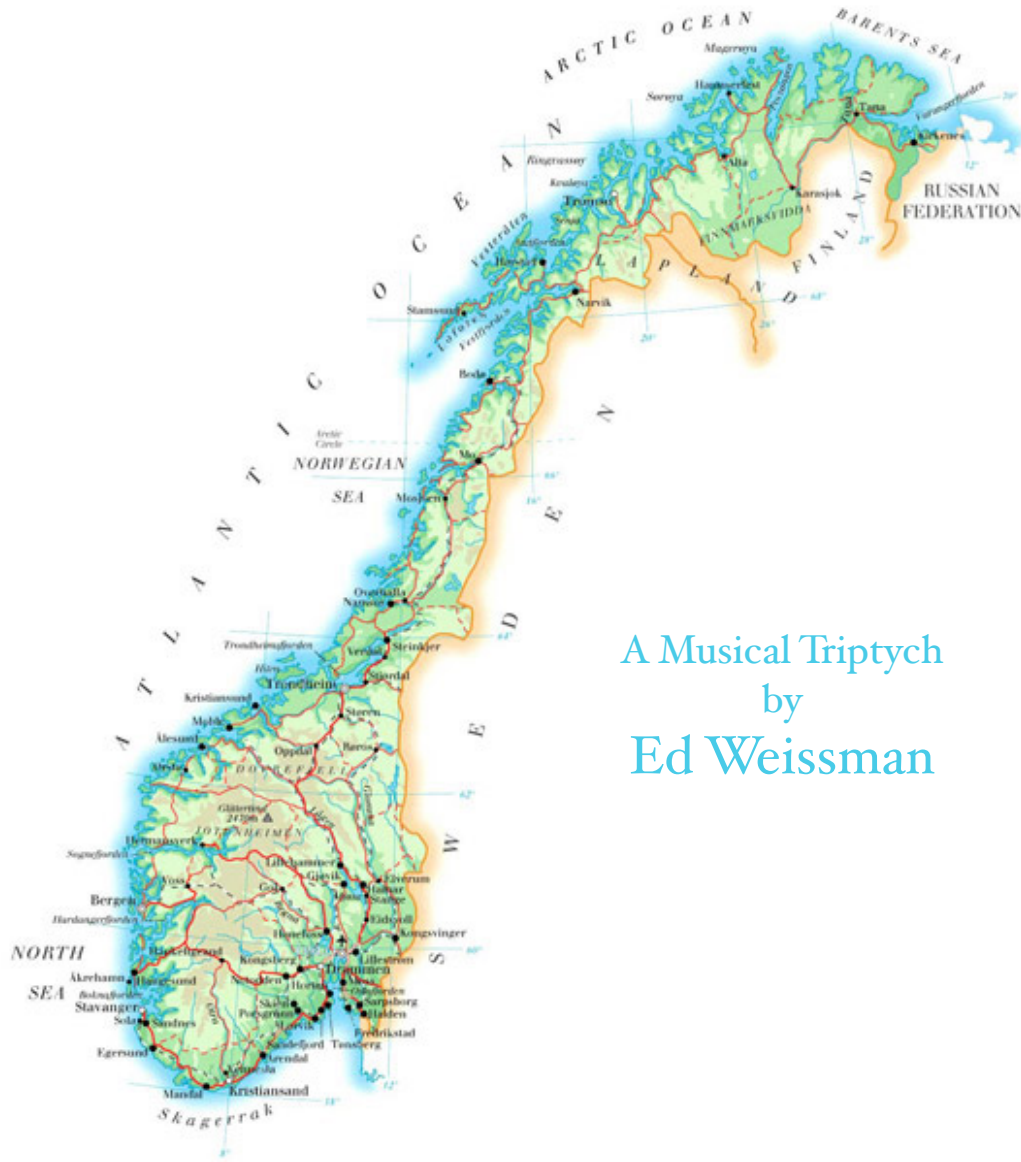


SAGA




A Musical Triptych
by
Ed Weissman

I ASKED CHATGPT ABOUT ANNE BROWN


Ed Who was Anne Brown, soprano?



Anne Brown was an American soprano who is best known for her portrayal of the title role in the world premiere of George Gershwin's opera "Porgy and Bess" in 1935. She also sang the role in the opera's Broadway run and in the first national tour. Brown was the first African American woman to play the role of Bess in the opera, and her performances were widely praised for their vocal and dramatic power. 

Ed What did Anne Brown do after Porgy and Bess?



After the initial run of "Porgy and Bess" and its national tour, Anne Brown's career as a performer slowed down. She did not take on many singing engagements and instead focused on her personal life and on teaching voice. Brown taught voice at Howard University and later at Morgan State University. She also occasionally performed in recitals and concerts, often singing spirituals and other African American folk music. She passed away on July 6, 2009. 

THIS EXCLUDES HER 63 YEAR-LONG DISTINGUISHED
EUROPEAN CAREER AND LIFE.
BOTH OF WHICH WERE IMPOSSIBLE IN
THE JIM CROW U.S.A.
(And even gets her date of death wrong)

HONORED SINGER, ACTOR, DIRECTOR, TEACHER,
VOCAL COACH.
WIFE, MOTHER, and DAUGHTER-IN-LAW OF A
JUSTICE OF THE SUPREME COURT OF NORWAY.

THE PERFORMERS

BLACK WOMAN WHITE MAN

THE PLAYS

SAGA 1: "ANNE BROWN CREATES BESS AND FLEES TO NORWAY: An Introduction to Her Life in 9 Headlines and An Epilogue"

SAGA 2: "JOACHIM RØNNEBERG AND HIS SKIERS SAVE THE WORLD"

SAGA 3: "ON A SUNNY SPRING MORNING IN OSLO, 1925"

THE PLAYS ARE PERFORMED WITHOUT AN INTERMISSION.
THE PRODUCTION WILL USE PROJECTIONS BOTH IN THE AUDITORIUM AS WELL AS ON STAGE.
THE PRODUCTION MAY EMPLOY A FOLEY ARTIST.
THERE MAY BE FLYING IN SAGA 2.

UPDATED AS OF WEDNESDAY, 1 NOVEMBER 2023

[TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

Table is to the right. Click to navigate.

ANNE BROWN
CREATES BESS AND
FLEES TO
NORWAY:

An Introduction to Her Life in 9 Headlines
and An Epilogue

A musical
By
Ed Weissman



Time: 1912 - 2009 Places: The USA, Norway, and Italy. The action is continuous although the script divided into scenes.

The actor who plays ANNE plays all the other parts

MUSICAL NUMBERS

1. Do, Do, Do (George and Ira Gershwin)
2. Vissi d'Arte from Tosca (Giacomo Puccini/Luigi Illica & Giuseppe Giacosa)
3. Courtship including Ja, Vi Elsker Dette Landet (The National Anthem)
4. Sorceress Aria from Dido and Æneas (Henry Purcell/Nahum Tate)
5. Audition for George. (Schubert, Gounod, Puccini)
6. The Man I Love (George and Ira Gershwin)
7. City Called Heaven (Traditional Spiritual)
8. Auditions for Ira, DuBose, Mammou, the Theatre Guild, The musical director, and Everyone Else and then George and Ira's Momma...Rose. (Delibes, Verdi, Wagner, Gounod, Grieg)
9. Do It Again (George Gershwin/B. G. De Silva)

PART I: ANNE BROWN CREATES BESS AND
FLEES TO NORWAY:AN INTRODUCTION TO
HER LIFE IN 9 HEADLINES AND AN
EPILOGUE

Scene 1 - "Anne Brown er Død."

Oslo, 14 March, 2009. The
following is projected.

☺ Logg inn ☰

Anne Brown er død

Den amerikansk-norske operasangeren Anne Wiggins Brown døde fredag, 96 år gammel.



RECORDED VOICE OF REPORTER

(Projection of news item in Norwegian and English)

Anne Brown er død. 13 mars 2 tusen og ni. Den Amerikansk-norsk operasangeren Anne Wiggins Brown døde fredag, nitti seks år gammel. Brown ble verdenskjent da hun spilte rollen som Bess i George Gershwins opera Porgy and Bess under urfremførelsen i oktober 1935.

(The sound has been fading after the first sentence but is still audible as the ACTOR as ANNE BROWN enters. As SHE begins to speak, the Norwegian fades out.)

ANNE

Anne Brown is dead. The American-Norwegian opera singer died Friday the 13th of March, 2009 at 96 years old. Brown was world-famous as she played the role of Bess in George Gershwin's opera Porgy and Bess at the premiere in October, 1935. The singer was born in Baltimore, MD in 1912 She moved to Norway in 1948 and married Olympic Ski Jumper Thorlief Schjeldereup and became a Norwegian citizen.

(Projections fade. Anne moves downstage center.)

I've lived a strange kind of life – half black, half white, half isolated, half in the spotlight. 35 years in America 62 in Norway. Notice that I am described as an American-Norwegian. However, what fits more comfortably to the American ear is Norwegian-American or Italian-American or Irish-American and, with much more baggage, African-American. I am a proud American-Norwegian and the winner of Norway's highest honor "Norsk kulturråds ærespris" Norway's annual prize given to one person for significant contributions in art and culture. One of Norway's great, excuse me, divas.

(The Following is projected)



Tonight, I am reintroducing myself to an American audience who probably doesn't know me or my work. It is about time. Long overdue. Racism drove me from my homeland. Norway is not a utopia but a place where I did thrive as an artist and as a woman, wife, mother, A full long life!. A friend once said "Anne Brown's not easy to get along with, but she's the best person to know." Yes, We tough girls tough it out.

In egalitarian Norway, I've sung, directed, taught as well as touring all over Europe and Latin America. I've been a vocal coach to opera singers, folk singers, actors like Liv Ullman, and jazz singers. But I know what you're expecting - your itching for some Gershwin. Yes, you'll hear some Gershwin but nothing from Porgy and Bess. Why, it is not yet in public domain and, oh, the royalties! One of my students is the jazz

singer Karin Krog who released an album of Gershwin songs. I'll sing one of the songs she worked on with me.

We worked on the album together. We both were learning. She taught me jazz and I taught her Gershwin and the importance of Ira's lyrics.

(SHE sings "Someone To Watch Over Me.")

THERE'S A SAYING OLD, SAYS THAT LOVE IS BLIND
STILL WE'RE OFTEN TOLD, SEEK AND YE SHALL FIND
SO I'M GOING TO SEEK A CERTAIN LAD I'VE HAD IN MIND
LOOKING EVERYWHERE, HAVEN'T FOUND HIM YET
HE'S THE BIG AFFAIR I CANNOT FORGET
ONLY MAN I EVER THINK OF WITH REGRET
I'D LIKE TO ADD HIS INITIAL TO MY MONOGRAM
TELL ME, WHERE IS THE SHEPHERD FOR THIS LOST LAMB

THERE'S A SOMEBODY I'M LONGIN' TO SEE
I HOPE THAT HE TURNS OUT TO BE
SOMEONE WHO'LL WATCH OVER ME

I'M A LITTLE LAMB WHO'S LOST IN THE WOOD
I KNOW I COULD, ALWAYS BE GOOD
TO ONE WHO'LL WATCH OVER ME

ALTHOUGH HE MAY NOT BE THE MAN
SOME GIRLS THINK OF AS HANDSOME
TO MY HEART HE CARRIES THE KEY

WON'T YOU TELL HIM PLEASE TO PUT ON SOME SPEED
FOLLOW MY LEAD, OH, HOW I NEED
SOMEONE TO WATCH OVER ME

WON'T YOU TELL HIM PLEASE TO PUT ON SOME SPEED
FOLLOW MY LEAD, OH, HOW I NEED
SOMEONE TO WATCH OVER ME

(Lights change.)

Scene 2 - "Porgy and Bess Opens
Tour at the National Theatre in
Washington, DC."

The Stage of the National Theatre,
1936

Projection:

THE NATIONAL THEATRE WASHINGTON,
DC.

ANNE

I was standing on a stage like the one I am on now.

(Projection: THE NATIONAL THEATRE WASHINGTON, DC.)

ANNE

After Porgy and Bess closed on Broadway, the original production toured. We were booked into the National Theatre in Washington, DC. It was segregated and I refuse to perform in a segregated theatre.

I spoke to the producer.

(To unseen producer in the House)

I want my family, friends and school comrades from Baltimore to see me and not from way up there - disgusting... I know it's not your fault... Ok, I'll speak the theatre owner.

(To audience)

By this time, the cast and crew were gathering in the house. In a short moment, the Theatre Owner appeared in the house.

ANNE

(To theatre Owners imitating with exaggeration a
Southern accent)

Anne. This is my theatre and my rules... I will sue you for all losses if you don't perform... Play your part... Don't get uppity...

(She speaks as herself.)

As you may may know, I grew up in Baltimore. My parents and family and friends want to see me in Mr. Gershwin's opera, but not up there. Down here! Mr. Duncan and I are the stars.

And no I'm not being uppity. Isn't uppity usually part of a two word statement? Either word makes me sick. Together I get angry or... Okay... Sue me... Destroy my career... still I will not perform in a segregated theatre.. (the light bulb)
Or... If you want just put all your white people up there!!! Threaten me with violence... I am a soprano, a diva... divas know how to fight. It's a fact summertime in Catfish Row is not easy livin' It's hot. The country is low, and with the heat, humidity and the crackers, why Miss Bess may just lay down in a faint. Yes we black ladies can faint as well as your fine White exemplars of Southern Womanhood.. Yes, we really can. In any even Miss. Brown, and that is how I am to be addressed, will not perform.

(Pointing at the various people named who are in the house.)

Oh! neither will Mr. Duncan. No Serena, and no Clara... Crown, Sportin' Life. The male chorus, the female chorus. Why even the few white folk in our cast won't perform and not to save their voices as white folks don't sing in this Catfish Row..

Well, we won. The theatre desegregates and we perform..

But just as soon as our tour moves on, the theatre re-segregates.

George, before he left for Hollywood promised a new opera for Todd Duncan and me.

One day I turn on the radio

RADIO

George Gershwin has died..

(Blackout.)

Scene 3 "Anne Brown Leaves For
Europe"

1946

Lights up,

ANNE

I got some work; some good work on Broadway in Pins and Needles and Mamba's Daughters by Dubose and Dorothy Heyward. He'd written the novel and with his wife the play Porgy and collaborated with George on the opera. A revival of Porgy and Bess in 1943 was a bigger hit than the original. But so much was closed to me, so much I had fight for. I wanted to be as far away as possible. And so I booked a European tour as the New York Times reported.

(The following is projected.)



The Times was wrong in saying I'd return to the US in November. I never did.

Major opera houses and concert halls were closed to me. I was always told Black girls can't go to school here. Black girls don't belong in great opera houses. Black girls should sing your spirituals not music composed for white ladies. To hell with that! I may not have sung at the Met or the great halls and opera houses in provincial America, but I have sung in the great halls and opera houses of Europe. My first tour ended in Milan at La Scala, the world's greatest opera house.

(ANNE exits as Lights dim as a curtain [the title page of the program at La Scala] descends.)



Scene 4 - "Anne Brown, soprano,
canterà questo sabato alla Scala
Ore 21:15 "

La Scala Milan
9 November 1946

A moment in which we hear musicians
tuning up. Then a very short
overture.

Curtain rises

ANNE BROWN enters beautifully and
formally dressed

ANNE BROWN

Tosca having lived her life for art is told by Scarpia, the
Chief of the Secret Police, he will release her lover if she
sleeps with him.

(SHE sings "Vissi d'Arte." Part of it is in English.)

I'VE LIVED FOR ART, AND I'VE LIVED FOR LOVE,
AND I'VE NEVER DONE HARM TO ANYONE!

(SHE sings in Italian.)

CON MAN FURTIVA
QUANTE MISERIE CONOBBI AIUTAI.
SEMPRE CON FÈ SINCERA
LA MIA PREGHIERA
AI SANTI TABERNACOLI SALÌ.
SEMPRE CON FÈ SINCERA
DIEDI FIORI AGLI ALTAR.
NELL'ORA DEL DOLORE
HOW COME HOW COME OH MY GOD,
HOW COME YOU REWARD ME IN THIS WAY?
DIEDI GIOIELLI DELLA MADONNA AL MANTO,
E DIEDI IL CANTO AGLI ASTRI, AL CIEL,
CHE NE RIDEAN PIÙ BELLI.
NELL'ORA DEL DOLORE,
PERCHÉ, PERCHÉ, SIGNORE,
AH, PERCHÉ ME NE RIMUNERI COSÌ
AH, HOW COME IT TAKES THIS JOURNEY TO BECOME FREE?

As I sing I too want to live my life for art ... and love, but I could never in America. My Scarpia was Jim Crow. Jim Crow did not let me sing at the Met, closed many doors to me and tried to force me to sing in segregated theatres. Europe is my escape. But am I free?

(Music accompanies a projection of montage of theatre programs from all over Europe. Ending with one after another program all in Scandinavia. This will allow time for a costume change.)

Scene 5 - "Anne Wiggins Brown Og
Thorlief Schjelderup Kommer Til Å
Gifte Seg"

ANNE

I stay in Europe with my young daughter. I was a young widow, and I don't want my daughter growing up in America.

I give many concerts in Scandinavia. As I perform in one city after another in Scandinavia, there was always the same young man in the first row smiling up at me. At first, I was put off by that man ,okay that handsome man, that very handsome man. People said I have a fan; I remind them that fan is short for fanatic.

I finally agree to meet him but in a very public place.

"THORLIEF"

Miss. Brown, I am Thorlief Schjelderup. My purpose is simple. I have fallen in love with you.

ANNE

Really? Really! Mr. Thorlief Schjelderup.

"THORLIEF"

You sound Norwegian and you pronounced my name...

ANNE

Of course, I pronounced your name correctly. My Norwegian is just at its beginning, but my ear is fully trained. Mr. Schjelderup, you say you love me, you are merely a besotted fan. I am not sure what else I can say.

(ANNE walks as if walking with HIM.)

Over several meeting, I realized he did love me. And in addition to his love, his charm, his handsomeness and intelligence, he was a man of substance. He was an Olympic Medalist in ski jumping, a writer and the son of a Justice of the Supreme Court of Norway who was a national hero for leading the resistance during the German occupation.

We took many walks and I began to fall in love too. I also began to appreciate the peace and beauty of Oslo although it was still recovering from the German destruction.

"THORLIEF"

Anne.

(HE sing badly.)

JA, VI ELSKER DETTE LANDET,
SOM DET STIGER FREM,

ANNE

(Taking over.)

FURET, VÆRBITT OVER VANNET,
MED DE TUSEN HJEM, –
ELSKER, ELSKER DET OG TENKER
PÅ VÅR FAR OG MOR
‡ OG DEN SAGANATT SOM *SENKER*
DRØMMER PÅ VÅR JORD.

"THORLIEF"

How do you know our national anthem?

ANNE

They play it at the beginning of all my Norwegian concerts.
And, as I said, I have a good ear.

(`THEY' are walking hand in hand.)

And yes, I've fallen in love with you too. And as the Norwegian anthem says "Yes, I love this country as it rises forth." I had also fallen in love with Norway

I marry and became Anne Brown Schjelderup. My husband adopted my daughter Paula and we had a daughter of our own, Vaar, which means spring, my favorite season of the year.

YES!, I love this country!

(Transition to the next scene.)

Scene 6 "Kirsten Flagstad Skal
Synge Farvel"

Oslo, 1953

ANNE

In 1953, the great Kirsten Flagstad is to give her farewell performance in an all star production of Dido and Æneas. I am to sing a small part. Miss Flagstad sees my name on the list and refuses to allow me to sing. Well, it is well known that her husband died in jail charged with collaborating with the Nazi occupation. Then something amazing happens. The performer who was to play the Sorceress, a major role, has to drop out. I've sung the role and am asked to take over. There's no one else. They beg me and beg me and finally I have an idea. Yes, I will perform if Madame Flagstad presents me to the cast and orchestra.

"KIRSTEN FLAGSTAD"

May I present to you Anne Brown. She will help us out by jumping in at the last moment to play The Sorceress. Welcome Anne Brown Schjelderup.

(ANNE sings The Sorceress's Aria from Dido and Æneas.)

ANNE

WAYWARD SISTERS, YOU THAT FRIGHT
THE LONELY TRAVELLER BY NIGHT
WHO, LIKE DISMAL RAVENS CRYING,
BEAT THE WINDOWS OF THE DYING,
APPEAR! APPEAR AT MY CALL, AND SHARE IN THE FAME
OF A MISCHIEF SHALL MAKE ALL CARTHAGE FLAME.

(Lights down.)

ANNE

My singing career ended in 1950s when asthma made breath control difficult to impossible. My second careers: I am directing operas all over Europe not just productions of Porgy and Bess. Gian Carlo Menotti chooses me as director of his operas in Europe after seeing and hearing my Magda Sorel in his opera The Consul. I am a singing teacher and on the faculty of the National Theater School. My students range from jazz singers such as Karen Krog to opera singers such as Elizabeth Norberg-Shulz, folk singer Åsa Kleveland who became Norway's Minister of Culture and Liv Ullman. I don't retire - I am living my life for art and love and am an honored Norwegian artist and teacher.

(Lights down. A musical transition to early 20th century America.)

Scene 7 "King Johnson lynched on
Christmas Day in Anne Arundel
County." - 1912

Baltimore in the Early 20th Century

ANNE

I was born in Baltimore - a very Southern city - on August 9, 1912. My father's ancestors were slaves and he was a doctor - that accomplishment left him a very strict and serious man as you can see from this picture. I was always fighting against his rule. He wasn't cruel or violent. He felt that Negroes had to be a credit to their race ... as if that could or would change anything.

(Picture projected. Wagner, and then jazz (perhaps a jazz version of "Someone to Watch Over Me" underscores.)

My mother made sure there was always music in our house. I sang before I could talk and walk. Baltimore was a Jim Crow town; the excellent Catholic school near my home was white only. My mother was mixed race: Black, Cherokee, and Scottish-Irish

I am fortunate. Llewellyn Wilson was a musician, teacher, and director. He taught at Frederick Douglass High School and provided Black students the education and opportunities white students had. The High School put on a production of The Flying Dutchman. It was fine training.

The august Peabody Institute was "No Negroes allowed." But that didn't stop me from seeking a good education. I win a full scholarship to Juilliard in New York - the first Black woman to do so. My father doesn't want me going off into the wild world of New York, but my mother persuades him to let me go.

(Underscoring ends.)

(The action continues into the next scene.)

Scene 8 "George Gershwin Is
Auditioning Colored Singers and
Actors for His Opera "Porgy"

The Auditions.

The years I spend at Juilliard turn me into a true professional. I read an announcement that George Gershwin was composing an opera based on the novel and play "Porgy." I thought there might be a role for me. I write for an audition. A few days later I am in George's living room.

(Only a piano accompanies as a pianist (unseen) has been brought by Anne to the audition.)

ANNE

Mr. Gershwin, I begin with Schubert - his love letter to music.

(SHE sings the beginning of "An Die Musik")

DU HOLDE KUNST, IN WIE VIEL GRAUEN STUNDEN,
WO MICH DES LEBENS WILDER KREIS UMSTRICKT,

And now the pyrotechnics of Gounod's Jewel Song from Faust.

(SHE sings the beginning of "The Jewel Song" from Faust)

AH! JE RIS DE ME VOIR
SI BELLE EN CE MIROIR,
AH! JE RIS DE ME VOIR
SI BELLE EN CE MIROIR,

And O Mio Babbino Caro by Puccini

O MIO BABBINO CARO
MI PIACE È BELLO, BELLO
VO' ANDARE IN PORTA ROSSA
A COMPERAR L'ANELLO

ANNE

Mr. Gershwin was very pleased with what he heard. Mr. Gershwin let me sing one of your songs.

(She sings "The Man I Love")

WHEN THE MELLOW MOON BEGINS TO BEAM
EVERY NIGHT I DREAM A LITTLE DREAM
AND, OF COURSE, PRINCE CHARMING IS THE THEME
THE HE
FOR ME
ALTHOUGH I REALIZE AS WELL AS YOU
IT IS SELDOM THAT A DREAM COMES TRUE
TO ME IT'S CLEAR
THAT HE'LL APPEAR

SOMEDAY HE'LL COME ALONG
THE MAN I LOVE
AND HE'LL BE BIG AND STRONG
THE MAN I LOVE
AND WHEN HE COMES MY WAY
I'LL DO MY BEST TO MAKE HIM STAY
HE'LL LOOK AT ME AND SMILE
I'LL UNDERSTAND
THEN IN A LITTLE WHILE
HE'LL TAKE MY HAND
AND THOUGH IT SEEMS ABSURD
I KNOW WE BOTH WON'T SAY A WORD
MAYBE I SHALL MEET HIM SUNDAY
MAYBE MONDAY, MAYBE NOT
STILL I'M SURE TO MEET HIM ONE DAY
MAYBE TUESDAY WILL BE MY GOOD NEWS DAY
HE'LL BUILD A LITTLE HOME
THAT'S MEANT FOR TWO
FROM WHICH I'LL NEVER ROAM
WHO WOULD, WOULD YOU
AND SO ALL ELSE ABOVE
I'M DREAMING OF THE MAN I LOVE.

I see delight on his face and pleasure that I actually sang the verse... But then ...

"GEORGE GERSHWIN"

Miss Brown, I want to hear you sing a spiritual.

(ANNE draws herself up.)

ANNE

Mr. Gershwin. I am a classical artist. Why would you think that 'all us colored folk' sing spirituals? I haven't prepared one. My accompanist has no music. And I had no idea you would even ask this of me. No idea. No idea at all.

"GEORGE GERSHWIN"

Miss Brown. I mean no insult, no stereotype and by no means an insult to your artistry or your race. My opera is set in Charleston and, just as in the play, the Black people are poor. In composing my opera I will be using some rhythms and motifs from the traditional music of my characters. I simply want to hear you sing a spiritual for that reason and that reason alone.

ANNE

I still have no music. And I have not prepared anything.

GEORGE GERSHWIN PLAYED BY ANNE

Sing whatever you wish a Cappella.

ANNE

(After a moment.)

I can sing a spiritual you may not know. It is called A City Called Heaven.

(SHE sings "A City Called Heaven" a Capella and unplugged.)

I AM A POOR PILGRIM OF SORROW.
AND I'M TOSSED IN THIS WHOLE WIDE WORLD ALONE. NO AND
NO HOPE HAVE I FOR TOMORROW.
I'M TRYING TO MAKE IT MY HOME.

SOMETIMES, I AM TOSSED AND DRIVEN, LORD.
SOMETIMES I DON'T KNOW WHERE TO ROAM.
I'VE HEARD OF A CITY CALLED HEAVEN
I'M STRIVING TO MAKE IT MY HOME.

MY MOTHER HAS REACHED THAT PURE GLORY.
MY FATHER'S STILL WALKIN' IN SIN.

MY BROTHER AND SISTER WON'T OWN ME.
BECAUSE I AM TRYIN' TO GET IN.

SOMETIMES, I AM TOSSED AND DRIVEN, LORD.
SOMETIMES I DON'T KNOW WHERE TO ROAM.
I'VE HEARD OF A CITY CALLED HEAVEN.
I'M STRIVING TO MAKE IT MY HOME.

SOMETIMES, I AM TOSSED AND DRIVEN, LORD.
SOMETIMES I DON'T KNOW WHERE TO ROAM.
I'VE HEARD OF A CITY CALLED HEAVEN.
I'M STRIVING TO MAKE IT MY HOME.

"GEORGE GERSHWIN"

Miss Brown. Anne. If you ever sing it again, and you must,
never sing it any other way.

ANNE

In fact, it is my encore piece and I always sing it a cappella
and always think of George. As I said before we tough girls
always tough it out.

(The scene is increasingly frantic only slowing down
for the audition with Momma Gershwin. This is a to be
worked out with the choreographer and music arranger.)

ANNE

This is but the first of many auditions.

I audition for Ira Gershwin. The Bell Song from Lakmé by
Delibes

(This goes on for a while)

OU OU OU

I audition the Haywards, the authors. Violetta from La Traviata
by Verdi

FOLLIE! FOLLIE DELIRIO VANO È QUESTO!
POVERA DONNA, SOLA
ABBANDONATA IN QUESTO
POPOLOSO DESERTO

I audition for Rouben Mammoulian, the director. The Valkyries
from Die Walkuren by Wagner.

HOJOTOHO! HOJOTOHO!
HEIAHA! HEIAHA! HOJOTOHO! HEIAHA!

I audition for The Theatre Guild, the producers, - The Humming
by Puccini Chorus from Madama Butterfly.

(She hums it. Of course most in the audience will
recognize it as Bring Him Home from you know what.)

I audition for so many others I can't remember who, when and
what.

(As SHE sings, SHE's running hither and yon.)
OU OUR
HEIANA HEIAHA HEIAHA
(HUMMING)
FOLLIE, FOLLIE,
O MIO BABBINO CARO
AH! JE RIS DE ME VOIR
SI BELLE EN CE MIROIR,

OU, HEIANA, O MIO BABBINO, JE RIS, (HUMS), OU

(Musical chaos ensues and mercifully it comes to an
end.)

Finally, I audition for George and Ira's Momma...Rose - Grieg and
Ibsen's Solveigs Sang from Peer Gynt. Little did I know I would
live most of my life in Norway.

KANSKE VIL DER GÅ BÅDE VINTER OG VÅR,
OG NÆSTE SOMMER MED, OG DET HELE ÅR; -
MEN EN GANG VIL DU KOMME, DET VÉD JEG VISST;
OG JEG SKAL NOK VENTE, FOR DET LOVTE JEG SIDST

At the end of this, I was offered a small role - Bess.

(Lights change.)

Scene 9 "George Gershwin's Opera
"Porgy" to Premiere at Boston's
Colonial Theatre on September 30
Prior to Opening On Broadway on
October 10"

and BESS.

ANNE

That small role in the novel and play "Porgy" begins to grow as George composes and I sing for him not just Bess but many of the other roles - male and female. When he first played Summertime, oh how I wished it belonged to Bess, but it didn't. As he composes we then work together, my role grows and grows. And then, he gives me the 3rd Act reprise of Summertime.

ANNE

We open our tryout in Boston at the Colonial Theatre On September 30 and the on Broadway at the Alvin Theatre October 10, 1935. Reviews were mixed. Neither music nor drama critics were quite sure what Porgy and Bess was. It took a while for people to see it as the masterpiece it is. My reviews were a triumph as were the reviews for Todd Duncan as Porgy and for the cast. My father was angry, he said it put Negroes in a bad light. It was what life in Jim Crow Charleston was.

Just before we left for our pre-Broadway engagement in Boston, George took my out for an orange soda.

"GEORGE GERSHWIN"

I want you to know, Annie, that henceforth and forever after, George Gershwin's opera will be known as Porgy and Bess.

(ANNE smiles in triumph imagining the brilliant career which will follow. A discordant note sounds as lights fade and the following caption photo are projected)

"ANNE BROWN SCHJEELDERUP 9 AUGUST 1912 - 13 MARCH 2009"



(End of the play...)

Epilogue

ANNE

If I had been born 20 years later, I might have sung at the Met and marched for Civil Rights. My life would have been very different. Of course, I would not have met Mr. Gershwin and that would have been a shame. I often wonder what might have been had he lived.

(SHE sings "Do It Again," slowly, as an anthem.)

OH, DO IT AGAIN.
I MAY SAY, "NO, NO, NO, NO, NO,"
BUT DO IT AGAIN.
MY LIPS JUST ACHE
TO HAVE YOU TAKE
THE KISS THAT'S WAITING FOR YOU.
YOU KNOW IF YOU DO,
YOU WON'T REGRET IT.
COME AND GET IT.

OH, NO ONE IS NEAR.
I MAY CRY, "OH, OH, OH, OH, OH,"
BUT NO ONE WILL HEAR.
MY MOM WILL SCOLD ME
'CAUSE SHE TOLD ME
THAT IT'S NAUGHTY, BUT THEN...
OH, DO IT AGAIN!
PLEASE DO IT AGAIN!

(Lights fade.)

TRANSITION FROM ANNE TO JOACHIM

The lights fade to black after the play. There is sound of blowing winds etc.

Lights come up slowly on projection of falling and blowing snow lights up the theatre.

Music transitions to the Joachim play as the lights come up with projections of huge drifts of snow, forests and high mountains.

If we can get away with it, the temperature in the theatre is lowered a few degrees.

The stage is now set for the next play, a snow filled valley and mountain standing in for all the valleys and mountains that Joachim will ski, climb, and walk.

SAGA IN THREE KEYS

JOACHIM RØNNEBERG AND HIS PLATOON OF SKIERS SAVE THE WORLD

TIME: 1943,
PLACE: Telemark, NORWAY

CHARACTERS

(Played by one actor)

JOACHIM RØNNEBERG

And EVERYONE ELSE

INCLUDING 2,800 NAZI STORM TROOPERS ON
SKIS



*"You have to fight for your freedom and for peace.
You have to fight for it every day, to keep it.
It's like a glass boat; it's easy to break;
it's easy to lose."*

-- Joachim Rønneberg

MUSICAL NUMBERS

1. Everyone Skis In Norway, Part 1.
2. Everyone Skis In Norway, Part 2.
3. The Raid.
4. Glass Boat/Fly.

The Norwegian folk song Eirik Jarl underscores the opening and other moments in the play. The title translates as Earl Eirik. He was an 11th century ruler of Norway (but did not take the title of King). The song is about an international athletic competition he sponsored.

UPDATED AS OF
Wednesday, 1 November 2023

Note: During WW II, the paper clip became a 'badge' of Norwegian resistance to the German occupation.

PART II: JOACHIM RØNNEBERG AND HIS
PLATOON OF SKIERS SAVE THE WORLD

Scene 1

To Vemork, Telemark, Norway and then to Sweden, Winter 1943. Many years later.

Music of Eirik Jarl is played by orchestra. Perhaps, a recording of the actor singing it in Norwegian plays.

Snow-filled mountain meadows surrounded by snow-packed mountains.

As the lights come up, the sound of an airplane gets louder and louder. Then it begins to fade.

A MAN parachutes in. HE removes his parachute and picks up some packages and opens them. HE pulls out skis and poles and a large rucksack. Movement is almost continuous.

MAN

This is a play about men on skis defeating a tyrant's plans for world domination. The mission is to destroy the heavy water plant in Vemork, Norway.

It's a true story. Not the fictions of movies or TV.

I am Joachim Rønneberg and yes I really did parachute into these mountains in 1943. One by one my platoon came together in Operation Gunnerside. Some parachuted into Norway; others had been with the resistance. There were only eleven of us. We did not know why we had to destroy that heavy water plant at Norsk Hydro in Vemork. We only were told it was so important that it could decide the outcome of the war.

I will take you through our entire mission. I will move in time from the winter of 1943 to the present with stops in between. And I'll do it on skis.

Heavy water is used to make fertilizer and something else. What was that something else? We did not know.

We did know that a previous British mission had failed. All the British were tortured and then shot by the Germans. In case we were caught, each of us has a cyanide pill in a pocket.

Now, we must wait for a full moon in a cloudless sky to begin our mission. Norway and we Norwegians are fighting the Hitler in every way. He is furious that we, the ideal aryan, are putting up the biggest fight against him. Aryans! Bullshit! Hitler is doing everything he can to destroy whole peoples and conquer the world and end freedom and democracy. Freedom and democracy which are as fragile as a boat made of glass. It can easily shatter. To save that boat, we ski.

(HE sings "Everyone Skis In Norway, Part 1.")
 IN A COLD AND MOUNTAINOUS WINTER COUNTRY,
 WE NEED TO SURVIVE
 SO WE SKI TO STAY ALIVE
 AND WE THRIVE.

EV'RYONE SKIS IN NORWAY.
 EV'RYONE PRAYS FOR SNOW.
 SOME LIKE TO SAIL. SOME LIKE TO ROW
 BUT EV'RYONE SKIS IN NORWAY, YOU KNOW

EV'RYONE SKIS IN NORWAY
 IN WINTER'S NIGHT, THE WORLD TURNS WHITE
 THE DARKEST DAYS ARE SHINING BRIGHT
 SO EV'RYONE SKIS IN NORWAY, THAT'S RIGHT

WE'RE A COUNTRY OF MOUNTAINS
 A COUNTRY OF WINTER
 WE DON'T FEAR THE COLD
 WE DON'T FEAR THE DARK
 WINTER'S THE SEASON
 FOR RUSHING DOWN MOUNTAINS
 FOR A VERY GOOD REASON
 OR JUST FOR A LARK.

WE MADE OUR WINTER INTO SPORT
WE USE OUR WINTER AS A FINAL RETORT
TO WAR TO WAR TO WAR

NOW, EV'RYONE SKIS IN NORWAY
THIS WINTER WE SKI, MY MEN AND ME
WE FIGHT TO SET NORWAY FREE.
THAT'S WHY WE SKI FOR NORWAY,
YOU'LL SEE.
ALT FOR NORGE ALT FOR NORGE ALT FOR NORGE
ALL FOR NORWAY! AND FOR THE WORLD.

(Music ends.)

(After a moment.)

(Lights down.)

Weeks of skiing, hiding, breaking into cabins, hunting and freezing and waiting for clear weather and a full moon and the signal to go! And, the longer we wait, the heavier the cyanide capsules in our pockets become. We wait during the long months for the right conditions: full moon and clear skies.

(JOACHIM Addressing his "MEN.")

I know, men, we're freezing. But we are not frozen. We are hungry, but not starving. We are on high alert, but we don't let fear weaken us. The weeks of waiting are over. Today is the day. No more looking for empty cabins, and shooting game and eating lichens to ration our supplies. Now we are going to do what we came to do. I know we argued about the route. But there is only one good one. We can't get across the bridge; it is guarded now. We have to go down this ravine. Okay, okay, cliff and up the other side. We will ski, sort of. Our supplies are good; we can't lose them now. Three groups: those who will set the charges; those who will guard us; those who will protect the skis and supplies.

(Sound of radio static and then music up.
Song "Everyone Skis in Norway, Part 2")

THE WORLD THINKS OF NORWEGIANS AS SKIERS.
WE NORWEGIANS ARE A PEOPLE WHO SKI.

THANKS TO SONDRÉ NORHEIM, WHOM WE REMEMBER,
HE TAUGHT THE WORLD TO SKI.
NOW ON THE EVE OF BATTLE.
ONE THING IS BLINDINGLY CLEAR,
WE'RE GOING TO WIN FOR NORWAY,
AS OUR TIME TO SKI IS HERE.
NONE CAN BEAT US.
NO ONE CAN BEAT US BECAUSE

EV'RYONE SKIS IN NORWAY.
EV'RYONE PRAYERS, YOU KNOW
IT MAY SEEM ODD, WE SURE THERE'S GOD
WHO ELSE COULD HAVE INVENTED SNOW.

EV'RYONE SKIS IN NORWAY
IN WINTER'S NIGHT, THE WORLD TURNS WHITE
THE DARKEST DAYS ARE SHINING BRIGHT
AND EV'RYONE SKIS IN NORWAY, THAT'S RIGHT

EV'RYONE IS SKIING IN NORWAY
THE YOUNGEST OF KIDS LEARN TO SKI
ONLY THEN DO THEY LEARN TO WALK
AND ON THE SLOPES IS WHERE
THEY LEARN TO TALK,

EV'RYONE'S FATE IS IN THIS WAR
AND TO WIN WE'LL SKI FAR MORE.
SO EV'RYONE SKIS FOR NORWAY

YES, SKIS ARE OUR SECRET WEAPONS
THEY'LL NEVER CATCH US
THEY'LL NEVER MATCH US
LET THE RACE BEGIN
LET THE CHASE BEGIN

AND ON OUR SKIS
ON OUR SKIS
THE SKIING KINGDOM
OF NORWAY WILL WIN.

WITH LUCK,
ALWAYS WITH LUCK
AND LOTS OF PLUCK
AND HOLY FUCK.
WE WILL WIN.

EV'RYONE SKIS IN NORWAY
IT'S THE NORWEGIAN WAY
EV'RYONE SKIS IN NORWAY
FOR NORWAY, WE SKI TODAY.

EV'RYONE SKIS IN NORWAY
SOMETIMES WE FALL
BUT WE CONTINUE TO TRY
THEN WE GET UP
THAT'S WHEN WE BEGIN TO FLY FLY.

(Lights down.)

Scene 2

Telemark, Norway to Sweden, 1943,
before, during, and after 27
February at the Norsk Hydro heavy
water plant at Vemork.

JOACHIM pulls a flask out of his
pocket.

(Static from a radio.)

I have saved some akvavit, and it is quite chilled.

(HE mimes giving 'everyone' a drink.)

Skål!

27 February, 1943, 20:00 hours, We go.

("The Raid" is spoken and underscored with movement, a
dance. As JOACHIM "skies," projections of the terrain
and the plant appear and change as they move. Time
passes.)

Time to ski to the ravine.
Along these tracks. ...
Alt for Norge. Alt for Norge.
Down we go.
There's a path here.
That one's better.
Slowly.
We are below their search lights now.
Slowly.
No no no.

(Looks down as if seeing some one falling down the
ravine.)

He's okay. He'll just have to wait for us..

How do you ski a ravine.
Carefully.
Down.
Now, up.
The fence!
The gate!

We need to cut the lock!
Who has the tools?
Who has the tools!
Who? Oh, you were slower.
Good.
You keep watch.
There
there and
there.
Move down the tracks with the supplies.
In we go. The door, the door. It's jammed.
Probably never used, they use the stairs.
What. No no!

(Sound of breaking glass. Throughout we hear the
whirr of machines and running water.)

No. Okay we'll crawl through the window.
No one seems to have heard the glass breaking.

A guard!

"GUARD"

Who's that?!

"ANOTHER PLATOON MEMBER"

It's ok. He's okay.
Thank god you brought a local with you.
His son is in the resistance.

JOACHIM

Bundle him up the stairs - he'll be safe from the explosion.
Tie him up. Don't hurt him. But make it look like there was a
struggle

Set the charges.
Set the charges.
Set the charges.
There too.
Careful.
More charges there.
Okay.
Two more over there.
The fuses.
Run the wire,
when I light the fuse,

count out the time 20 seconds.

(The countdown extends time.)

20 It's burning.

19 okay

18 I'll be last

17 Out of the building.

(HE looks around, a final check.)

16 There is the road that crosses the ravine into the complex.
Run to the the tracks.

15 Put your skis on.

14 There are the others.

(Quiet)

13. Catch up. Catch up.

12. Faster

11. Okay.

10 Tracks are clear.

9 Down, down down

8 There's cover

7 Ski through this. I know I KNOW.

6 Who fell?

5 He can't get up.

4 I'll get him.

3 Here, take my hand Got him.

2 Down more

1 Take cover.

(A small explosion. Not massive as audiences may expect.)

An anticlimax But we did it. We did it. Surgical and modest like Norwegians.

(Search lights snap on all over the theatre. Sirens blare. The sound of soldiers boots marching, running.)

All hell breaks. More lights. But we were right. They never thought we could attack from the ravine. They are on the railroad tracks and on the roads.

(Search lights fade and sirens are quieter and quieter. A map is projected and is updated showing the route of the escape. We hear, intermittently, the sounds and light of their pursuers.)

Down and up.
He's fine.
He waited for us
Ski into the woods.
Keep going.
A road.
Clear.
We cross.
Into the woods.
Just in time
An armored patrol passes.

We ski all night and into the morning. We take turns sleeping and standing guard.

(During this, actions can be mimed in detail.)

We continue.
Roads filled with troops. And airplanes. Airplanes. And then skiers. A lot of skiers.

The days ski by. We split up.
(To those leaving.)
Godspeed to you all. On to Sweden.

(To his men.)

Yes, I know we're being chased by Nazi stormtroopers. They aren't Norwegian skiers.

(Sound of motors of trucks etc. getting louder. JOACHIM halts himself, and with a gesture to the others, hides under an outcropping. In the course of this, the sounds and lights of their pursuers on land and in the air occur more and more frequently.)

We lost them.

We meet members of the resistance with news and supplies.

"A MEMBER OF THE LOCAL RESISTANCE"

You are being chased by scores of storm troopers.

JOACHIM

How many?

"ANOTHER RESISTANCE MEMBER"

I was told two thousand eight hundred stormtroopers!!!!

JOACHIM

How did they have time to count?

(Pause.)

Think of it this way. To be chased by a platoon is frightening. Two thousand eight hundred stormtroopers is an adventure.

(Silence. The music up again. When they ski into Sweden the border marker is projected.)

Kilometers go by

Day.

Night.

Day.

Night.

Day.

Then, down the hill and across the road - the Swedish border!

C'mon, this road is empty now but who knows?

Cover over there.

Wait,

Wait for the clouds to cover the moon.

There's the marker

We cross the border.

Bet those 2800 German storm troopers are pissed.

2,800 NAZI STORM TROOPERS

(Off stage. Recorded by actor playing Joachim.)

Scheisse!

JOACHIM

This is the only time in my entire life when I'm pleased to be in Sweden. It was my best ski weekend ever. 450 kilometers!!!!

(Projections fade. JOACHIM is on a bare stage.)

When the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, we then knew why we had to do what we did. We helped prevent Hitler from getting the bomb. Heavy water is the medium which allows uranium to become plutonium which enables nuclear fission and hence a nuclear weapon.

I spoke for years about this and our Norway. And our peace and freedom and democracy.

"You have to fight for your freedom and for peace. You have to fight for it every day, to keep it. It's like a glass boat; it's easy to break; it's easy to lose."

Joachim Rønneberg died 21 October 2018 at age 99 in his home in Ålesund, Norway.

Epilogue

JOACHIM

(JOACHIM sings Finale: "Glass Boat/Fly")

EV'RYONE SKIS IN NORWAY
WE'RE BORN TO SKI
WHY DO WE SKI IN NORWAY?
TO KEEP AFLOAT
OUR DEMOCRATIC GLASS BOAT.
SKIING HAS MADE US FREE!

SOMETIMES WE FALL
BUT WE CONTINUE TO TRY
THEN WE GET UP
THAT'S WHEN WE BEGIN
TO WIN AS WE FLY FLY FLY FLY.

(If possible, a stage effect of JOACHIM ski jumping.
Music Buttons. The lights fade. End of Joachim
Rønneberg and His Platoon of Skiers Save The World.

Fred og Frihet er Ingen selvfølge/Peace and Freedom
are not self-evident.



TRANSITION FROM JOACHIM TO SUNNY MORNING

The snow melts. Sound of running water. Projections of melting snow a fill the stage and slowly one by one we hear bird calls.

The temperature in the theatre is raised a few degrees if it had been lowered in Transition 1.

Lights up on spring time in Oslo.



ON A SUNNY SPRING MORNING IN OSLO 1925

Book and Lyrics by ED WEISSMAN

(Suggested by a play by Serafín and Joaquín Álvarez Quintero
as translated by Lucretia Xavier Floyd)

CHARACTERS

SOLVI. A woman of about 70. She once was beautiful and is now handsome. She walks with a cane but is lively and aware of the world around her.

This is the musical Anne Brown would have done had she done a musical in Norway.

ERLING. A man of 70, He is impatient and unwilling to accept his limitations.

TIME: A sunny spring morning, 1925.

PLACE: A quiet park in Oslo, Norway.

In 1925, Oslo became Oslo again.
For 300 years it was Christiania
(Kristiana after the 1877 language reform)
at the command of Danish King Christian.

MUSICAL NUMBERS

1. Waiting For Spring.....Solvi
2. The Poem.....Erling, Solvi
3. Erling's Story.....Solvi
4. Solvi's Story.....Erling
5. The Stories Merge.....Erling/Solvi
6. Waiting For Spring (reprise).....Solvi

PART III: ON A SUNNY SPRING
MORNING IN OSLO.

Spring. Oslo. 1925.

Music up. The music suggests bird calls.

Lights come up on a public park. Trees are beginning to leaf out. Most flowers are buds, but a few are in bloom.

A bench at centre.

SOLVI enters. SHE is a still lovely, white-haired old lady of about seventy. She walks with a cane, but stands tall. She carries a bag of bread scraps. She looks at the trees smiles at the birds. SHE opens the bag.)

SOLVI

It's a beautiful day! I was afraid my seat would be occupied, but it's here. And so is the better weather. And ere they come! They know just when to expect me. My birds know their Solvi - the old lady bird-watcher who also feeds them.

(SHE sings "Waiting For Spring." She is looking around as she sings.)

LIFE IS CHANGING BY THE HOUR.
TINY CREATURES STIR.
WINTER STORM NOW
GENTLE SHOWER.
COLORS RISE AND BLUR.

(SHE rises, walks to the right, throws some bread crumbs.)

My old friend, the Red-backed Shrike.

SWOLLEN RIVERS START TO FLOOD.
 ALL MY BIRDS RETURN.
 WINTER SNOW MELTS
 INTO MUD,
 (She brushes mud off her shoes using the other shoe)
 YET I SIT AND YEARN.

EVEN THOUGH ALL NATURE KNOWS
 WHAT EACH DAY WILL BRING
 I KEEP WATCHING AS LIFE GROWS
 FOR I'M STILL WAITING FOR SPRING.

(Returning to her seat and watches, and laughs. At the name of each bird, bird calls are echoed by the orchestra as the music reflects all the birds.)

There, the rose finch! I know him well. Now one, now another, now three ... an entire Charm of rose finches. I believe this one would eat from my hand. That Icterine warbler takes his piece and flies up to his own branch, surveys his realm. He is a true politician, he sings everybody else's songs. New ones arrive - Hazel Grouses, the Nutcrackers and, yes, a Wryneck. Ha, ha! Don't quarrel. There is enough for all. I'll bring more tomorrow.

SWOLLEN RIVERS START TO FLOOD
 ALL MY BIRDS RETURN
 WINTER SNOW MELTS
 INTO MUD
 YET I SIT AND YEARN

EVEN THOUGH ALL NATURE KNOWS
 WHAT EACH DAY WILL BRING
 I KEEP WATCHING AS LIFE GROWS
 FOR I'M STILL WAITING FOR SPRING

I'M STILL WAITING WAITING FOR SPRING.

(End of Song.
 ERLING harrumphs in from the left centre. Erling is an old man. He is impatient. HE drags his feet.)

ERLING
 Students, students idling their time away, they should be at school, but there's hope of them leaving.
 (HE stamps his feet.)

That bench over there is mine!

(HE walks to Solvi's bench and sits down.)

SOLVI

(Indignantly.)

Look out!

ERLING

Are you speaking to me?

SOLVI

Yes, to you.

ERLING

What do you wish?

SOLVI

You have scared away the birds who were eating my crumbs. They're up in the trees and they are very angry with you.

ERLING

What do I care about the birds?

SOLVI

Well, I do.

ERLING

This is a public park.

SOLVI

Yes, a park for birds and trees and flowers as well as people.

ERLING

We have not met. I cannot imagine why you take the liberty of addressing me. I see an empty bench over there... Oh.

(HE stands and is about to walk. He shakes his head.)

That bench is stolen now too.

SOLVI

(To the birds.)

Why must old people get so fussy and cross?

ERLING

(HE sits down.)

The authorities should place more benches here for these sunny mornings. Well, I suppose I must resign myself and sit on the bench with the old lady.

(Muttering to HIMSELF. HE sits at the extreme end of Solvi's bench and looks at her indignantly. He touches his hat as he greets her.)

God morgen, damen min.

SOLVI

What, you are still here?

ERLING

I repeat that we have not met.

SOLVI

I was responding to your salute.

ERLING

"God morgen" should be answered by "god morgen," that is all you should have said.

SOLVI

You should have asked permission to occupy this bench, which is mine, herren min.

ERLING

The benches here are public property.

SOLVI

Why, you just said the one the students have was yours.

ERLING

Very well, very well. I have nothing more to say.

(Between his teeth.)

Senile old lady! She ought to be at home knitting.

SOLVI

Don't grumble any more. I'm not going to leave just to please you, herren min.

ERLING

(Brushing the dust from his shoes with his handkerchief.)

If the ground were sprinkled a little it would be an improvement.

SOLVI

Do you use your handkerchief as a shoe brush?

ERLING

Why not?

SOLVI

Do you use a shoe brush as a handkerchief?

ERLING

What right have you to criticize my actions?

SOLVI

A neighbor's right

ERLING

I do not care to listen to nonsense. I have never listened to nonsense. And I've always made that very clear. Very clear. Now, I will read.

SOLVI

You are very polite.

ERLING

Pardon me, *damen min*, but please mind your own business.

SOLVI

I generally say what I think.

ERLING

And, so very much more. I'm reading now.

(ERLING, casting indignant glances at Solvi, takes a pair of glasses with bottle-thick lenses from his pocket, adjusts them, and takes a book from another pocket and opens it.)

SOLVI

(To the Birds.)

I thought he was taking out a telescope.

ERLING

Did you say something?

SOLVI
Your sight must be keen.

ERLING
Keener than yours is.

SOLVI
Yes, evidently.

ERLING
Ask the grouse and ducks.

SOLVI
Ah! You hunt.

ERLING
I did, and even now —

SOLVI
Oh yes, of course, herren min.

ERLING
Yes, every Sunday I take my gun and dog and go to my hytte and kill time.

SOLVI
Yes, kill time. Exactly!

ERLING
Do you think so? I could show you a wild boar's head in my study.

SOLVI
They are easily purchased to fill the walls just as one can easily purchase shelves of books.
(SHE pauses, recalibrates.)
I thought you'd have something more beautiful and meaningful to you on your walls.

ERLING
Very well, damen min, please allow me to read. Enough conversation.

SOLVI
Well, you subside, then.

ERLING

(Takes out a small box out of a bag and opens it.)
But first I shall take a piece of chocolate. Will you have a
chocolate?

(Offers the box to Solvi.)

SOLVI

Do you often proffer chocolate to a stranger?

ERLING

It is from Freiabutikken on Karl Johans Gate [fry ah boo teek en
Karl Yohan gahtuh], they are the best. You will like it.

SOLVI

(taking a piece).
Ahhhh.

ERLING

Ahhh.

SOLVI

We both like it.

ERLING

Yes, we finally agree.

SOLVI

What a coincidence!

(THEY reach for another piece at the same time.)

ERLING

There, I feel better.

SOLVI

So do I. Chocolate brings peace. Together, we can feel as well
as taste the richness of the chocolate

ERLING

You will excuse me if I read aloud?

SOLVI

Read as loud as you please; you will not disturb me.

ERLING

(Reading, He sings "The Poem." The Poem is set to romantic operetta-like music.)
 "ALL LOVE IS SAD, BUT SAD AS IT IS,
 IT IS THE BEST THING THAT WE KNOW."

SOLVI

Who wrote that? Doesn't sound like Ibsen.

ERLING

(Reading and singing.)
 "THE DAUGHTERS OF THE MOTHERS I ONCE LOVED
 KISS ME NOW AS THEY WOULD A GRAVEN IMAGE."

Those lines, I take it, are in a humorous vein.

SOLVI

(laughing.)
 Certainly not Ibsen!

ERLING

There are some beautiful poems in this old book of European poetry from my student days. Here.
 (HE hands HER the book and sings)
 "TWENTY YEARS PASS. HE RETURNS."

SOLVI

You cannot imagine how it affects me to see you reading with all that glass between your eyes and the book.

ERLING

Can you read without any?

SOLVI

Certainly.

ERLING

At your age? You're jesting.

SOLVI

Pass me the book.
 (Takes the book, sings aloud but doesn't quite look at the pages.)
 "TWENTY YEARS PASS. HE RETURNS.
 AND EACH, BEHOLDING THE OTHER, EXCLAIMS—
 CAN IT BE THAT THIS IS HE?"

HEAVENS, IS IT SHE?"

(SOLVI returns the book to Erling and winks at the birds.)

ERLING

Indeed, Yes. I envy your wonderful eyesight.

SOLVI

It is gift.

(To the birds.)

My memory.

ERLING

I am very fond of good verses. I even composed some when I was young.

SOLVI

Good ones?

ERLING

Not really. But nothing like Ibsen; his are as cold as Norway. I actually met him when he was in Kristiansund, the town of my birth.

SOLVI

You did? You were?

ERLING

Yes, I was indeed born. I didn't leave until I was in my twenties. Have you ever visited that city?

SOLVI

Yes, herren min. I spent several summers there. At a Villa. Let me see ... Yes, Villa Tahiti.

ERLING

(startled.)

Villa Tahiti?

SOLVI

Villa Tahiti!! Is the name familiar to you?

ERLING

Yes, very familiar. If my memory serves me right, for we forget

as we grow old, the most beautiful woman I have ever seen lived in the villa, and I assure you I have seen many. Let me see. What was her name? Sylvi? Solvi? Solvi!

SOLVI

(Startled.)

Solvi?

ERLING

Yes.

(THEY look at each other intently.)

SOLVI

(recovering.)

Nothing. I am reminded of a friend from there.

ERLING

How strange!

SOLVI

It is strange. She was called "The Lady of The Sea."

ERLING

Precisely, "The Lady of the Sea." She was well known. I seem to see her as if she were here with me now, looking out the window with the red roses. Do you remember that window?

SOLVI

Yes, I remember. It was the window in her room.

ERLING

She spent many hours there. I mean in my day.

SOLVI

(sighing.)

And in mine, too.

ERLING

She seemed to cast a radiance wherever she was. Her figure was beautiful, perfect. "What forms of sovereign beauty God models in human clay!" She was a dream.

SOLVI

Dreams can become nightmares. She was very unfortunate and had a sad love affair.

ERLING

Very sad.

(THEY look at each other.)

SOLVI

Did you hear of it?

ERLING

Yes.

SOLVI

What a coincidence.

(To Erling)

The gallant lover. But then the fathers...

ERLING

Precisely, though it was more her father. He wanted her to marry within her class. Her lover was my cousin.

SOLVI

Oh yes, a cousin! A mutual friend told me in one of her letters the story of that affair, which was truly romantic. He, your cousin, passed by on horseback every morning down the path under her window, and tossed up to her balcony a bouquet of flowers which she caught. As he did so, he'd say "I love you."

ERLING

And later in the afternoon, the gallant horseman would return by the same path, and catch the bouquet of flowers she would toss him. And she did so, she'd say "I think highly of you as well." Am I right?

SOLVI

Yes. Her father and mother wanted to marry her to some wealthy officer whom she would not have.

ERLING

And one night, when my cousin waited under her window to hear her sing, this "officer" presented himself unexpectedly.

SOLVI

And insulted your cousin.

ERLING

There was a quarrel.

SOLVI

And threats.

ERLING

And then the duel.

SOLVI

Of course, the duel. What is a romance without a duel? And a duel with a Norwegian Army officer

ERLING

Yes, on the next very day he left, and he never came back.

SOLVI

You seem to know the story well.

ERLING

And so do you.

SOLVI

I have explained that a mutual friend repeated it to me.

ERLING

As my cousin did to me.

SOLVI

Those two lovers so loved the poem you just read. What irony!

ERLING

Your friend was full of so many details.

SOLVI

It seems as if he decided to forget Solvi.

ERLING

He did not. As I was told.

SOLVI

How do you account, then, for his conduct?

ERLING

I will tell you. The young man went to Christiana as the Danes renamed it. Finally, just this year, it is Oslo again after centuries.

SOLVI

Yes,, bit by bit, we were taking back our country. Do you know any more of the adventure? Please feel free to be unfettered in your cousin's reports.

ERLING

From there he went to Stockholm. He wrote Solvi many letters, some of them in verse. But, undoubtedly, they were intercepted by her father, for she never answered at all. Erling then, in despair, believing his love lost to him forever, went to Paris and joined the the French Foreign Legion.

SOLVI

Of course the Foreign Legion. Did he die in the desert? The Sahara?

ERLING

No, he got rich.

(Solvi's song interweaves this scene)

SOLVI

WELL, ISN'T THAT GRAND
A FORTUNE UNPLANNED
NOT DEAD IN THE SAND

ERLING

But he only thought of Solvi

SOLVI

And so he lived happily ever after?

ERLING

He was in the San Francisco earthquake.

SOLVI

So he died.

ERLING

No, he made a fortune when the city was rebuilt.

SOLVI
SO WIDE AWAKE
A FORTUNE TO MAKE
NOT DEAD IN THE QUAKE

ERLING
But he only thought of Solvi

SOLVI
And then

ERLING
He came home.

SOLVI
And there he died?

ERLING
No, He lived happily and prosperously but never forgetting
Solvi.

SOLVI
Then what happened?

ERLING
He decided to make more money by going to Argentina. It was
quite the rage at the time.

SOLVI
There he died?

ERLING
No.

SOLVI
ARGENTINA WAS BOOMING
HIS FORTUNE WAS ZOOMING
AND DEATH WASN'T LOOMING

ERLING
He came back home richer. I won't bother you with his adventures
in Panama and Peru. Or, New Zealand, New Caledonia and Nova
Scotia.

SOLVI
Oh bother with those details.

ERLING

I wish I could, but my cousin never told me.

(SOLVI sums it up partly to Erling and partly to the birds.)

SOLVI

SO HIS AFRICAN STINT
LED TO MAKING A MINT
AND A ROUND-THE-WORLD SPRINT
YOU SHOULD PUT THAT IN PRINT
THOUGH I HEAR MORE THAN A HINT
OF IBSEN'S PEER GYNT.

BUT JUST LOOKING AT YOU
TELLS ME IT'S TRUE.

(To the birds)

ERLING'S OUT OF HIS LEAGUE
WATCH HIM ZAG AND THEN ZIG
HIS LIES GROW AS BIG
AS A CRESCENDO BY GRIEG.

SOLVI

So he's alive then. Or at least he didn't die there! Did he die back in Europe?

ERLING

Neither in Europe nor any America.

SOLVI

Where, Asia, Africa, Australia?

ERLING

None of those places.

SOLVI

So he's alive.

ERLING

He was returning to America and sailed on the Titanic.

SOLVI

He drowned?

ERLING

Of course. What did you expect! Until the very end, my cousin never forgot her! And as he went under he whispered her name "Solvi, Solvi, So..glug, glug, glug."

(The next two comments overlap)

SOLVI

How did you learn this?

ERLING

You may well ask me how I know.

ERLING, SOLVI

Molly Brown.

ERLING

Molly Brown, Yes, my cousin told her his sad tale as he succumbed in that famous transportation accident.

SOLVI

Titanic! Without Molly Brown! Unthinkable!

ERLING

Yes, indeed, damen min. Molly told me so in her kind letter. I presume, though, on the contrary, that Solvi, a short time after the duel, was chasing butterflies in the garden, indifferent to regret.

SOLVI

No, no!

ERLING

It is woman's way.

SOLVI

Even if it were woman's way, "The Lady of the Sea" did not share that propensity. My friend wrote that Solvi awaited news for days, months, a year, and no letter came. One afternoon, just at sunset, as the first stars were appearing, she left the house for the first time. After that, she was seen to leave the house every day, and with quickening steps, wend her way toward the beach. She wrote his name in the sand and watered it with her tears.

(As Solvi describes Solvi on the beach and writing Erling in the sand. HE sings interior but is plainly emoting hoping she will think the story is moving him.)

ERLING

SHE WROTE MY NAME IN THE SAND
I WISH IT WERE TRUE
SHE WROTE MY NAME IN THE SAND.
BUT WHAT CAN I DO?

WHAT A STORY TO INVENT
WHAT A MOVING WAY TO GO
BUT WHAT IS HER INTENT?
IT'S BECAUSE SHE DOESN'T KNOW
SHE'S STILL BEAUTIFUL
SHE'S STILL SO BEAUTIFUL
THE LADY OF THE SEA

SOLVI

She shovelled snow off the sand in winter.

ERLING

She shovelled ... snow.

SOLVI

Yes, snow and she was undeterred by hurricanes. Finally, her tears froze his name into concrete. She was free to leave.

ERLING

MY LADY OF THE SEA.
SHE CAN'T THINK I BELIEVE
THAT TALE SHE INVENTS
AND WANTS ME TO GRIEVE
BUT I'VE GOT COMMON SENSE
OH, THE LADY OF THE SEA

FOR HER
MATCHING HER LIES WITH MINE
OH, IF I HAD THE SPINE
I'D SAY IT'S ME IT'S ME IT'S ME
MY LADY OF THE SEA

I COULD SAY "YOU STILL LOOK LIKE YOU"

I COULD SAY "MY LADY OF SEA"
 BUT WHERE WOULD I BE?
 SHE'D NEVER EVER EVER SEE
 BECAUSE I NO LONGER LOOK LIKE
 NO LONGER SOUND LIKE
 NO LONGER FEEL LIKE
 THAT MAN WHO ONCE WAS ME.

HOW DARE SHE STILL BE BEAUTIFUL
 BECAUSE THERE IS NOTHING I CAN DO
 WHEN THE MAN WHOM SHE ONCE KNEW
 IS NO LONGER
 THAT MAN HER MIND CAN SEE
 IS THE MAN WHO'S NO LONGER ME
 DESPITE ALL MY LONGING
 THAT MAN IS NO LONGER ME
 I'M NO LONGER ME

SOLVI

She had done her work. She sat down on a rock, her gaze fixed upon the horizon. The waves murmured their eternal song and slowly crept up to her rock. The tide rose and she walked out into a surprisingly warm sea.

ERLING

(As SOLVI finishes her story.)

SHE NOW SAYS SHE WAS WASHED OUT TO SEA
 AND SHE'S STILL BEAUTIFUL.
 I SOULD BE THE ONE WASHED OUT TO SEA
 BECAUSE THE ERLING I ONCE WAS IS NO LONGER ME.

(Song ends. ERLING is now fully present.)

Good heavens!

SOLVI

The fishermen of that shore still tell the story, it was decades before the waves eroded the concreted Erling. A worthy ending for an ending on the Titanic

ERLING

Who'd have dreamed that the poem we loved because it was romantic and sad, would actually come true.

SOLVI

Poor Solvi!

ERLING

Poor Erling!

SOLVI

Well at least they were finally reunited! Think of it, it's quite romantic!

ERLING

Reunited? Romantic? ... Ah!

BOTH

Of course, of course.

ROMANTIC
ROMANTIC
OH SO ROMANTIC
REUNITED
REUNITED
REUNITED
IN
THE
ATLANTIC.

SOLVI

(To the birds.)

I will not tell him that I married a skier two years later. But he's the one I remember.

ERLING

(To his book.)

In three months, I ran off to Copenhagen with a soprano from the Royal Danish Opera. But she's the one I remember.

SOLVI

Fate is curious. Here are you and I, complete strangers, meeting by chance, discussing the romance of old friends! We have been conversing as if we were old friends.

ERLING

Yes, it is curious, considering the ill-natured prelude to our conversation.

SOLVI

You scared away my birds.

ERLING

I was unreasonable, perhaps.

SOLVI

Yes, that was evident.

(Sweetly.)

Are you coming again tomorrow?

ERLING

Most certainly, if it is a sunny morning. And not only will I not scare away the birds, but I will bring a few crumbs.

SOLVI

Thank you very much. Birds are grateful and repay attention.

(SHE looks up and off to the birds.)

ERLING

(Looking at Solvi, while her back is turned, but to himself.)

No, no, Better that she recall the gallant horseman who passed daily beneath her window tossing flowers.

SOLVI

(To "her" birds.)

No, I am too sadly changed. It is better he should remember me as the blue-eyed girl tossing flowers.

ERLING

This has been a great honor and a great pleasure, *damen min..*

SOLVI

It has also been a pleasure to me.

ERLING

Good-bye until tomorrow.

SOLVI

Until tomorrow, *herren min.*

ERLING

If it is sunny.

SOLVI

Of course, only if it is a sunny morning. Will you go to your bench?

ERLING

No, I will come to this one if you do not object?

SOLVI

This bench is at your disposal.

ERLING

And I will remember to bring the crumbs.

SOLVI

Tomorrow, then?

ERLING

Tomorrow!

[SOLVI walks away right. ERLING, trembling, is exiting left. SOLVI turns her head toward HIM.]

ERLING

Wait!

(HE pauses as if to say something something more, but resumes walking.)

SOLVI

Yes, herren min.

ERLING

Damen min.

[HE bows. SOLVI waves goodbye. The music swells. THEY smile once more, exiting and suddenly as THEY walk off in the the different directions as THEY look like the young lovers they once were. ERLING exits first. Solvi remains as the trees leaf out and the flowers burst into bloom and, maybe, we see birds, for the first time, on the branches.)

SOLVI

(SHE sings the tag for "Waiting For Spring.")

IT'S FINALLY SPRING.

(SHE jumps a bit and exits almost running as the young girl she once was as the music builds to its finish. Lights down.)

(During the bows, the ACTOR PLAYING ERLING picks a bouquet which he gives to the ACTOR PLAYING SOLVI who shakes a finger at him as if admonishing a bad boy.)

END OF PLAY