNE

*(SHE points at the horizon, where a ship has just appeared.)*

PHAEDRA  
The Tributes. They're not getting here for another two days!

ICARUS  
Judging by the location of that ship, they're not getting here for another hour at most.

PHAEDRA  
Something isn't right.

ICARUS  
We should get back to the palace. I'm sure everyone's in a frenzy.

PHAEDRA  
*(Handing ICARUS HIS jacket.)*

Here.

ICARUS  
Thanks. Got everything, Arie?

*(ARIADNE nods.)*

PHAEDRA  
Let's go.

## CREATOR OF LIGHT

*(THESEUS steps to the front of the stage, flanked by the ghosts. ARIADNE and PHAEDRA watch from upstage.)*

GHOST 3

Word traveled quickly throughout the palace.

THESEUS

King Minos—

GHOST 2

The Tributes had arrived early because the Athenian Prince Theseus had come to kill Asterion and free Athens from its debt to Crete.

THESEUS

I am Theseus, son of Aegeus, King of Athens.

GHOST 3

He'd never succeed.

THESEUS

I am here to kill the Minotaur and free Athens of its debt to Crete.

GHOST 2

He'd never make it out alive.

THESEUS

I am ready to battle the beast at your earliest convenience.

*(THESEUS exits. PHAEDRA follows HIM.)*

GHOST 3

Not without help.

GHOST 1

Ariadne, Asterion awaits.

ARIADNE

Let him wait. Just this once, let him wait.

THESEUS, FROM ATHENS.

THESEUS, A PRINCE,

COME TO KILL THE MINOTAUR.

COME TO KILL MY BROTHER.

THIS MAN COULD BE MY CHANCE TO BE FREE.

Hey, bring me the light supplies.

GHOST 2

Why?

ARIADNE

I promised Phaedra light.

GHOST 2

That was years ago.

GHOST 3

You promised Asterion you'd keep visiting him forever, too. That's not going to stop you from running off to Athens with this prince, though, is it?

ARIADNE

I promised him I'd keep coming until one of us was dead. I won't leave Phaedra to deal with the darkness on her own.

GHOST 1

Ariadne?

*(GHOST 1 hands ARIADNE a crate of supplies, which ARIADNE begins arranging around herself. The supplies include different types of metal wire, nails, and scrap metal, a collection lightbulbs made out of Mason jars, and a large stack of fruits and vegetables.)*

ARIADNE

I PROMISED PHAEDRA LIGHT  
BUT I CAN'T GIVE HER THE SUN AT NIGHT.  
I CAN'T PULL DOWN THE STARS  
SO I'LL CATCH LIGHT IN THESE LITTLE JARS.

GHOST 3

You've been trying that for years. It doesn't work.

ARIADNE

I have a new idea.  
EVERYBODY KNOWS  
SUNLIGHT CAUSES PLANTS TO GROW,  
SO IN THIS APPLE, DEEP INSIDE,  
DON'T YOU THINK SOME LIGHT MIGHT HIDE?



*(GHOST 3 picks up the apple and bites into it,  
then shows it to ARIADNE.)*

GHOST 3

No.

ARIADNE

You can't get to it just like that. It's too small. It's in the cells. You have to draw it out, you have to... extract it.

LIKE PULLING THIS POTATO  
OUT FROM THE SOLID GROUND  
YOU HAVE TO DIG A LITTLE  
'FORE WHAT YOU SEEK IS FOUND.  
THOUGH IT ISN'T EASY,  
IT'S WELL WORTH THE FIGHT.  
SO CALL DEMETER BACK TO CRETE  
IT'S TIME TO HARVEST LIGHT.

GHOST 3

And how do you propose to do this?

ARIADNE

I'm getting to it.  
I LOVE CONUNDRUMS  
WHEN I'M THE ONE WHO OVERCOMES.  
FOR ME IT'S REAL AS WAR,  
WHAT I GOT THIS METAL FOR.

THERE'S A WELL-KNOWN NORM:  
DON'T FLY KITES OUT IN A STORM.  
IF KEYS PULL LIGHTNING DOWN TO EARTH  
WHAT'S A PIECE OF IRON WORTH?

FOR MY OWN EXPER'MENT,  
A NAIL GOES IN THIS PEAR.  
CONNECT IT WITH SOME WIRE—  
SOON MY JAR WILL BE AFLARE.  
THE ANSWER IS SO SIMPLE.  
JUST ADMIT I'M RIGHT  
AND CALL DEMETER BACK TO CRETE  
SO SHE CAN WITNESS MY GREAT FEAT.  
I THANK HER FOR HER FIELDS OF WHEAT,  
BUT VICTORY'S A SWEETER TREAT  
SO EVERYBODY TAKE A SEAT  
AND WATCH ME HARVEST LIGHT.

*(ARIADNE wraps the wire around the nail sticking out of the pear and then around the lid of the Mason jar. Nothing happens.)*

AND JUST LIKE THAT THE DOUBT SETS IN.  
WHAT IF I CAN'T CHOOSE TO MAKE IT RIGHT?  
I CAN'T JUST CHOOSE TO LET THERE BE LIGHT.  
I CAN'T CHOOSE TO HAVE ABILITY THAT ISN'T THERE,  
A PARALYZING THOUGHT, A CROSS TO BEAR.

I CAN JUSTIFY THE KILLING OF A KILLER WHOM I LOVE  
BUT TO LEAVE ALIVE AND ALONE AND AFRAID  
SOMEONE GUILTLESS AS A DOVE...

*(SHE starts to put together dozens more lights like the first one, and the GHOSTS follow suit. Of course, these lights don't work either.)*

SO CHOOSE TO THINK HARDER  
AND CHOOSE TO THINK SMARTER.  
CHOOSE TO FIND OUT WHAT I'M CAPABLE OF.  
CHOOSE TO JUST TRY THINGS  
'TIL FINDING THE RIGHT THING.  
CHOOSE NOT TO SLEEP TIL THE BATTLE IS WON.  
YES, CHOOSE TO WORK TIL THE RISE OF THE SUN.  
THE DARK'S NO FUN WITHOUT SOME POINTS OF LIGHT.  
BUT HOW NOW TO CREATE A STARRY NIGHT?

CHOOSE TO SUPPRESS DOUBT;  
IT'S NOT WORTH THE FALLOUT.  
CHOOSE NOT TO THINK THAT YOU MIGHT NOT SUCCEED.  
NOW ROLL UP YOUR SLEEVES  
AND CHOOSE TO BELIEVE  
THAT THE THING THAT YOU NEEDED WAS JUST A SMALL PUSH.  
That's it!  
LIKE KETCHUP IN A BOTTLE  
THE LIGHT JUST NEEDS SOME FORCE  
WHILE THIS NAIL PULLS, THIS ONE WILL PUSH  
THE LIGHT OUT FROM ITS SOURCE.

*(SHE sticks a nail in the other end of the original pear and the jar lights up. SHE and the ghosts begin sticking nails in the rest of the lamps they've created and watch as they all light up.)*

NIGHT DISSOLVES AROUND ME—  
WHAT AN AWESOME SIGHT.  
I DON'T NEED APOLLO'S SUN;  
I CAN HARVEST LIGHT.

*(SHE gets up and begins arranging the lamps around the room so as to eliminate each patch of darkness.)*

THOUGH THE LIGHT'S INHERENT,  
MY DEVICE HAS SET IT FREE.  
THIS INDOOR CONSTELLATION  
IS HERE BECAUSE OF ME.  
THE MAKER OF THE GADGET  
IS THE AUTHOR OF THIS SIGHT  
PRAISE BE TO HEPHAESTUS—  
I'VE CREATED LIGHT.

GHOST 2

Well, that's one way to put it. "Created light"...

GHOST 3

Oh, give her a break.

GHOST 1

Congratulations, Arie.

GHOST 2

I'm just trying to keep her from getting a big head. Doing her a favor, really.

GHOST 3

It isn't about what she's done. It's about what she's going to do. Look what lies ahead of her. You remember Athens. She has every reason to be excited.

ARIADNE

I do, don't I?  
WITH LIFE ILLUMINATED,  
A BRIGHT NEW WORLD AWAITS.  
FORTUNE ALWAYS FAVORS THOSE  
WHO ARE MASTERS OF THEIR FATES.  
ONCE I GET TO ATHENS,  
WHO KNOWS WHAT I MIGHT DO?  
NOT TRAPPED INSIDE A LABYRINTH,  
MY LIFE BEGINS ANEW.

DESPITE MY EFFORTS, NOW I KNOW:  
I NEVER WOULD HAVE CHOSEN NOT TO GO.  
SO MAYBE THERE'S A DARKNESS IN ME  
BUT CREATOR OF LIGHT I CHOOSE TO BE.

**LIFE LINE**

*(ARIADNE and the GHOSTS enter THESEUS's cell. HE is boxing with thin air but stops when HE sees ARIADNE.)*

Who are you?  
THESEUS

Ariadne.  
ARIADNE

The princess?  
THESEUS

Yes.  
ARIADNE

Prince Theseus of Athens.  
THESEUS  
*(Bowing:)*

I know.  
ARIADNE

Okay.  
THESEUS  
*(Pause.)*

Is there... something I can do to help you?  
ARIADNE

You won't make it out of there alive.  
GHOST 3

That was blunt.  
THESEUS

Nothing you say is going to convince me not to try. Athens has been punished long enough, and it ends with me.  
ARIADNE

I'm not trying to convince you not to try.  
THESEUS

Oh.  
*(Pause.)*

Then what are you doing, exactly?

ARIADNE

I'll give you what you need to make it out alive if you promise to take me back to Athens with you.

THESEUS

You'd help me?

ARIADNE

Do you promise?

THESEUS

If it's going to help me kill the Minotaur, I don't have much of a choice, do I?

ARIADNE

Of course you do.

THESEUS

I don't see it that way. I have a duty to my people.

*(Pause.)*

Yes, you can come to Athens with me if you help me kill the Minotaur and get of there alive.

ARIADNE

Thank you. I'll be back in a little while with a weapon and a spool of string. Use the weapon to kill him. Tie the spool of string to a rock at the entrance and take it with you, unraveling it as you go. When you're finished, you'll be able to follow it back out. I'll be back soon.

*(SHE starts to exit.)*

THESEUS

Hey, wait! That's it? That's your grand plan for getting me out alive?

ARIADNE

That a problem?

THESEUS

It seems like a pretty simple plan.

ARIADNE

And what were you going to do? Fight him with your bare hands?

THESEUS

Yeah.

Right. ARIADNE  
*(SHE begins to exit again.)*

Hey, stop doing that! THESEUS

What? ARIADNE

Trying to leave. THESEUS

Why? ARIADNE

Why are you helping me? THESEUS  
*(Pause.)*  
You can tell me; I'm not going to judge you, or anything. If you want the Minotaur dead, we're on the same side.

*(Pause.)*

You have to say *something*. GHOST 1

ARIADNE  
When I was eleven I taught myself to write with my left hand even though I was naturally right handed and I've done it ever since.

GHOST 2  
Well, that *was* something.

ARIADNE  
It was a choice I could make. There weren't many. An oracle had told us Asterion—the Minotaur—would kill anyone but his own kin, so after our mother died, the responsibility of taking care of him fell to my sister and me. But she's afraid of the dark, and the labyrinth is very dark. I hope you're not afraid of the dark.

THESEUS  
I'm not afraid of anything.

ARIADNE

Good.

THESEUS

So you've been taking care of the Minotaur yourself? For how long?

ARIADNE

Twelve years.

THESEUS

That's an awfully long time to spend taking care of a monster.

ARIADNE

He didn't choose to be a monster. When you kill him, please remember that, and do it quickly.

THESEUS

I'll do what I can.

*(Pause.)*

You care about him. I didn't expect anyone to care about him.

ARIADNE

He's my brother.

THESEUS

Then why—?

ARIADNE

I didn't choose to spend my life taking care of him. That choice was made for me. I have other things I want to do.

THESEUS

Like what?

ARIADNE

I create things.

THESEUS

What kind of things?

ARIADNE

Simple things, mostly. Practical things. A filtering system for water, a peeler for vegetables.

GHOST 3

Light.

Today I made light. ARIADNE

You made light? THESEUS

In jars. ARIADNE

How? THESEUS

I can get one to show you. ARIADNE

No, that's okay. THESEUS

*(Pause.)*

I still don't understand why you want to come to Athens. Once the Minotaur's dead there'll be nothing stopping you from creating anything you like. This is your home, isn't it?

Too many...ghosts. ARIADNE

*(Pause.)*

Not literal ghosts—

Nice save. GHOST 2

It's okay, Princess. I understand. THESEUS

No one calls me princess. Just Ariadne is fine. ARIADNE

It's okay, Ariadne. THESEUS

*(Pause.)*

HAUNTED.  
QUIET.

STRAIGHT-BACKED.  
SURE. ARIADNE



JAW SET,  
INTENSE.

THESEUS

KIND AND GOOD.  
NOBLE.  
FEARLESS.

ARIADNE

REAL AND STRONG.

THESEUS

PURE AND CALM.

ARIADNE

PRESENT.

THESEUS

SINCERE?

ARIADNE

DEFENSIVE BUT NOT AFRAID.

THESEUS

I FEEL MY DEFENSES FADE.

ARIADNE

FRANK-FACED.  
STEADFAST.  
WALLED UP, BUT NOT WALLED IN.

THESEUS

MORE THAN JUST CHARMING,  
MORE THAN POLITE.  
AND CERTAINLY MORE THAN HE SEEMS AT FIRST SIGHT.

ARIADNE

POISED AS IF WAITING  
FOR SOMETHING TO HAPPEN,  
READY FOR ACTION.

THESEUS

READY TO FIGHT.

ARIADNE

*(THESEUS reaches out to touch ARIADNE.)*

BOTH

AND JUST LIKE THAT  
A SPARK IGNITES.  
TOGETHER WE'LL SURVIVE THE NIGHT  
AND MAKE IT OUT OF HERE.

BY CHOICE OR BY SOME GRAND DESIGN,  
CONNECTION FORMS; CAN'T BE DEFINED.  
OUR PATHS NOW INTERTWINE  
AND YOU WILL BE MY LIFE LINE.

THESEUS

YOU'RE NOT THE KIND  
I WOULD HAVE GUESSED  
BUT MAYBE I COULD BE MY BEST  
WITH YOU THERE BY MY SIDE.

ARIADNE

YOU'RE EVERYTHING  
A PRINCE SHOULD BE  
AND NOW BEFORE ME I CAN SEE  
ALL I NEVER KNEW I WANTED.

BOTH

SO JUST LIKE THAT,  
WE'LL SAIL AWAY.  
A NEW LIFE FOR US BEGINS TODAY.

ARIADNE

WE'LL MAKE IT OUT OF HERE.

THESEUS

WE'LL LET OUR FATES COMBINE.

BOTH

AND YOU WILL BE MY LIFE LINE.

*(THEY kiss.)*

THESEUS

I want you to come with me.

ARIADNE

I am coming with you.

THESEUS  
No, to the palace.

ARIADNE  
In Athens?

THESEUS  
Do you have another plan?

ARIADNE  
No, but you don't have to—

THESEUS  
I want to. I want you there with me.

ARIADNE  
Me?

THESEUS  
Yes, you. I like you.

ARIADNE  
Nobody likes me. My sister Phaedra, people are always asking her to come live at their castles, but she won't leave Crete.

THESEUS  
Well, I'm asking you.

ARIADNE  
What would I do there?

GHOST 2  
You know what.

THESEUS  
You'd be with me.

ARIADNE  
What happens when it's time for you to find a queen?

*(THESEUS kisses HER again.)*

THESEUS  
Just say you'll come.

ARIADNE

Okay.

THESEUS

Okay?

ARIADNE

Okay. I'll come live at the castle with you.

*(THESEUS kisses HER again.)*

But now I have to go build you a weapon. I'll be back.

*(SHE exits.)*

## ARIADNE AND ICARUS

*(ARIADNE enters ICARUS's workshop.)*

ARIADNE

I need to talk to you.

ICARUS

What's up?

ARIADNE

That prince. Theseus. He wants to kill Asterion and sail back to Athens.

ICARUS

I wouldn't worry about it. He'll never make it out alive.

ARIADNE

Not without help.

*(Pause.)*

ICARUS

I see. What happens when you get to Athens?

ARIADNE

I'm going to live at the palace.

ICARUS

And work as an engineer?

ARIADNE

No.

ICARUS

What are you going to be doing then?

*(ARIADNE looks embarrassed, and ICARUS understands.)*

Hermes.

ARIADNE

It isn't what you think!

ICARUS

What is it then?

ARIADNE

I think I might love him.

*(Pause.)*

ICARUS

I didn't think you did that sort of thing.

ARIADNE

Love people?

ICARUS

You aren't going to like it there. I've read about the Athenian political system. You'd be going from one labyrinth to another. If you think you'd have more time for your inventions as a concubine of the Prince of Athens than you do as Princess of Crete you're sorely mistaken.

ARIADNE

I'll make time.

*(Pause.)*

You should come.

ICARUS

What?

ARIADNE

To Athens.

ICARUS

I doubt Prince Theseus is taking passengers.

ARIADNE

He is if I ask him to.

ICARUS

I think I'll pass.

ARIADNE

Is there someone you want to stay here for?

ICARUS

What? No. What gives you that idea?

ARIADNE

Earlier Phaedra said...

ICARUS

Phaedra doesn't know what she's talking about.

*(Pause.)*

How do you know you can trust this guy? Logically speaking, for just a second.

ARIADNE

I don't. He could have been pretending to like me to make sure I helped him, and he could leave me here once he's killed Asterion. I know that. But if I don't help him, he will die, and I will still be stuck here, imagining what could have been. So I have to try, okay?

*(Pause.)*

I told him I'd be back with a weapon for him later tonight. Icarus, listen.

I HAVE THIS IDEA

FOR THIS SPECIAL TYPE OF CROSSBOW

MADE WITH A SPECIAL TYPE OF SPRING.

ICARUS

I'm sure that will work well.

ARIADNE

DO YOU WANT TO HELP ME BUILD IT?

ONE LAST THING TOGETHER?

IT WOULD REALLY MEAN A LOT.

ICARUS

You've got to be kidding me.

DON'T LOOK AT ME WITH THAT LIGHT IN YOUR EYES

AS IF THIS WERE LIKE EVERY OTHER TIME.

IT'S NOT A LUTE OR A LAMP OR A PAIR OF WINGS.

ARIADNE

We've made weapons before.

ICARUS

That isn't the point.

ARIADNE

Then what is?

ICARUS

FOR THE FIRST TIME I FEEL LIKE YOU'RE USING ME.

ARIADNE

What?

ICARUS

I BELIEVED IN US AS PARTNERS,

BELIEVED IN ALL WE WOULD DO.  
NOW I START TO WONDER,  
IS THAT ALL I WAS TO YOU?  
THROUGH SPRINGS AND STRINGS AND STRUGGLES,  
THROUGH UMBRELLAS AND SPYGLASSES  
THE MOST IMPORTANT THING WE BUILT  
WAS NOTHING FOR THE MASSES.

AT LEAST THAT'S HOW IT WAS FOR ME,  
THOUGH MAYBE NOT FOR YOU,  
BECAUSE THE THING THAT I CAN'T SEE  
IS HOW YOU NEVER HAD A CLUE,  
HOW YOU DIDN'T UNDERSTAND  
I'D DO ANYTHING FOR YOU.

ARIADNE  
ANYTHING BUT HELP ME WITH THIS NOW?

ICARUS  
IF THIS WAS WHAT YOU WANTED,  
YOU COULD HAVE TOLD ME YEARS AGO,  
INSTEAD OF WAITING FOR SOME PRINCE TO COME ALONG.  
I WOULD HAVE MADE A WEAPON  
FOR ME TO USE MYSELF,  
BUT I WON'T MAKE ONE FOR SOME OTHER GUY  
SO HE CAN BE YOUR HERO.  
I NEVER THOUGHT YOU NEEDED ONE AT ALL.

ARIADNE  
YOU'RE SAYING YOU'D HAVE DONE IT?  
YOU'D HAVE TRIED TO KILL MY BROTHER?

ICARUS  
IF I'D KNOWN THAT'S WHAT YOU WANTED  
I'D HAVE DONE IT IN AN INSTANT.  
WHAT A DIFFERENT LIFE THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN.

ARIADNE  
WE STILL WOULD HAVE BEEN STUCK HERE.  
I WANT TO GET AWAY.  
I NEED TO START AFRESH  
SOMEWHERE NEW.

ICARUS  
YOU AND I COULD HAVE FLOWN FAR AWAY.  
I'D HAVE GONE WHERE YOU WANTED TO GO.



ARIADNE  
THEY'RE NOT DESIGNED FOR DISTANCE,  
EVEN YOU KNOW THAT.

ICARUS  
I KNOW WE WOULD HAVE SOMEHOW FOUND A WAY.

ARIADNE  
THEY AREN'T EVEN FINISHED YET.

ICARUS  
I FINISHED THEM TODAY.  
ISN'T THAT SOME LOVELY IRONY?

ARIADNE  
THEY MUST STILL NEED ADJUSTMENTS.

ICARUS  
ADJUSTMENTS I CAN MAKE.

ARIADNE  
BUT EVEN SO—

ICARUS  
JUST LET IT GO.  
STOP AND LET ME SAY  
YOU AND I COULD HAVE FLOWN FAR AWAY.  
I'D HAVE GONE WHERE YOU WANTED TO GO.  
WE COULD HAVE STARTED A NEW LIFE  
IN A CITY SOMEWHERE.  
OPENED A LITTLE SHOP TO SELL OUR WARES.  
WE'D CONTINUE TO CREATE THINGS  
AND CONTINUE TO BE FRIENDS,  
THE GHOSTS OF THE PAST LEFT BEHIND.  
NO CASTLE WALLS AROUND US,  
NO MAZE FROM WHICH TO HIDE.  
JUST YOU AND ME, COMPLETELY FREE  
TO LIVE THE WAY WE WANT.  
DON'T YOU SEE HOW GREAT THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN?

ARIADNE  
YOUR HEAD IS IN THE CLOUDS.

ICARUS  
AND YOUR HEART'S NOWHERE TO BE FOUND.

THERE'S MORE TO YOU THAN JUST A MIND,  
I KNOW IT.  
HAVE YOU REALLY NEVER DREAMED  
OF WHAT IT'D BE LIKE TO LEAVE WITH ME?  
IF YOU TELL ME NO, I'LL DROP THE TOPIC NOW.

ARIADNE

No.

ICARUS

Okay, fine. You should get back to your prince, then. But I wouldn't waste my time with the crossbow, if I were you.

ARIADNE

He can't kill Asterion with his bare hands. It'll never work.

ICARUS

Just hand him a dagger.

*(Pause.)*

And make sure to find me to say goodbye before you go.

ARIADNE

I will. You're a good friend, Icarus. That you would have done that for me. I never would have wanted to put you in that kind of danger.

ICARUS

I'll see you later, Arie.

*(HE exits.)*

GHOST 3

Why did you lie to him?

GHOST 1

It's totally crossed your mind.

GHOST 2

You and Icarus in a little shop, teaching your first child how to invent things.

ARIADNE

I don't want children.

GHOST 2

Fine, teaching your dog how to invent things.

ARIADNE

I had to lie to Icarus. It doesn't matter now what may or may not have crossed my mind in the past. I'm leaving with Theseus tomorrow.

GHOST 2

And Icarus stays here with Phaedra.

ARIADNE

What?

GHOST 2

Oh, come on. You can't have completely repressed the memory.

GHOST 1

Here, we'll help.

*(GHOST 1 becomes a 17-year-old YOUNG PHAEDRA and GHOST 3 becomes a 17-year-old YOUNG ICARUS. THEY sit on the beach. ARIADNE watches.)*

YOUNG ICARUS

And then she did this funny thing where she closed her eyes and just sat there for, I don't know, five minutes? You could practically see the gears turning inside her head. And then when she was done her hands started moving as fast as a cartoon and then it worked. After weeks of trying, she fixed it just like that. It was incredible.

YOUNG PHAEDRA

I'm sure. Where is she anyway? She was supposed to be here by now.

YOUNG ICARUS

Probably still in the labyrinth.

YOUNG PHAEDRA

She sure is spending a lot of time down there.

*(THEY sit in silence for a moment, unsure what to talk about.)*

YOUNG ICARUS

Arie and I just started working on this new invention—

*(YOUNG PHAEDRA kisses YOUNG ICARUS. It isn't a very long kiss, but he doesn't immediately pull away either.)*

Don't tell Arie that happened, okay?

YOUNG PHAEDRA

Okay.

ARIADNE

Do you think it ever happened again?

GHOST 3

No.

ARIADNE

I didn't know what to make of it then and I don't know what to make of it now.

GHOST 2

Doesn't matter anymore, right?

ARIADNE

YOU AND I COULD HAVE FLOWN FAR AWAY.  
I'D HAVE GONE WHERE YOU WANTED TO GO.  
WE COULD HAVE STARTED A NEW LIFE  
IN A CITY SOMEWHERE.  
OPENED A LITTLE SHOP TO SELL OUR WARES.  
IF I HADN'T BEEN SO STUBBORN,  
IF I HADN'T BEEN SO BLIND.  
WHAT A DIFFERENT LIFE THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN.  
Let's keep moving.

*(GHOST 1 moves forward to continue telling  
the story.)*

ARIADNE AND PHAEDRA

GHOST 1

And so she sewed a dagger into the lining of his shirt and told him to get some rest.

GHOST 3

She packed her things, the few she wanted to bring.

GHOST 2

And then she went to say goodbye to Asterion.

GHOST 1

Shall we?

ARIADNE

No.

GHOST 2

But this is when you did that.

ARIADNE

Let's skip it. I want to do that last.

GHOST 2

But—

GHOST 3

Let her. Before she knew it, Theseus was in the labyrinth.

ARIADNE

And there was nothing to be done but wait.

*(SHE sits down on the floor and wraps HER  
arms around HER knees. And waits. And waits.)*

GHOST 2

Sometimes I wish you'd pace like a normal person.

*(PHAEDRA bursts into the room, highly  
agitated.)*

PHAEDRA

Arie, I'm afraid!

ARIADNE

Like Phaedra, you mean.

PHAEDRA

I had a nightmare about the labyrinth.

ARIADNE

I think I might have something that will help with that.

*(SHE grabs the crate where all of the little lights have ended up and reconnects one of them, causing it to light up, before handing it to PHAEDRA.)*

PHAEDRA

Oh, Arie! You did it!

ARIADNE

I promised.

PHAEDRA

But I never thought... You're amazing.

*(Pause.)*

They're beautiful, aren't they?

*(Pause.)*

Thank you.

ARIADNE

I'll light the rest while you tell me about your dream.

PHAEDRA

Okay. Here it is. I was in the labyrinth and standing at a fork, with that spool of string you use to find your way out clutched in my hands, except the string was made of light. Just... pure light. And it led down the right fork, expanding in brightness as it went until all I could see was blinding light. I could hear voices around a bend down there, hundreds of them, talking and laughing and singing Cretan songs, happy, but all I could see was light.

ARIADNE

And down the left fork?

PHAEDRA

Shadows, all shadows. And a man.

ARIADNE

What man?

*(Pause.)*

PHAEDRA

I couldn't see his face. But he was good. A friend. And I started to go toward him, but the string grew hot in my hands, burning them, so I retreated, and it cooled again, to a pleasant warmth, like the sun on my face when we sit down on the beach in the middle of Spring, as if to say, "don't forget, this is the way home." And when I looked back, the left fork was gone, and the man along with it. I began to weep; have you ever cried in a dream? It's an odd sensation. You know you're doing it but you don't feel the tears on your face. So then I grew confused, and all of a sudden I wasn't sure if the fork and the man had been there at all and felt very lost, and the second the thought occurred to me, I woke up.

ARIADNE

Why didn't you just drop the string?

PHAEDRA

What?

ARIADNE

When it grew hot. Why didn't you just drop it?

PHAEDRA

I couldn't have. It wasn't a normal string; it was... part of me.

ARIADNE

Phaedra... do you ever wonder what else is out there?

GHOST 2

Tread carefully.

PHAEDRA

Out where?

GHOST 3

Remember how Icarus reacted.

GHOST 1

And he doesn't have her loyalty to Crete.

GHOST 2

To be fair, he had other reasons to be upset.

ARIADNE

Anywhere. Do you really want to stay on Crete forever?

PHAEDRA

Of course. This is home, isn't it?

ARIADNE

What if it didn't have to be? What if you could go somewhere else, somewhere far from labyrinths and monster-brothers and parents who weren't there? Athens, for example?

PHAEDRA

Athens? Why are you bringing up Athens?

ARIADNE

It was just an example. You said yourself you wanted to go down the other fork, the one that wasn't home. What if we could?

PHAEDRA

And then it disappeared! That's the point, don't you see?

NO FORKS,

DON'T EVEN DREAM IT.

NO CHANCE,

DON'T START TO SCHEME IT.

NO CHOICE,

WHEN A WHOLE COUNTRY NEEDS YOU.

NO NEED—

IT'S THEIR LOVE THAT FEEDS YOU.

ARIADNE

Phaedra, you said you *cried* when the other fork disappeared.

PHAEDRA

Maybe I was crying out of happiness that I had ended up going down the path with the light. It's hard to tell in dreams. Or maybe I was crying because... I wanted both.

ONE LIFE,

LAI D OUT BEFORE ME.

ONE LAND,

THAT SWEARS THEY'LL ADORE ME.

ONE DREAM,

A PROSPEROUS CRETE.

ONE FLAW—

A LIFE INCOMPLETE.

YES, I HAVE DREAMT OF ETERNITY

WRAPPED IN THE ARMS OF ONE MAN.

YES HE IS NEAR, AND I'M FULL OF FEAR,

AND MISSING A LIFE THAT NEVER BEGAN.

YES, MY HEART HAS BEEN TORN IN TWO

SINCE I FIRST SAW HIS EYES SPARKLE GREY.



BUT WHEN I LOOK OUT, THERE ARE LIGHTS IN THE WINDOWS  
OF THIS LAND THAT I LOVE TOO MUCH TO BETRAY.

I'M STUCK,  
TRAPPED BY MY OWN HEART.  
I CAN'T  
CHOOSE TO WANT A NEW START.  
I'M HERE,  
AND HERE'S WHERE I WILL BE.  
I KNOW  
BOTH LOVES WILL STAY A PART OF ME.

ARIADNE

Both *loves*? Phaedra, who was the man in your dream?

*(Pause.)*

PHAEDRA

Prince Theseus. The man was Prince Theseus. I love him.

ARIADNE

Have you... met him?

PHAEDRA

Of course I've met him.

ARIADNE

Did something happen with you two?

PHAEDRA

Not exactly. We just talked. But it was the most wonderful talk! Ariadne, no one has ever understood me so well! And now he's gone into the labyrinth and I doubt if anyone ever will again.

ARIADNE

Phaedra—

*(THESEUS enters.)*

THESEUS

It's done. The Minotaur is dead.

ARIADNE

Was it... quick?

THESEUS

He didn't even put up a fight.

*(THESEUS comes to ARIADNE and kisses  
HER.)*

Go gather your things. We depart for Athens at dawn.

*(THESEUS exits.)*

PHAEDRA

You traitor.

ARIADNE

Phaedra—

PHAEDRA

You helped him kill the Minotaur.

ARIADNE

His name is Asterion and you know nothing about what I've done.

PHAEDRA

You were supposed to keep him alive so Athens' debt to Crete could be repaid.

ARIADNE

That debt has been repaid a hundred times over, what he was was far from alive, and I wasn't supposed to take care of him, *we* were. But that distinction has always escaped you.

PHAEDRA

So now you're leaving?

ARIADNE

There's nothing for me here.

PHAEDRA

And in Athens there's Theseus.

ARIADNE

I was going to go even before that.

PHAEDRA

I'm sure. Well, every happiness to you both.

*(SHE exits. Pause.)*

GHOST 3

You couldn't have known.

Let's just move on.

ARIADNE

The only thing left is Asterion.

GHOST 1

Okay. Let's go.

ARIADNE

## **LULLABY**

*(ARIADNE enters ASTERION's lair, followed by the GHOSTS. HE is exercising, and takes a moment to notice HER.)*

ASTERION

Arie, hey. I didn't hear you come in.

ARIADNE

I'm sorry I'm so late.

ASTERION

It's okay. I did wonder—

ARIADNE

It's been a crazy day. I couldn't get away.

ASTERION

I'm sure.

ARIADNE

The Tributes arrived early.

ASTERION

Oh?

ARIADNE

I told them they could bring them in tomorrow afternoon. No need to keep them—is that okay? Are you hungry yet?

ASTERION

Yeah, it's fine.

ARIADNE

So... read anything interesting today?

ASTERION

You look exhausted, Arie. We don't need to do this right now.

ARIADNE

I don't mind, really.

ASTERION

I was going to go to bed anyway. We can talk later. We've got infinite time.

ARIADNE

You're so strong. You've grown so strong, since we first met.

GHOST 1

Ariadne? Do you want us to--?

*(SHE nods. SHE watches as GHOST 2 puts on some distinctive costume piece of ARIADNE's to become nine-year-old YOUNG ARIADNE and GHOST 3 places bull horns upon HIS head to become ten-year-old YOUNG ASTERION. YOUNG ARIADNE has just entered ASTERION's lair for the first time. YOUNG ASTERION is huddled in a corner, grief-stricken and frightened. THEY stare at each other.)*

ASTERION

Not so strong I don't need a lullaby to get to sleep. I know it's been a while, but what do you say?

YOUNG ASTERION

Who are you? What do you want?

YOUNG ARIADNE

Ariadne.

ASTERION

Ariadne?

*(SHE begins to hum the melody of the lullaby, still watching the GHOSTS play out the flashback.)*

YOUNG ASTERION

Ariadne, my sister?

*(YOUNG ARIADNE nods. ASTERION curls up on a little sleeping mat, and ARIADNE sits beside HIM, stroking HIS hair.)*

ASTERION

Thank you.

YOUNG ASTERION

I didn't know you were coming. The note just said my mother had died.

Typical. YOUNG ARIADNE

I thought I was going to be alone forever. YOUNG ASTERION  
*(YOUNG ARIADNE shakes HER head.)*

You'll keep coming?

You might not like me— YOUNG ARIADNE

Why not? YOUNG ASTERION

I don't like to talk. Bugs some people. YOUNG ARIADNE

That's okay. I like to talk. Just so long as I have somebody to talk to. You'll be here? YOUNG ASTERION

Every day. Forever. YOUNG ARIADNE

You won't... you really won't leave me here alone? YOUNG ASTERION

Not until one of us dies. YOUNG ARIADNE

Ariadne— YOUNG ASTERION

Arie. YOUNG ARIADNE

What? YOUNG ASTERION

My friends call me Arie. YOUNG ARIADNE

You have friends? I mean, I don't have friends. Are we friends? YOUNG ASTERION  
*(YOUNG ARIADNE shrugs.)*

Anyway, what I was trying to say, Arie, is if I can ever do something for you, to thank you for coming down here all the time—

YOUNG ARIADNE

Nothing.

YOUNG ASTERION

I mean it, whatever you wish—

YOUNG ARIADNE

Nothing.

YOUNG ASTERION

You can let me know later.

*(Beat.)*

You don't like to talk, but do you sing?

YOUNG ARIADNE

In what context?

YOUNG ASTERION

Mother's lullaby. Before I go to bed each night, could you... could you sing me mother's lullaby?

YOUNG ARIADNE

She never sang a lullaby to me.

YOUNG ASTERION

If I teach it to you, do you think you could...?

YOUNG ARIADNE

How does it go?

YOUNG ASTERION

Like this:

DREAM ABOUT LIGHT,  
DREAM OF THE COOL NIGHT AIR,  
DREAM OF THE SEA.  
DREAM ABOUT ME,  
KNOWING WHEN YOU WAKE UP I'LL BE THERE.

DREAM ABOUT MEADOWS  
AND CLIFFS BY THE OCEAN.  
DREAM OF RAIN SHOWERS  
AND FLOWERS AND STARS.

DREAM OF THE MOON,  
GLOWING BRIGHT AS A CANDLE  
AND KNOW THAT I LOVE YOU  
JUST AS YOU ARE.

GO TO SLEEP,  
AND IN YOUR DREAMS ESCAPE.

GO TO SLEEP,  
I'LL BE HERE WHEN YOU WAKE.

ARIADNE, YOUNG ARIADNE  
*(Overlapping:)*

DREAM ABOUT LIGHT,  
DREAM OF THE COOL NIGHT AIR,  
DREAM OF THE SEA.  
DREAM ABOUT ME,  
KNOWING WHEN YOU WAKE UP I'LL BE THERE.

DREAM ABOUT MEADOWS  
AND CLIFFS BY THE OCEAN.  
DREAM OF RAIN SHOWERS  
AND FLOWERS AND STARS.

DREAM OF THE MOON,  
GLOWING BRIGHT AS A CANDLE  
AND KNOW THAT I LOVE YOU  
JUST AS YOU ARE.

GO TO SLEEP,  
AND IN YOUR DREAMS ESCAPE.

GO TO SLEEP,  
I'LL BE HERE WHEN YOU WAKE.



ASTERION  
*(Overlapping:)*

DREAM OF FREEDOM,  
DREAM OF THE WORLD ELSEWHERE,  
SEEING FIRSTHAND, ROAMING UNPLANNED,  
VIBRANT NEW LANDS,  
KNOWING I NEVER WILL BE THERE.

IMAGINE RUNNING  
AND JUST KEEP ON GOING,  
NOTHING TO STOP YOU.  
DREAM OF NO WALL.

BUT MOSTLY DREAM PEOPLE,  
AND PEOPLE AND PEOPLE,  
TALKING AND LAUGHING,  
MY FRIENDS, ONE AND ALL.

I'LL GO TO SLEEP,  
AND IN MY DREAMS ESCAPE.

I'LL GO TO SLEEP,  
YOU'LL BE HERE WHEN I WAKE.

GHOST 1  
*(To ARIADNE, for the remainder of the song:)*

DREAM ABOUT ATHENS,  
DREAM OF TOMORROW.  
DON'T THINK OF THE END.

ASTERION  
*(Aside, for the remainder of the song:)*

DREAM TO PRETEND  
I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S CAUSED HER SORROW.

GHOST 1

DON'T DREAM OF A LIFE  
SO DIFFERENT FROM THIS ONE,  
IN WHICH HE COULD LIVE  
AND YOU COULD BE FREE.

ASTERION

I HAD A DREAM  
SOMEONE ATTACKED ME.  
THE GLINT OF A KNIFE—

BESIDE HIM, HER STRING.

GHOST 1

DREAM OF A FUTURE  
DESIGNED BY YOUR CHOICES,  
THE STARS REARRANGED  
AS YOU CHOOSE THEM TO BE.

ASTERION

IF THAT'S HER WISH,  
I'LL SEE THAT SHE GETS IT.  
THOUGH THE GODS WARNED ME,  
I WON'T FIGHT BACK.

GHOST 1

LET HIM SLEEP.  
A BRAND NEW LIFE AWAITS.

ASTERION

I'LL GO TO SLEEP  
THOUGH I KNOW DEATH AWAITS.

GHOST 1

LET HIM SLEEP.  
IT'S TIME NOW TO ESCAPE.

ASTERION

I'LL GO TO SLEEP,  
SOON THROUGH MY DEATH ESCAPE.

ARIADNE

ASTERION, SLEEP,  
AND REMEMBER I LOVE YOU.  
I'LL SUFFER THIS CHOICE  
'TIL I JOIN YOU SOME DAY.

**FREE AT LAST**

*(GHOSTS 2 and 3 become THEMSELVES again.)*

GHOST 3

Arie? You've said all your goodbyes. It's time to go.

*(ARIADNE stands and the sleeping ASTERION disappears from the stage.)*

ARIADNE

I'm ready.

GHOST 1

Theseus is waiting on the ship.

GHOST 3

We won't come with you to the docks.

GHOST 2

From this point forward, you're on your own.

GHOST 1

Go on. Your life awaits.

ARIADNE

THE SUN SITS HIGH.  
THE OCEAN CALLS.  
A LIGHTNESS FLOATS UP IN MY CHEST  
AND I AM FREE AT LAST.

THE WORLD LOOKS NEW.  
THE FUTURE PULLS.  
THE PAST BEGINS TO DROP AWAY  
AND I AM FREE AT LAST.

GHOSTS

SO LEAVE US HERE TO FADE AWAY;  
FORGET US ON THE HIGHEST SHELF.  
YOU'VE GOT SO MUCH AHEAD OF YOU,  
WE GIVE YOU LEAVE, WE GIVE YOU LEAVE: CHOOSE TO FORGIVE  
YOURSELF.

ARIADNE

I DIDN'T KNOW

THAT I WOULD FEEL  
EMPTY AND FULL AT THE SAME TIME,  
NOW THAT I'M FREE AT LAST.

GHOSTS

YES, LEAVE US HERE TO FADE AWAY;  
FORGET US ON THE HIGHEST SHELF.  
YOU'VE GOT SO MUCH AHEAD OF YOU,  
WE GIVE YOU LEAVE: CHOOSE TO FORGIVE YOURSELF.

*(As the GHOSTS begin to retreat into the  
background one at a time, THESEUS enters and  
joins ARIADNE. The rest of the song is sung in  
a round.)*

GHOST 3

SO LEAVE US HERE TO FADE AWAY;  
FORGET US ON THE HIGHEST SHELF.  
YOU'VE GOT SO MUCH AHEAD OF YOU,  
WE GIVE YOU LEAVE: CHOOSE TO FORGIVE YOURSELF.

THESEUS

SO JUST LIKE THAT, WE'LL SAIL AWAY.  
NEW LIFE FOR US BEGINS TODAY.  
NO GHOSTS OR MONSTERS LEFT TO FIGHT,  
AND WE WILL BE WASHED CLEAN BY OCEAN SPRAY.

*(PHAEDRA appears, separate from THEM.)*

GHOST 2

SO LEAVE US HERE TO FADE AWAY;  
FORGET US ON THE HIGHEST SHELF.  
YOU'VE GOT SO MUCH AHEAD OF YOU,  
WE GIVE YOU LEAVE: CHOOSE TO FORGIVE YOURSELF.

PHAEDRA

THOUGH MY HEART IS TORN IN TWO,  
MY SISTER DID THE THING I COULDN'T DO.  
I DON'T HAVE TO BETRAY CRETE  
TO GET TO GO WITH THEM ACROSS THE SEA.

*(ICARUS appears, separate from THEM.)*

GHOST 1

SO LEAVE US HERE TO FADE AWAY;  
FORGET US ON THE HIGHEST SHELF.

YOU'VE GOT SO MUCH AHEAD OF YOU,  
WE GIVE YOU LEAVE: CHOOSE TO FORGIVE YOURSELF.

ICARUS

YOU AND I COULD FLY AWAY—  
NO, I SEE NOW THAT IT'S TOO LATE.  
YOU'VE CHOSEN HIM, AND IT'S MY LOSS.  
MY RETICENCE, MY COWARDICE IS WHAT HAS SEALED MY FATE.

*(The GHOSTS are gone. ARIADNE steps away  
from THESEUS and addresses the audience.)*

ARIADNE

HERE'S WHAT HAPPENED NEXT  
WHEN I STRUCK OUT ON MY OWN.  
COME WITH ME AND YOU WILL SEE  
THE PART THE GHOSTS DON'T KNOW.

*(ARIADNE makes HER way onto the ship.)*

## MELTING

*(ARIADNE stands with THESEUS on the bow of the ship.)*

ARIADNE

A few short hours on the ship pass. Theseus and I enjoy the ocean air. The salt seems to scrub my lungs clean, and as I breathe out the debris, I feel myself letting go of every trace of everything and everyone I knew on the island of Crete. They all seem to evaporate, swept away by the wind that propels us forward. It's just me and Theseus now. Nothing remains of the ghosts or Asterion, Icarus or—

*(PHAEDRA appears behind ARIADNE and THESEUS.)*

PHAEDRA

Arie!

ARIADNE

Phaedra? What are you doing here?

PHAEDRA

I decided to come to Athens with you.

ARIADNE

So you stowed away on our ship?

PHAEDRA

I thought you might not want me to come, after what I said before. Listen, Arie, I'm so sorry. You have to believe me, I am. It wasn't fair of me to say that. You did what you had to do. Please say you'll forgive me. I don't know what I'll do if you won't forgive me. Find passage back to Crete, I suppose, but I couldn't live with myself if I knew you were still mad—

ARIADNE

Okay, okay. I forgive you.

PHAEDRA

Oh, thank you! We're going to have such fun in Athens together! Imagine all the things we'll do! I don't know where I'll live, but—

ARIADNE

Theseus, you've met my sister Phaedra, right?

THESEUS

I have. Nice to see you again, Princess Phaedra.

*(HE kisses HER hand.)*

You'll be welcome in the palace, of course, for as long as you'd like.

PHAEDRA

Thank you.

THESEUS

And in the mean time we'll set you up in a cabin next to ours. I don't know where you managed to hide yourself but I can't imagine it was very comfortable.

PHAEDRA

No, it most certainly wasn't! I'd be very grateful for a cabin.

THESEUS

Here, I'll show you to it.

*(THEY begin to exit, but freeze when ARIADNE speaks.)*

ARIADNE

I trusted him too quickly. I see that now. I don't believe he was ever insincere, but it's easy to see how she is everything the Queen of Athens ought to be, and everything a man like him could want. As the days on the ship pass, they grow closer. It hurts, of course, but what is there to do? It's so natural, it happens so easily, that I'm not even really surprised. And then one day, I come around a corner and there they are...

*(THESEUS and PHAEDRA kiss passionately.)*

PHAEDRA

Theseus...

THESEUS

Wait. Before you say anything, just think about it for a moment:  
YOU'D MAKE A PERFECT QUEEN  
AND I'LL BE A PERFECT KING.  
TOGETHER WE WILL BE THE BEST  
ATHENS HAS EVER SEEN.

PHAEDRA

THE PEOPLE WILL ALL LOVE US  
AND WE WILL LOVE THEM, TOO.  
BESIDES THAT WE'LL LOVE EACH OTHER;  
I COUNT THAT AS A PLUS.

*(Apart from THEM, ICARUS appears, flying, wings strapped to HIS back.)*

ICARUS

ARIE, HERE I COME.  
NOW I WILL WIN YOUR HEART.  
FROM WAY UP HERE, OLD FEARS SEEM SMALL,  
AS WINGS BEAT LIKE A DRUM.  
SUDDENLY I'M SURE, SOMEHOW,  
ALL THINGS WILL SOON BE WELL.  
IT WAS FOR YOU I LEARNED TO FLY;  
YOU'LL HAVE TO LOVE ME NOW.

ICARUS, THESEUS, PHAEDRA

LIGHT AS THE AIR  
NOTHING WOULD DARE  
TO BRING ME DOWN NOW.  
I KNOW EVERYTHING WILL BE ALL RIGHT NOW.  
I'M BOUNCING ON CLOUDS,  
SINGING OUT LOUD,  
FEELING THE SUN ON MY FACE!  
FLYING HIGH FOR THE SUN ON MY FACE.  
FLYING HIGHER AND HIGHER AND HIGHER!  
AND LOOK AT THE VIEW!

PHAEDRA AND THESEUS

THE WORLD IS OURS TO RULE AND BE A PART OF.

ICARUS

THE WORLD IS MINE TO SEE AND BE A PART OF.

ARIADNE

THEIR WORLD WAS NEVER MINE TO BE A PART OF.

THESEUS

MY HEART IS MELTING.

PHAEDRA

MY FEARS ARE MELTING.

ARIADNE

MY FUTURE'S MELTING.

ICARUS

MY WINGS ARE MELTING.  
My wings are melting, shit!



*(ICARUS disappears. THESEUS and  
PHAEDRA exit.)*

## FINALE

### ARIADNE

There's an island up ahead, near enough to swim to. I look at Theseus's map. It's marked, "Naxos, uninhabited." They've gone below, to one of their cabins I suppose. They don't hear the splash, and it'll be hours before they notice they can't find me. By that time no one will think to check the little island they passed so many miles back. That's as much thought as I give it. I arrive on Naxos and assess my surroundings.

PLENTY OF WOOD.  
PLENTY OF ROCKS.  
FRONDS OF PALM.  
ALL THE BUILDING BLOCKS  
OF ANYTHING THAT I MIGHT NEED TO MAKE.

WILD BOARS  
AND BIRDS AND FISH.  
EV'RYTHING  
I COULD EVER WISH.  
WHO NEEDS THINGS LIKE HUMAN COMPANY?

I OPENED MY HEART TO LOVE  
AND THIS IS WHERE IT LEAD.  
ONE DOESN'T HAVE TO REALLY LIVE  
TO GET OUT OF BEING DEAD;  
I'LL EXIST HERE ON THIS ISLAND INSTEAD.

I HAVE THIS IDEA  
FOR THIS SPECIAL TYPE OF CROSSBOW  
MADE WITH A SPECIAL TYPE OF SPRING.  
I CAN MAKE IT JUST AS WELL ON NAXOS,  
FAR FROM QUEENS AND KINGS  
AS I COULD HAVE MADE IT BACK IN CRETE, OR ATHENS.

AND YET, SOMETHING PULLS  
AT THE STRINGS IN MY HEART.  
THE MOMENT I THINK  
I CAN LIVE HERE I START  
TO YEARN TO FEEL THAT HEAT AGAIN,  
THAT HEAT I JUST HAD FOUND.

I DON'T REGRET MY DECISION.  
I'M HAPPY THAT THIS IS MY LIFE.  
THAT IS THE LIFE I'VE CHOSEN.  
BECAUSE I CHOSE IT.

AT LEAST I CHOSE IT.  
AND NOW I'LL CHOOSE A DIFFERENT ONE.

A MESSAGE TO THE GODS OF FATE:  
WE'LL CALL THIS ONE A DRAW.  
YOU MAY HAVE GOT MY DIGNITY,  
BUT YOU DIDN'T GET MY SOUL.  
I GUESS I'D RATHER LOVE THEN LOSE  
THAN NEVER LOVE AT ALL.

AND SO I'LL BUILD MYSELF A RAFT  
AND SET OFF FOR A GRAND NEW LAND.  
I CAN STILL FIND LIFE AND LOVE,  
THOUGH IT ISN'T WHAT I PLANNED.  
THIS MAY BE A BATTLE LOST,  
BUT THERE'S STILL FIGHTING IN ME YET.  
THOUGH I'M ON AN ISLAND, STUCK,  
MY FUTURE ISN'T SET.

I TRIED TO REARRANGE THE STARS  
AND IT DIDN'T QUITE WORK OUT.  
THE WHOLE WORLD IS A LABYRINTH  
AND I'M LOST, WITHOUT A DOUBT.  
BUT THIS ISN'T WHERE MY STORY ENDS,  
THERE'S STILL A MISSING LINK.

*(ICARUS wades out of the sea dragging HIS  
mangled, melted wings.)*

ICARUS  
YOU MADE A PRETTY COOL CONSTELLATION,  
I THINK.

ARIADNE  
Icarus! What are you doing here? How did you get here?

*(ICARUS holds up HIS melted wings.)*

ICARUS  
Technical difficulties.

ARIADNE  
And I suppose you're going to tell me one should never fly too close to the sun?

ICARUS  
Why would I do a thing like that? It got me to you, didn't it?

YOU AND I CAN STILL FLY FAR AWAY.  
I WILL GO WHERE YOU WANT ME TO GO.  
WE WILL SOMEHOW START A NEW LIFE  
IN A CITY SOMEWHERE,  
OPEN A LITTLE SHOP TO SELL OUR WARES.  
WE'LL CONTINUE TO CREATE THINGS,  
MAYBE MORE THAN JUST FRIENDS,  
THE GHOSTS OF THE PAST LEFT BEHIND.  
NO CASTLE WALLS AROUND US,  
NO MAZE FROM WHICH TO HIDE.  
JUST YOU AND ME COMPLETELY FREE  
TO LIVE THE WAY WE WANT.  
WHAT DO YOU SAY TO GIVING IT A TRY?

ARIADNE

LET'S BUILD OURSELVES A RAFT  
AND SET OFF FOR A GRAND NEW LAND.  
WE CAN STILL HAVE LIFE AND LOVE,  
THOUGH NOT HOW WE HAD PLANNED.  
THE ODDS MAY BE AGAINST US  
BUT WE'LL HAVE OUR VIC'TRY YET.  
THOUGH WE'RE ON AN ISLAND, STUCK,  
THE FUTURE'S NEVER SET.

ICARUS AND ARIADNE

TOGETHER WE'LL ARRANGE THE STARS  
AND LEARN WHAT LIFE'S ABOUT.  
THOUGH THE WHOLE WORLD IS A LABYRINTH  
I KNOW WE CAN MAKE IT OUT.  
THIS ISN'T WHERE OUR STORY ENDS,  
THIS IS WHERE IT ALL BEGINS.  
WE'LL SEE THIS THROUGH, THROUGH THICK AND THIN  
AND COUNT THIS AS A WIN,  
SO THOUGH WE'RE ON AN ISLAND, STUCK,  
THERE'S STILL A MISSING LINK.  
WE'LL MAKE A PRETTY COOL CONSTELLATION,  
I THINK.

*(End play.)*

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