

# Texts

---

(Texts and translations have been supplied to Vocal Arts DC by Steven Blier, and have not been edited or altered in any way.)

## **“Lonely Town pas de deux,” arranged for two pianos by Charlie Harmon (On the Town) [1944]**

*Mr. Blier and Mr. Barrett*



## **“Something’s coming” from *West Side Story* [1957]**

Lyrics by STEPHEN SONDHEIM (1930–)

*Sung by Miles Mykkanen*

### **“Something’s coming”**

Could be!  
Who knows?  
There’s something due any day;  
I will know right away,  
Soon as it shows.  
It may come cannonballing down through the sky,  
Gleam in its eye,  
Bright as a rose!  
Who knows?  
It’s only just out of reach,  
Down the block, on a beach,  
Under a tree.  
I got a feeling there’s a miracle due,  
Gonna come true,  
Coming to me!  
Could it be? Yes, it could.  
Something’s coming, something good,  
If I can wait!  
Something’s coming, I don’t know what it is,  
But it is  
Gonna be great!  
With a click, with a shock,  
Phone’ll jingle, door’ll knock,  
Open the latch!  
Something’s coming, don’t know when, but it’s soon;  
Catch the moon,  
One-handed catch!  
Around the corner,  
Or whistling down the river,  
Come on, deliver  
To me!  
Will it be? Yes, it will.  
Maybe just by holding still,  
It’ll be there!  
Come on, something, come on in, don’t be shy,  
Meet a guy,  
Pull up a chair!  
The air is humming,  
And something great is coming!  
Who knows?  
It’s only just out of reach,  
Down the block, on a beach,  
Maybe tonight . . .



# Texts

---

## **“Seena” from *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue* [1976]**

Lyrics by ALAN JAY LERNER (1918–1986)

*Sung by Justin Austin*

### **“Seena”**

Seena, Thomaseena...

I knew her so long, my sweet little Seena,  
I knew her before she was crawling on the floor.

Then one day this week

Her hair brushed my cheek,

And now I don't know her no more.

I knew her so well, my sweet little Seena,

I knew ev'ry pout, ev'ry twinkle that she wore.

Then one day her smile lit the sky for a mile

And now I don't know her no more.

Oh I used to know if her tears were real,

But I don't know now, all I do is feel.

And I used to know where her thoughts would fly,

But I don't know more, all I do is die of love

And want her so.

And that's all I know, Seena.

We laughed and we played, me and little Seena.

We ran through the years

through the trees by the shore.

But gone is the past, I met her at last,

And now I don't know her no more.



## **“The story of my life” from *Wonderful Town* [1953]**

Lyrics by BETTY COMDEN (1917–2006) and ADOLPH GREEN (1914–2002)

*Sung by Annie Rosen*

### **“The story of my life”**

You wake one day, the sun is bright.

You feel like strolling through the town.

Your dress is new, your hat just right

And then the rain comes pouring down.

Well, that's the story of my life.

You dream you've heard a lovely song.

All night you're haunted by the theme.

When you wake up, the notes are wrong.

The song has vanished with the dream.

Well, that's the story of my life.

Like any story that is filled

With love and joy and hope as it grows.

And then the story ends

Without the love, the joy, the hope at the close.

So it goes.

You leave the life you've always known

You travel long, you travel far

To find the star that's all your own

# Texts

---

But then you never find the star.  
Well, that's the story of my life.  
The classic story of my life.



## **“Ain’t got no tears left” from *On the Town* [1944]**

Lyrics by BETTY COMDEN (1917–2006) and ADOLPHE GREEN (1914–2002)  
*Sung by Lucia Bradford*

### **“Ain’t got no tears left”**

Ain’t got no tears left,  
I’ve been cryin’ so long;  
Can’t weep for joy,  
Can’t weep for sorrow.  
Ain’t got no tears left,  
Though the pain, it’s so strong;  
Can’t keep on cryin’ all the time.  
Ain’t got no tears left.  
The day you walked out without any trace  
I tried to find you, but you won the race,  
And now I sit here, don’t go any place,  
Just keep on starin’ into space  
Rememberin’ your face.  
Ain’t got no hope  
I’m gonna find you some day,  
Won’t be tonight,  
Won’t be tomorrow.  
Though I still need you  
In the same burnin’ way,  
Can’t keep on cryin’ all the time.  
Ain’t got no tears left.  
Ain’t got no tears left.  
Wish I could cry, so that  
I can get relief from this pain,  
The way the showers bring flowers back  
To life in the rain.  
Can’t keep on cryin’ all the time;  
Ain’t got no tears left;  
No tears...



## **“We must have a ball” from *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue* [1944]**

Lyrics by ALAN JAY LERNER (1918–1986)  
*Sung by Adrian Rosas*

### **“We must have a ball”**

Secession, discordance, disruption...  
Dissension, division,  
That Dred Scott decision,  
And threats that the Union will fall!  
There’s but one thing to be done:

# Texts

---

We must have a ball!  
Those endless petitions  
For funds and munitions  
Are driving me straight up the wall.  
One would think we're on the brink!  
We must have a ball!  
A royal soirée.  
Resplendent and gay  
And lo! All of our dilemmas  
Will vanish away.  
We'll let it go on and on  
'Til early dawn.  
By then every little slave in the South  
May be gone.  
Behaving like cultured and civilized men  
Can make every mountain a molehill again.  
Says Jefferson Davis  
There's nothing can save us  
We'll soon be divided like Gaul.  
Fools, I say, I don't see why,  
We can't have a ball!  
It's not fair  
Just because bugles are starting to blare,  
And the cry of secession is filling the air...  
Oh Lord, but I'm bored with it all!  
We must have a ball!



## **"I Go On" from *Mass*** [1971]

Lyrics by STEPHEN SCHWARTZ (b.1948)

*Sung by Chelsea Shephard*

### **"I Go On"**

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowèd be Thy name.  
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
But deliver us from evil.  
Amen  
When the thunder rumbles  
Now the age of God is dead.  
And the dreams we've clung to,  
Dying to stay young  
Have left us parched and old instead.  
When my courage crumbles,  
When I feel confused and frail.  
When my spirit falters,  
On decaying alters.  
And my illusions fade.  
I go on right then.  
I go on again.

# Texts

---

I go on to say I will celebrate another day.  
I go on.  
If tomorrow tumbles,  
And everything I love is gone,  
I will face regret,  
All my days and yet  
I will still go on.  
Lauda lauda laudae.  
Lauda lauda-de-da-de-dae.



## **“You were dead, you know” from *Candide* [1956]**

Lyrics by JOHN LATOUCHE (1914–1956) and RICHARD WILBUR (1921–2017)

*Sung by Miles Mykkanen and Chelsea Shephard*

### **“You were dead, you know”**

*Candide:* Oh... !  
*Cunegonde:* Oh... !  
*Candide:* Is it true?  
*Cunegonde:* Is it you?  
*Candide:* Cunegonde!  
*Cunegonde:* Candide!  
*Candide and Cunegonde:* Oh my dear love!  
*Candide:* Dearest how can this be so?  
You were dead, you know.  
You were shot and bayoneted, too.  
*Cunegonde:* That is very true.  
Oh, but love will find a way.  
*Candide:* Then what did you do?  
*Cunegonde:* We'll go into that another day.  
Now let's talk of you.  
You are looking very well.  
Weren't you clever, dear, to survive!  
*Candide:* I've a sorry tale to tell.  
I escaped more dead than alive.  
*Cunegonde:* Love of mine where did you go?  
*Candide:* Oh, I wandered to and fro.  
*Cunegonde:* Oh, what torture! Oh, what pain!  
*Candide:* Holland, Portugal, and Spain!  
*Cunegonde:* Oh, what torture!  
*Candide:* Holland, Portu-  
*Cunegonde:* Oh, what torture!  
*Candide:* I would do it all again  
To find you at last.  
*Both:* Reunited after so much pain.  
But the pain is past.  
*Candide:* We are one again.  
*Cunegonde:* We are one at last.  
One again. One at last, one again, one at last!



# Texts

---

## From *Arias and Barcarolles* [1988]

Texts by the composer

“Prelude”

*Sung by Justin Austin and Annie Rosen*

### “Prelude”

I love you,  
It's easy to say it,  
And so easy to mean it, too...  
I love you...  
I love you...

“Love Duet”

*Sung by Justin Austin and Annie Rosen*

### “Love Duet”

*Mezzo*

Funny,  
The way it  
Goes and flows, this melody;  
Funny, the way it  
Grows and grows insistently  
Evenly  
Almost as if it...  
Had a mind of its own  
What shall we call it?  
Is it art or is it...  
Minimal music or classical  
Or popular song?

What should it tell us?  
How to know if...

Must it go on?  
Must it go...  
Must it...  
Question.  
Questioning about this song;

Last? Conventionally.  
To the so-called “second eight”...  
To the bridge!  
Do you love me?

Question:  
Why not skip this election?  
Should I discard my lover?  
Are all these notes expressive?  
Or obsessive?

*Baritone*

Funny...  
Funny, the way it flows, the way this  
Melody (if you can call it...)  
Funny, the way it grows and  
Grows insistently  
Unevenly

Had a mind of its own.  
Very good question.  
Is it art or...

All of them wrong.  
What does it tell us?  
How are we to know if  
If or when or why or  
Whether it will stop

Or go on?  
Will it go on?  
Will it?  
Question.  
Question.  
Questioning about this  
Going to last how long?  
Time, then, to modulate.  
Sequentially  
Questioning...  
Question:  
What shall we name the baby?  
Why can't I give up smoking?  
Why are the nation raging?  
Am I aging?

# Texts

---

Aren't all these questions pointless?

We're so clever.

Question:

Don't you get sick of triads?

What's with this sudden accent?

Stick to the subject, Mary.

Pure aesthetics.

...and love...

A mystery...

Scary, the way it flows,

It knows the mystery;

Scary, the way it grows and grows

Incessantly,

Evenly,

Almost as if it...

...had a mind of its own.

Very good question.

Sing a lengthy...

Empty cliché.

Why not just stop it?

Repetitious,

Beautiful but repetitious.

Let it stop.

Stop.

Stop.

## “Greeting”

*Sung by Annie Rosen*

## “Greeting”

When a boy is born, the world is born again,

And takes its first breath with him.

When a girl is born, the world stops turning 'round,

And keeps a moment's hushed wonder.

Every time a child is born, for the space of that brief instant,

The world is pure.

Question:

Why are the natives restless?

How come we've stuck together?

Triads be real relaxin'

Jesse Jackson.

This is some conversation.

Subject?

Oh, yes, the nature of song...

Content and form...

And love...

Scary the way it flows,

As if

It knows the mystery;

Scary the way it grows and grows

Incessantly

Unevenly,

Almost as if it...

...had a mind of its own.

How shall we end it?

Shall we sing a charming

Coda of ravishing beauty

That'll vanish away?

How can we stop it?

Look how comforting and...

Beautiful but repetitious.

Let it stop.

Stop.

Stop.



## “Take care of this house” from *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue* [1976]

Lyrics by ALAN JAY LERNER (1918–1986)

*Sung by Miles Mykkanen*

# Texts

---

## “Take care of this house”

Here in this shell of a house,  
This house that is struggling to be.  
Hope must have been  
The first to move in,  
And waited to welcome me.  
But hope isn't easy to see.  
Take care of this house,  
Keep it from harm,  
If bandits break in  
Sound the alarm.  
Care for this house,  
Shine it by hand,  
And keep it so clean  
The glow can be seen  
All over the land.  
Be careful at night,  
Check all the doors,  
If someone makes off with a dream  
The dream will be yours.  
Take care of this house,  
Be always on call,  
For this house is the hope of us all.



## From *Songfest* [1977]

### “if you can't eat”

Poem by e.e. cummings (1894–1962)  
*Sung by the company*

### “If you can't eat”

If you can't eat you got to  
smoke and we aint got  
nothing to smoke:come on kid  
let's go to sleep  
if you can't smoke you got to  
Sing and we aint got  
nothing to sing:come on kid  
let's go to sleep  
if you can't sing you got to  
die and we aint got  
Nothing to die,come on kid  
let's go to sleep  
if you can't die you got to  
dream and we aint got  
nothing to dream(come on kid  
Let's go to sleep)



# Texts

---

## “I, too, sing America/Okay Negroes”

Poems by LANGSTON HUGHES (1902–1967)  
and JUNE JORDAN (1936–2002) respectively  
*Sung by Justin Austin and Lucia Bradford*

### “I, too, sing America”

Poem by LANGSTON HUGHES (1902–1967)

I, too, sing America.  
I am the darker brother.  
They send me to eat in the kitchen  
When company comes,  
But I laugh,  
And eat well,  
And grow strong.  
Tomorrow,  
I'll be at the table  
When company comes.  
Nobody'll dare  
Say to me,  
“Eat in the kitchen,”  
Then.  
Besides,  
They'll see how beautiful I am  
And be ashamed—  
I, too, am America.

### “Okay, Negroes”

Poem by JUNE JORDAN (1936–2002)

Okay, “Negroes”  
*American Negroes*  
looking for milk  
crying out loud  
in the nursery of freedomland:  
the rides are rough.  
Tell me where you got that image  
of a male white mammy.  
God is vague and he don't take no sides.  
You think clean fingernails crossed legs a  
smile  
shined shoes  
a crucifix around your neck  
good manners  
no more noise  
you think who's gonna give you some-  
thing?  
Come a little closer.  
Where you from?

## “A Julia de Burgos”

Poem by JULIA DE BURGOS (1914–1953)  
*Sung by Chelsea Shephard*

### “A Julia de Burgos”

Ya las gentes murmuran que yo soy tu enemiga  
porque dicen que en verso doy al mundo mi yo.

Mienten, Julia de Burgos.

La que se alza en mis versos no es tu voz; es mi voz;  
porque tú eres ropaje y la esencia soy yo; y el mas  
profundo abismo se tiende entre las dos.

Tú eres fría muñeca de mentira social  
y yo, viril destello de la humana verdad.

Tú, miel de cortesanas hipocresias; yo no;  
que en todos mis poemas desnudo el corazón.

Tú eres como tu mundo, egoísta; yo no;  
que todo me lo juego a ser lo que soy yo.

Tú eres solo la grave señora señorona; yo no;  
yo soy la vida, la fuerza la mujer.

Tú eres de tu marido, de tu amo; yo no;  
yo de nadie o de todos, porque a todos  
en mi limpio sentir y en mi pensar me doy.

# Texts

---

Tú te rizas el pelo y te pintas; yo no;□  
a mí me riza el viento; a mí me pinta el sol.

Tú eres dama casera resignada, sumisa,  
atada a los prejuicios de los hombres; yo no;  
que yo soy Rocinante corriendo desbocado  
olfateando horizontes de justicia de Dios.

## “To Julia de Burgos”

Now people mutter that I am your enemy□  
because they claim that through poetry I give your Self away to the world.

They lie, Julia de Burgos.□

What rises from my poems isn't your voice;□ it is my voice!  
□For you are just the costume, and I am the essence; and the  
deepest of chasms lies between the two.□

You are the cold puppet of social falseness□  
and I, the virile flash of human truth.□

You are the honey of courtly hypocrisy—not I;□  
for in all of my poems I bare my heart.□

You are selfish, like your world—not I;□  
for I put everything at stake to be what I am.□

You are merely the serious, patronizing lady of the manor—not I:  
□I am life, strength—I am woman!

□You belong to your husband, to your master—not I:  
□I belong to no one, or to everyone, because I give myself  
to all through my untainted feelings and thought.

□You curl your hair and paint your face—not me;□  
the wind curls my hair, the sun paints my face.□

You are the housebound lady, resigned and submissive,  
tied to the prejudices of men—not me;□  
for I am Rocinante running wild, unbridled,□  
sniffing at the limits of God's justice.□

*Translation: S. Blier*

## “To what you said”

Poem by WALT WHITMAN (1819–1892)  
*Sung by Adrian Rosas and the Company*

## “To what you said”

To what you said, passionately clasping my hand, this is my answer:  
Though you have strayed hither, for my sake, you can never belong to me,  
Nor I to you,

Behold the customary loves and friendships the cold guards  
I am that rough and simple person

I am he who kisses his comrade lightly on the lips at parting,  
And I am one who is kissed in return,

I introduce that new American salute  
Behold love choked, correct, polite, always suspicious

Behold the received models of the parlors —  
What are they to me?

What to these young men that travel with me?

# Texts

---

## **“To my dear and loving husband”**

Poem by ANNE BRADSTREET (1612–1672)

*Sung by Chelsea Shephard, Annie Rosen and Lucia Bradford*

## **“To my dear and loving husband”**

If ever two were one, then surely we.  
If ever man were loved by wife, then thee.  
If ever wife was happy in a man,  
Compare with me, ye women, if you can.  
I prize thy love more than whole mines of gold,  
Or all the riches that the East doth hold.  
My love is such that rivers cannot quench,  
Nor ought but love from thee give recompense.  
Thy love is such I can no way repay;  
The heavens reward thee manifold, I pray.  
Then while we live, in love let's so persevere,  
That when we live no more, we may live ever.

## **“To the poem”**

Poem by FRANK O'HARA (1926–1966)

*Sung by the Company*

## **“To the poem”**

Let us do something grand  
just this once        Something

small and important and  
unAmerican        Some fine thing

will resemble a human hand  
and really be merely a thing

Not needing a military band  
nor an elegant forthcoming

to tease spotlights or a hand  
from the public's thinking

But be        In a defiant land  
of its own a real right thing

