***Losing Her Voice***

**Composer & Librettist: Elizabeth Kelly**

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**Act One**

**Scene One: *Carmen*, the Opera**

New York, late 1800s

The curtain opens to reveal the orchestra and a screen on an otherwise darkened stage.

The following intertitles come up in response to musical cues.

**Intertitles:**

**Card 1**

The Metropolitan Opera House

New York, late 1800s

**Card 2**

Less than five years after a group of wealthy industrialists founded the

Metropolitan Opera Company

to compete with the Academy of Music,

**Card 3:**

the prestigious opera house of New York’s ‘old money’ elites,

who had rejected all of their membership requests….

**Card 4:**

the Academy of Music folded.

**Card 5:**

However, the Metropolitan Opera was running at a deficit.

**Card 6:**

A visionary music director came in to bring the Company into the black.

**Card 7:**

The solution: a switch from Italian opera to German!

**Card 8:**

The (cheaper) German singers sang both German opera old (Beethoven) and new (Wagner) and German-language versions of French & Italian works

**Card 9:**

including a German-language version of a French opera that had already become a proving ground for divas in the decade since its premiere….

The music shifts to iconic ‘Habanera’ accompaniment

**LILLI LEHMANN** enters from behind screen. She is ‘Carmen’. The two **Gentlemen of the Press** take seats on stage left and right, watching her, surrounded by chorus who are also spectators. **Geraldine** is already seated in the front row.

**Lilli**

(With poignant dignity)

Liebe ist ein rebellischer Vogel

Nichts kann es zähmen

Und es ist sinnlos wenn man es ruft

Wenn er sich weigere….

Liebe! (in counterpoint with press)

**Press Gentleman 1**

Bizet’s charming opera was new in its German dress.

**Press Gentleman 2**

Our new ‘Carmen’, Fraulein Lilli Lehmann, did much to impress.

**Lilli** (reversed music)

Die Liebe ist ein Kind der Bohême

Es kannte nie, nie Gesetze

Wenn du mich nicht liebst, liebe ich dich

Wenn ich dich liebe, nehm' dich in Acht !

**Chorus**

A glorious voice!

**Gent 1**

She is the leading European prima donna we have heard

**Chorus**

A true artist!

**Gent 2**

She sings with ease; her high notes are electrifying….

**Gent 1**

Powerful and ringing… (modulating)

**Lilli** (in slow counterpoint)

Die Liebe ist ein Kind der Boheme

**Gent 2**

To the eye she was a somewhat.. matronly gipsy

**Gent 1**

With her very tall stature and almost… military bearing,

**Gent 2**

Her comely countenance but severe expression…

**Gents 1 & 2 Together**

Frau Lehmann was a most dignified Carmen

She moved even the most critical listeners… to approbation.

**Scene Two: The Lesson**

As the last note of Scene 1 rings out, **Geraldine** jumps to her feet and applauds. All lights go out except for a spotlight on Geraldine. All others clear stage. A spotlight goes up on **Lilli** by the piano on stage left.

On the screen, an intertitle flashes:

**Berlin, 1903**

**Lilli**

(She gestures impatiently at Geraldine.)

Miss Farrar, my dear Geraldine, it is time to start.

**Gerry**

(Gerry joins Lilli at the piano.)

Thank you for seeing me, Frau Lehmann.

**Lilli**

No student has ever made such an effort to see me, coming all the way from Melrose, Massachusetts… in America, sending nearly daily letters, including an introduction from Dame Melba herself.

**Gerry**

It is an honor to work with someone who created roles for Herr Wagner. It is my dream to sing Elizabeth in Tannhauser.

**Lilli**

How old are you, child?

**Gerry**

19.

**Lilli**

You will need a few years and a bit more meat for Elizabeth…. What will you sing now?

**Gerry**

‘Habanera’ from ‘Carmen. In French. I apologize, I do not yet sing in German.

**Lilli**

Proceed.

**Gerry**

(Coquettishly)

L’amour est un oiseau rebelle….

**Lilli**

HALT! You are not…completely… without talent, but that is an unmusical phrase. Why don’t you sing it so?

(Lilli demonstrates with smooth technical perfection)

L’amour est un oiseau rebelle…

Now try it again….

**Gerry**

(sings the phrase again, but she cannot control her need to move & emote)

L’amour est un oiseau rebelle…

**Lilli**

That is not how I sang it! Do not act your lessons!

**Gerry**

Frau Lehmann, I am sorry but I must sing as I feel. The color must change as I change. I am not being obstinate, just… truthful…to myself.

**Lilli**

(after a pause, bemused)

You are a strange child, but… you may just find your way.

Still, before you ‘feel’ the music, you must be able to ‘sing’ the music… properly. You strain your voice singing as you do.

**Gerry**

Yes, I do sometimes sound like…a cricket…

**Lilli**

It is time, my child, to really learn…how to sing…

(She pulls a mirror in front of Geraldine.)

Your body is the instrument

which you must learn to play…

Your muscles are the strings,

which you must learn to tune

Mastering your instrument, my child

Is the greatest challenge you will face

But it is your responsibility

To serve ideal art…for the human race.

You are a singer, not a scientist, my dear

But you must understand your sensations

You have to learn how a good tone feels

And be able to replicate it.

This will take time, Geraldine

True art cannot be learned by steam

You must commit yourself

To discipline and daily practice.

Before you can sing, you must breathe

Most singers waste their air

The perfect tone soars on whirling currents you must prepare

With thoughtful coordination of diaphragm and larynx

(She demonstrates breathing and Geraldine imitates.)

Once you have learned to breathe,

It will be time to think of pitch

The key will be a magical exercise taught to me

By my mother when I could barely speak

It does wonders for equalizing the tone

Through your entire range

I speak of course of the Great Scale

Sung slowly on all the vowels

(She demonstrates Great Scale & Geraldine imitates.)

(Interjection:) Prepare your lowest note with enough breath to support the highest! (p. 97)

If you practice the Great Scale every day,

You will eventually be ready for vocal gymnastics

(She sings coloratura passagework….)

And once you control your technique

It will be time to consider … expression.

I speak of expression and not your feelings

Because the true artist thinks not of herself

But the role….With every aspect of her performance serving

her conception of the work as a whole

This, my child, is how an artist embodies a masterpiece

And you will find that often the most economic gesture,

Exaggerated...

Communicates the best to a full hall.

(She demonstrates melodramatic gestures. Geraldine imitates but appears unsure.)

Stop wriggling, child! It is as if you have 110 digits!

Use less of your body and more of your VOICE!

(Frustrated, Lilli ties Geraldine’s hands behind her back.)

That will have to wait….

One last piece of advice…

A good singer can never lose her voice

But she can squander it

You need not be a nun, my child

But you must embrace sobriety.

No heavy food, meats or champagne

Keep warm and above all

No sitting and talking in restaurants

Early to bed and early to rise is best for the voice …and the soul.

Your body is the instrument

which you must learn to play…

Your muscles are the strings,

which you must learn to tune

Mastering your instrument, my child

Is the greatest challenge you will face

But if you apply yourself to your practice,

You will sing forever …by God’s grace!

**Gerry**

I don’t want to sing forever. Who wants to pay to see an old Carmen?

**Lilli**

(laughs)

You are still young.

Now try ‘Habanera’ again.

**Gerry**

(looks in mirror with Lilli behind her, sings stiffly but with beautiful vocal control)

L’amour est un oiseau rebelle

Frau Lehmann, how did I sing?

**Lilli**

My dear, you are an impudent girl…with some promise… if you are willing to work.

(She unties Gerry’s hands.)

Now go home and practice.

Gerry walks to the door.

And remember, no restaurants!

**Gerry**

Auf wiedersehen, Frau Lehmann!

**Scene Three: Practice Aria**

**Geraldine** stands in front of a mirror center stage with a spotlight. She practices the Great Scale.

As she begins to sing the scale, the **Female Chorus** surround her with their own mirrors. Light reflects off all the mirrors.

Throughout this aria, the chorus accompanies Geraldine, singing fragments & variations of the ‘Great Scale’.

There is an open window frame looking in on Geraldine.

**Gerry**

I see myself in the mirror

From the outside in

But if I am to sing, I know

It must come from within

I am not afraid to work

I will practice every day

But to be a true artist

My spirit must flow freely

Through me

I may not have the best voice

Of all the girls who dream

Of greatness on the stage

But I do have something else

I am not afraid to act the drama

Or to give all of myself

While others dream of marriage

I know what I want

I do not want children

I just want to sing

I am not afraid to fight

I know that I am worthy…

One day I will be your diva

And sing from the inside out

**Female Chorus**

I will be a star… I will travel near and far… I will be a diva….

The **Crown Prince** enters and stands looking at Geraldine through the windowframe.

**Geraldine** starts to practice passage from ‘Carmen’ in front of mirror. She first tries to sing with a stiff gesture like the ones that Lilli demonstrated, but quickly abandons stiffness for her own more fluid & unrestricted style of movement. As she ends her singing with a flourish, the

**Crown Prince** applauds.

**Prince**

(applauding)

Brava!

**Geraldine** stares at the Crown Prince, startled.

**Prince**

What an entrancing voice!

You must sing for us at the palace.

Wear your finest royal lavender or black.

**Gerry**

I shall be delighted to sing!

In white.

The **Prince** laughs and nods.

**Scene Four: Gossip Chorus**

In this scene, the **Female Chorus** are jealous gossips. The **Male Chorus** are libelous press.

**Female Chorus**

(stage whisper)

Who’s there? Who is it? Who is it?....

It’s the Crown Prince,

The Crown Prince…

The Crown Prince of Germany …

heard Miss Farrar

The Crown Prince

He saw her

Miss Farrar

(The Crown Prince takes Geraldine’s hand through the window.)

The Crown Prince of Germany … touched Miss Farrar

The Crown Prince

He touched her

Miss Farrar

(The Crown Prince kisses Geraldine’s hand through the window.)

The Crown Prince of Germany KISSED Miss Farrar!

The Crown Prince of Germany KISSED Miss Farrar!

The Crown Prince of Germany KISSED Miss Farrar!

(Through the course of the next section, Geraldine puts on white gloves, walks over to a pedestal where she prepares to sing as the Crown Prince is seated and watches her with rapt attention.)

**Male Chorus** (entering stage as PRESS)

This just In!

**Female Chorus**

WHAT?

**Male Chorus**

German Prince Loves Melrose Girl

**Female Chorus**

WHO?

**Male Chorus**

He invited her to sing at the palace

The German Prima Donnas are jealous and… caustic

**Male Chorus**

Breaking News!

**Female Chorus**

Yes?

**Male Chorus**

Despite her successful Berlin debut

American subjected to constant abuse

**Female Chorus**

Who does this woman think she is?

She can’t just come and steal our Crown Prince…

She can’t swoop in and take the throne

I suggest a boycott of all her shows.

**Male Chorus**

Breaking News

**Female Chorus**

What?

**Male Chorus**

Read all about it!

The Crown Prince of Germany

The Crown Prince of Germany

The Crown Prince of Germany

WILL PROPOSE to Miss Farrar!

**Female Chorus**

No, that can’t be true!

Is there a baby on the way? (gasp)

**Male Chorus**

Her father punched a reporter in the face!

No doubt ashamed of his daughter’s disgrace…

**Female Chorus**

I heard Frau Lehmann hid the child

These Americans are really quite unrefined & wild

**Lone Male Chorister**

She IS a great dramatic actress

Though all do not find her voice attractive

**Male Chorus**

Breaking News, This Just In

**Female Chorus**

WHAT?

**Male Chorus**

The Crown Prince of Germany

**Female Chorus**

YES?

**Male Chorus**

The Crown Prince of Germany

The Crown Prince of Germany

The Crown Prince of Germany Has Invited

Miss Farrar to Sing

At the Royal HofOper in Berlin!

**Full Chorus**

(Eruption of Voices)

You can’t be serious, what a scandal!

Have you heard her? Is it true?

**Geraldine** sings a vocal flourish, which silences the choir. All look at her in wonder.

This segues directly into the next scene.

**Scene Five: Royal Love Duet**

As the choir watches, **Gerry** and the **Crown Prince** sing to each other.

**Prince**

She first ensnared me

With her voluptuous siren song

Like a wayward sailor, I couldn’t resist

The sweet caress of her tone.

Her smile enchants me

Her gorgeous eyes enthrall

Even from a distance

Her expression pierces my very soul

(The Prince hands Gerry a CONTRACT.)

Miss Farrar?

**Gerry**

My Grace?

**Prince**

On behalf of the German people,

Please sing for us

At the Berlin Opera?

**Gerry**

Yes!

(Gerry sings the following from her pedestal, addressing the audience directly.)

His gaze ignites me

Melting away my fears

Like the royal jewels he gave me,

he elevates this New England girl.

I thrill when I see

The mischievious glint in his eye

His radiant smile engulfs me….

He is my prince

**Prince**

She is my star

**Gerry**

Lighting a path through the darkness

**Prince**

Glowing from afar

**Gerry & Prince**

Is this how it feels when you finally….

(The Prince gets down on one knee and holds out ring.)

**Prince**

Find the One?

**Gerry**

Oh, my darling!

**Prince**

Yes?

**Gerry**

No….

I swore I would be true to my dream

I must follow where this voice leads….

(The Prince puts the ring back, stands up and extends a hand to Geraldine)

**Gerry**

Thank you for being my first champion

**Prince**

Thank you for being my first love

(Gerry returns to the pedestal and accompanies choir with vocalises. The Prince watches.)

**Female Chorus**

She really is a tremendous talent

I always knew that she was innocent

**Male Chorus**

Really a beautiful voice

And a dramatic tour de force!

(One of the choristers brings Gerry a letter. She opens it and smiles jubilantly for a moment. After a moment, the smile fades and she walks over to the prince.)

**Gerry**

Your Grace?

**Prince**

Yes, my darling?

**Gerry**

I have been offered a contract by the Metropolitan Opera in New York,

But I won’t take it before our contract runs its course.

**Prince**

No.

(He tears up original CONTRACT.)

You must go.

It was a privilege to have you in Berlin

Please come back in the summers and sing

**Gerry & Prince**

Is this how it feels when you finally seize your destiny?

**Gerry**

(tearful)

Thank you for being my first champion

**Prince**

Farewell, my first love

**Female Chorus** (to Great Scale melody)

The New York Metropolitan, The New York Metropolitan

It is time, she must say goodbye

It is her time to go home and shine.

**Scene Six: Press Confrontation**

**Baritone as Gentleman of the Press with Male Chorus as Press**

Did you ever love the Crown Prince? REALLY?

Do you even know how to love? REALLY?

Sure, he loved you that’s clear

But was he more than a boost for your career?

Lovely, Erotic, Exotic, Toxic,

Forget Carmen,

You were the most vicious femme fatale

Of all, we fear…

Let’s check the record

The Prince was just the first

Of a long line of men

You used to ascend

Who loved you before seeing

You are CURSED

Let’s start at the Metropolitan

Where you became America’s first homegrown star

But would you honestly be where you are

Without the support

of a cast of leading men?

There was gossip unconfirmed of course

About you and baritone Scotti

Then there was your favorite Don Jose

Caruso, leading tenor of the day

These rumors may have been grist for the mill

But these men certainly raised your prestige

And there is no doubt at all

That you proved a bitter pill

For the man who helped you the most of all

Gerry, what about Toscanini?

Your conductor truly loved you…

He gave you seven years of his life

Barely even spared a night for his wife

With his deft technique

He helped you to soar

When you cast him aside,

He couldn’t take it in stride

He resigned, which leaves us wondering…

Did you ever love the Crown Prince? REALLY?

Did you love any of them? REALLY?

They could not resist you that’s clear,

But were they more than a boost for your career?

Really? Truly? Sincerely?

**Gerry & Female Chorus**

Stop!

**Male Chorus**

We think not!

**Gerry**

Really, do you think that any of those men

Honestly, truly sincerely loved me?

I was not defined by these men

If anything, I would say I helped them….

**Male Chorus**

We think not!

**Female Chorus**

Gerry is innocent!

**Scene Seven: Gaining & Losing Her Voice**

**Gerry**

Look, I understand

That sometimes to play a role

The public must believe

That I am the character

But if I may be so bold…

Royal intrigue

Storybook romance

Femme fatale

All certainly have the power to entrance

My own stories were a bit more prosaic

Sure, the Crown Prince was a dear friend and patron

He gave my start but it was I who won public adoration with my art

Our puppy love wasn’t meant to endure

He married a duchess

I returned to the New World,

I did stand by him through TWO WORLD WARS

Scotti and Caruso were treasured colleagues and chums

As artists, we had quite a run

But let me be very clear

Despite what you hear

Caruso had to give up top billing for for MY Met premiere

And dear old Toscanini only came on board

After I had already scored

Thousands of fans screaming my name

Sold out houses and critics’ acclaim

I was the star who they paid to see

I was the artist of greater fame

Over seven years, I gave him every chance

He told me he loved me and yes, there was romance

But this New England girl couldn’t wait forever

I am no man’s mistress, I am diva!

**Female Chorus**

You were our star!

**Gerry**

I sang for the women

In domestic drudgery

I never had Frau Lehmann’s penchant for vocal gymnastics

But I worked, nothing could stop me.

**Female Chorus**

She sang for us!

**Gerry**

I was not afraid to find my own way

I may not have had the best voice

But I mastered my instrument

And I had this face

I never indulged, kept this figure in shape

And when it came to drama I was unafraid….

**Female Chorus**

Oh, could she act!

**Gerry**

I lived for the stage

To perform is electric

I love to tell stories…

And oh, the roles I created!

I played every imaginable woman

From Goosegirl ingenue to Madame Butterfly

I was a muse for all the greats

Massenet, Humperdinck, Strauss, Puccini

I was their dream leading lady

And perhaps my greatest triumph of all

Was Bizet’s infamous femme fatale—

(She sings a bit of vocalise from ‘Habanera’)

**Female Chorus**

<Swoon>

**Gerry**

I sang in Berlin, of course

Then I sang my way to stardom in New York

In the summers I sang in swanky Montecarlo

Frankly, there was hardly a hill or dale

An American or European city where I did not prevail

I was your diva!

**Female Chorus**

She was our star!

I sang for all you ladies

Giving a voice to all your travails

All you in the chorus

And you out there

I sang for you in every great hall I could find

But at a certain point it wasn’t enough

And I realized it was time

To find a way at the end of the show

For you to hear me inside of your home

(Gerry begins to sing vocalises from ‘Carmen’ to a microphone that is placed center stage. The Female Chorus each collect a vinyl recording and walk out to phonograph machines positioned around the audience.)

**Female Chorus**

Ah…

(They imitate the vocalises from ‘Carmen’. )

As the female chorus walk over to their phonograph machines,

Gerry continues to sing with increasingly difficulty….

**Male Chorus**

Another successful debut!

Again, Miss Farrar sells out the house!

Her throngs of fans even have a name

The Gerryflappers threw Miss Farrar a parade…

(Finally, Gerry loses her voice…)

Reports are in!

Miss Farrar cannot sing!

Due to illness and overwork,

The Metropolitan’s leading diva has gone hoarse!

**Female Chorus**

She’s gone hoarse?!

She’s gone hoarse?!

**Male Chorus**

The rumors are true

The Metropolitan has no choice

They had to replace her mid-show

Miss Farrar has lost her voice!

**Female Chorus**

She’s lost her voice?!

(As Gerry holds her throat, her voice can be heard … from the phonograph machines….As the Female choir starts up the recordings, echoing counterpoint turns into eerie cacophony. Over this din, a telephone ring can be heard. Gerry walks over and answers.)

**Cecil B. Demille** (from offstage, amplified - speaking)

Hello, Miss Farrar I have been trying to reach you.

This is Cecil B. Demille.

I am a director in Hollywood out in California.

And I wonder if I could interest you in silent film.

(Gerry looks skeptical….)

I know you are an opera singer

But we both know you are also a great actress

This is your chance to make your mark

On a form that may just become tomorrow’s art

(Gerry considers…)

I heard you have been ill

But we would give you top billing

If you would consider playing Carmen

In a moving picture.

Oh, and of course we will pay top dollar

Ten thousand and a private train car

Your own house and staff

And a red carpet welcome from the mayor.

(Gerry is about to speak, but Cecil cuts her off.)

Don’t answer me now.

Send me a telegram.

We will film in a month

And you can get back to New York for next season.

(Gerry hangs up and considers. The Female Chorus stop the phonograph recordings one by one.)

**Lilli** (from far stage left)

Gerry?

(Gerry looks startled.)

Surely, you cannot consider this!

You are an artist!

Your voice is your gem

This is not a job for a respected diva!

You belong in opera houses playing for royals

Bettering humanity with your superlative vocals

Not the nickelodeon playing for children

This is no place for a legitimate woman

(Gerry paces in front of the mirror. The Female Chorus sings the Great Scale theme.)

**Gerry**

Frau Lehmann, I always made my own way.

I was never just a singer but also an actress…

It is time for this American diva to explore a new frontier

To see how I fare without my voice

And bring my art from stage to screen.

Gerry walks over to a writing table where she writes out the following response, which is projected on the screen:

Yes. I will play Carmen in your moving picture.

**CHOIR**

(cacophony!)

Breaking news, this just in!

Gerry will light up the silver screen!

She will star in a silent Carmen!

She has lost her voice!

(After reaching a musical climax, the stage goes black except for the words on screen. Dramatic exit music plays.)

**Act Two**

**Scene One: *Carmen*, the Film**

Hollywood, 1914

Actual opening to Carmen comes up. Instrumentalists are visible playing like a silent movie pit orchestra – highly melodramatic.

When the lights come up, **Geraldine** is on stage. Shot goes down to her actual face… Cecil stands with male chorus as cameramen & crew. Female Chorus is on stage with her for cigarette fight scene.

**Cecil** (speaking)

OK, here is the scenario…

You are in a cigarette factory

You get in a fight with the other girls

Violence and tragedy ensue

Don Jose steps in to break up the fracas

And he can’t resist your feminine wiles…

LIGHTS! CAMERA! ACTION!!

(**Gerry** enacts the cigarette fight scene with Female Chorus. The instrumentalists play dramatic music before seguing into accompaniment for Cecil.)

**Cecil** (singing in musical theatre style)

Before Gerry came to Hollywood, I admit, I was a bit… worried

In opera, a host of sins are covered by the voice’s glory.

I had coached many actors from stage to screen

And there was always an adjustment from projecting to a full hall

To the intimacy of the close-up

…You cannot lie to the camera’s eye…

But Gerry made the adjustment with no trouble at all

Her eyes were riveting with the power to enthrall.

There was always something… magical… about Gerry!

(At the end of the scene, **Lou Tellegen** walks in as Don Jose to break up the fight. There is obvious chemistry between **Lou** and **Gerry**.)

**Cecil** (speaking)

And, CUT!

Fantastic, great take, Gerry!

OK, here is the next scene

But first let me formally introduce Mr Lou Tellegen

Your leading man…

Actually, could you please get some more makeup on her? Her skin tone isn’t quite right for this light….

(A makeup man from Male Chorus powders Gerry’s face with what seems an excess of chalk. She looks a bit startled.)

Now here is the scenario:

You are Carmen

He is Don Jose

You dance and he cannot resist

The sway of those hips!

Lou and Gerry enact their seduction scene. The game begins (card…)

**Cecil** (singing)

Here was the thing about Gerry…

She was a star when Hollywood was still just a cow town

We were so thrilled to get her

Delighted to pay her more than anyone before

You have to understand

She was a star before there was a movie biz

Before Tinseltown with all its glitz

She had thousands of Gerry flapper fans

And she sang grand OPERA!

Not exactly everyone’s cup of tea, if you know what I mean…

She was no rock ‘n roll crooner

This woman became an international sensation singing Carmen!

**Cecil** (speaking)

AND SCENE! CUT!

Now it’s time for that final fight

After the bull scene for which we will get a real crowd

Possible with movie magic…

You tell him you’re leaving

He won’t take no

Here is his knife, now go!

Could we get some more makeup, please?

Great! Lights! Camera! Action!

Gerry and Lou enact death scene….

**Cecil** (singing)

And let me tell you this about Gerry

She may have been the world’s reigning diva

But all the crew knew by day two

She was Gerry, not Miss Farrar!

My God the woman was salt of the earth

A consummate professional

Early for every scene, happy to take direction

Never a complaint, even when delayed in the hot sun and dirt

We gave her our very best dressing room

She didn’t care that the previous occupant had been a quite respectable… mare

Just got to work, still practiced her scales

Never arrogant even when people couldn’t help but stare…

Unafraid to bring grand old opera to the spanking new silver screen…

There really was something …extraordinary…about Gerry.

**Cecil** (speaking)

Bravi! That’s a day.

Gerry, if I may…

I would like to get better contrast for your beautiful eyes.

Would you mind stepping into this box

So that we can work on the close-ups and find just the right light?

**Scene Two: *You Were My Ideal Love***

Lou stands, smoking a cigarette, gazing at the screen, which features loops of close-ups of Geraldine Farrar from ‘Carmen’.

**Lou**

I remember the first time I saw you

A startling vision of loveliness

In gypsy dress

I knew I had to have you

I could barely restrain myself on set

I have lived all over the world, my dear

And certainly had quite a career

From illegitimate son in Holland

To the circus, then prison in Russia

From gambler on the Riviera

To Sarah Bernhardt’s leading man in America

Darling, I was the greatest lover there ever was

And…you were….

You were my ideal love…

Better than booze or…snuff

The thrill of the gambling hall

Was really nothing at all (Build to a peak)

Compared to the feeling

I had when seizing

Your heart, my sweet

Oh, what a feat!

Sure, there were a few women before

Of course, there was my first wife

Mother of my child

But it wasn’t quite right

I mean, we would sometimes fight

And she would never let me go out at night

She was an artist but really a bore, my dear

She was happy to free me, sincerely

We both knew I was meant for another sphere

There were others, of course

I mean, look at this

It would have been cruel to deny them

I had a few trysts

I can’t help it…

Women were kind to me

But they were all really practice

So that I could claim

The greatest prize

A woman of staggering beauty and fame….

You were my ideal love…

Better than booze or…snuff

The thrill of the gambling hall

Was really nothing at all

Compared to the feeling

I had when seizing

Your heart, my sweet

Oh, what a feat!

I know you promised to never let a man

Stand in the way of your work

And those other men, what can I say

They were really… jerks

Not one of them really understood

The true art of romance

I never gave up – calls, letters, telegrams

I was always there

And finally, I knew you could not resist

The greatest gesture of all, my darling

Remember when I proposed?

The day I truly made you mine?

Miss Farrar became Mrs Tellegen

Oh, my darling – what a glorious, wondrous magical day it was!

When you were my bride.

**Chorus**

You were our ideal love

We couldn’t get enough

You made us feel

Storybook romance was real

Really so beautiful

And genteel

Leading lives that gave us chills

You were our IDEAL LOVE!

**Gerry**

Is this how you see me?

I suppose that is what I wanted you to see!

Sadly there is more to the story

Where to begin…

You were my ideal love

But that was just a ROLE you played

You made me believe

I was your queen

You followed me long after our last scene

With love letters, roses, and flattery

But, I can honestly say, looking back at what we had,

…You are a cad!

Lou- No, my darling!

I promised that I would never let a man

Keep me from living my dreams

I never thought of marriage

I knew I wanted to be free!

But then there was you

So incredibly handsome

With charm and charisma to spare

Who can blame me

For taking a chance

For God’s sake, Rodin used you as the model

For a statue of the ideal lover

You literally

Embodied ROMANCE!

And for awhile, everything was divine

It was the best of times…

We moved into a gorgeous apartment

On the best street in Manhattan…

The world was green with envy

We were the toast of every party

But too soon, cracks appeared

You were never home in the evening

I had to wake up early to practice vocalises

Then perhaps, worst of all,

I started risking my career

I insisted that you appear

In all of my silent films

Demille warned me it was a mistake

But I loved you so much I was willing to insist

That you should even get top billing,

I mean, what man can tolerate playing second fiddle

To the love of his life?

But no matter what I did,

It was never enough for you

And soon enough, there were whispers and rumours

That turned to full blown scandal

You committed adultery

With a seemingly endless stream

Of lovely young ladies

And yet when I finally

Sued for divorce

You still had the audacity to play victim for the papers

How could you? How could I?

How could I ever believe?

That an ideal love exists?

Just because of your well-practiced kiss?

How could your act take in

the world’s greatest actress?

You were my ideal love

But that was just a ROLE you played

You made me believe

I was your queen

You followed me long after our last scene

With love letters, roses, and flattery

But, I can honestly say, looking back at what we had,

…You are a…

CAD! (As she sings, the newspaper images on screen begin to distort.. and images from ‘Carmen’ film mix with headlines from their divorce.)

Get away! You are better seen and not heard…

**Cecil**

(Door knocking heard)

Gerry?

**Gerry**

Yes.

**Cecil**

(pulls outs contract)

I am sorry but your films aren’t selling like they were. Now, in your contract, we have you down for three more films but…

(Gerry tears up the contract.)

Thank you.

(Cecil leaves. A telephone is heard fings. She answers.)

**Gerry**

Yes?

**Male Chorister** (offstage - spoken)

Mrs Tellegen, er Miss Farrar, we are sorry to report. We have to cut the value of your Metropolitan Opera contract in half….

(Gerry slams the phone down. In frustration, she walks over and turns off the screen.)

**Scene Three: The Final Lesson**

**Gerry** sits in front a mirror center stage. She starts to remove her ghoulish make-up and begins to weep. Lilli appears as a ghostly apparition. The **Female Chorus** can be heard offstage singing the Great Scale theme….

**Lilli**

My child

**Gerry**

Frau Lehmann!

**Lilli**

My dear, what is it?

**Gerry**

Oh Frau Lehmann, everything is falling apart. I should have listened. Hollywood was a mistake.

**Lilli**

Geraldine, I saw you in Carmen on film…. I was wrong. You were… riveting.

**Gerry** (stunned)

Thank you.

**Lilli**

So much has changed…

The Berlin you knew is shattered

Bombs have left their scars

The opera house is in ruins

And the royals have fled abroad.

Food is rationed, we often starve

So many friends are gone

But I still have all that I need

My child, I still have my art.

The Great Scale healed me from sickness

Practice gave me my voice

And, Geraldine, it has not been easy

But I have continued to make the choice

I sing every day (leap to sing)

And when I sing, I am free

No matter what horrors I face,

The Great Scale brings me peace, serenity and grace

Now you face your own problems (Back to opening)

But my dear you have all you need

Practice the Great Scale

It is your creed

You will sing forever

Your strong spirit will prevail

And your art will lift you

From this strife

I promise you

The Great Scale

Will get you through….

**Female Choir**

Nothing else matters, No one else matters

**Lilli**

I promise you

The Great Scale

Will transport you

Will get you through….

**Gerry**

Oh my darling Frau Lehmann,

I am so sorry for your pain.

I feel so foolish for my tears…

You are so wise, art can conquer all fears

And I will do all that I can to help you.

I will send you all I can…

But…

I always knew I would not be an old Carmen….

It is time to find my next dream….

I will never give up my daily practice

But I think… it may be time to leave….

**Female Choir**

Nothing else matters, No one else matters

**Gerry**

I have loved being your diva

But it is my time

To find my next place… to shine

**Female Choir**

Nothing else matters, No one else matters

Gerry and Lilli sing vocalises of ‘Carmen’ in counterpoint.

**Gerry**

Farewell, my dearest teacher

**Lilli**

Farewell, my pupil. I am proud… of your success.

(Lilli disappears behind the screen. Gerry gathers her courage, turns the screen back on, and walks offstage. During this time, her make-up should be fixed.)

**Scene Four: Farewell!**

**The Metropolitan Opera, 1922**

**Throughout this scene, Lou is behind the screen. He is increasingly covered by social media postings. His text comes up as intertitles as he is stuck in a silent film.**

**Male Choir**

Breaking News!

This Just In!

Gerry will leave….

The Metropolitan

**Female Choir**

No!

**Male Choir**

They have shut down Broadway

No athletic team has ever had such an enormous ticker tape parade

**Female Choir**

No! I can’t bear to see her go!!!

We cannot miss her very last show…

Hurrah, Farrar! Farrar, hurrah!

**Gerry**

(cuts off with loud vocalise and swoons)

There is uproarious applause

**Female Choir**

Hurrah, Farrar! Farrar, hurrah!

(They throw flowers on stage. Gerry dons a crown a flowers.)

**Gerry**

Twenty years ago

I slaved that achievement might be mine…

That I might be a prophetess in my own country

But I never thought…

It would be like this

(uproarious applause with some tears)

I don’t want a tear shed in this house today

**Female Chorister**

I can’t help it, I’ve already wept bushels….

**Lou**

Gerry! Gerry!

(laughing)

**Gerry**

I am leaving this institution because I want to

But that does not mean farewell to you

I still have many plans

**Female Choir**

Hurrah, Farrar! Farrar, hurrah!

**Gerry**

These have been sixteen years of happiness,

Such great happiness that if I died tonight

I would not regret it

I love you all dearly,

But we are weary

And we must say goodbye.

**Female Choir**

Hurrah, Farrar! Farrar, hurrah!

**Lou (Not spoken, comes up as intertitle)**

Gerry, Gerry! Please….You can’t just ignore me….

**Full Choir**

Hurrah, Farrar! Farrar, hurrah!

**Lou (Intertitle)**

For God’s sake, won’t anyone look at me?

I don’t understand

I was your matinee idol – (He holds up clippings)

(Desperate, Lou tries to cut away social media postings with golden shears.)

**Full Choir**

Hurrah, Farrar! Farrar, hurrah!

**Lou (Intertitle)**

I am still your Lou, darling! Please, let’s have a word.

**Full Choir**

Hurrah, Farrar! Farrar, hurrah!

**Lou (Intertitle)**

I can’t stand it anymore. Damn you and damn the talkies!

(Lou points scissors towards himself. The screen goes black and a headline about his suicide comes up – ‘Former husband of Geraldine Farrar commits suicide with golden shears’)

**Scene Five: Eternity in Celluloid & Vinyl**

A phone is heard ringing offstage.

**Reporter** (spoken)

Lou Tellegen killed himself. Any comment?

**Gerry** (spoken)

Why should that interest me?

Silence.

The screen flickers back to life. It is the closing scene of ‘Carmen’ playing silently.

After about thirty seconds, an old woman hobbles out on to the stage with a cane. It is an elderly Gerry.

She takes a seat and watches.

As she sits down, a crackling recording of the opening music plays through the PA.

**Gerry** (singing through microphone with heavy reverb, facing away from audience)

I refused to be an aging Carmen

And yet here I am

Captured in the bloom of youth

In celluloid and vinyl.

(She turns around)

I sang for my public

They saw me so intimately

They brought my voice inside of their homes

But…did they ever know me?

Now I perform for you who never knew me

You hear my voice echoing across time

You see me flickering on your screens

Or at least my apparition

I live on in the stories I told

And the stories told about me

Newspapers and magazine headlines

Flash at the click of a button

Is it me who you see?

Can you hear me sing?

Years after my last Gerryflapper died…

Do I live on in my reflections?

Will I degrade

Have I decayed

Or…

Can I live on…

In my reflections?

(She walks away, singing in counterpoint to her reflections.)