

# THE MUSIC TEACHER

an opera

Music by Allen Shawn

Libretto by Wallace Shawn

Sarah Wolfson ♦ Jeffrey Picón ♦ Jason Forbach  
Rebecca Robbins ♦ Parker Posey

**Timothy Long, conductor**

## Singers

Aeola (young Jane)	Sarah Wolfson
Alcimedea (young Mr. Smith)	Jeffrey Picón
Chronilos (Jim)	Jason Forbach
Vocalist	Rebecca Robbins

## Servant Girls/Students

Elisa Cordova ♦ Kristin Knutson  
Lauren Jelencovich ♦ Rebecca Robbins

## Students

Derek Basthemer ♦ Ross Benoliel  
Stefanie Nava ♦ Kristina Valada-Viars

## Speakers

Jane	Parker Posey
Mr. Smith	Wallace Shawn
Student	Halley Wegryn Gross
Stewardess	Elizabeth Berkley

## Orchestra

Bart Feller, **Flute/piccolo**  
Steven D. Hartman, **clarinet, bass clarinet**  
Lino Gomez, **saxophone**  
Whitney LaGrange, **violin/viola**  
Maxine Neuman, **cello**  
Troy L. Rinker, Jr., **bass**  
Lloyd P. Ariola, Carol Wong, **principal pianos, celeste**  
Timothy Long, **piano** (tracks 37, 41, 43, 45)  
Allen Shawn, **piano**, (tracks 2, 6, 7, 35, 36, 41, 43, 45), **percussion**

Timothy Long, **conductor**

1.	Overture	1:03
2.	School Chorus	2:52
3.	Jane: 'I never knew him...'	0:10
4.	Round	1:07
5.	Jane 'I still think about the school...'	0:35
6.	Practicing	0:33
7.	Rock Song	1:04
8.	Jane: '..and one day Jim said...'	0:16
9.	Jane: 'And I remember...'	0:40
	<b>(Smith and Jane's opera)</b>	
10.	'Act One. Overture'	0:35
11.	Aeola: 'The waves break quietly...'	2:17
12.	Chronilos: 'My dear, some wonderful news...'	2:00
13.	Aeola: 'Ah, how pleasant to see...'	2:06
14.	Chronilos: 'Good Lord, Alcimedés...'	1:08
15.	Locket Aria (Alcimedés)	7:21
16.	Chronilos: 'Your coat, my dear Alcimedés...'	1:13
17.	Bird Aria (Alcimedés)	2:32
18.	Alcimedés: 'Oh delicious breakfast...'	0:37
19.	Servant Girls: 'My what an attractive man!'	0:53
20.	Aeola: 'How do you like your toast...'	0:28
21.	Servant Girls: 'There are things we'd all like to do...'	1:09
22.	interlude (Wild Dancing)	0:33
23.	Alcimedés: 'Your servants seem a little wild...'	1:35
24.	interlude	0:29
25.	Chronilos: 'Oh, is something the matter?'	1:28
26.	Entr'acte	1:02

27.	'Act Two.' Aeola: 'When did the clock strike midnight?'	2:59
28.	Alcimedés: 'Does no one sleep in this accursed land?'	2:28
29.	Aeola: 'Your words mean nothing...'	3:47
30.	Aeola and Alcimedés: 'The night stands still.'	2:26
31.	Chronilos: 'Ah, what a magical night!'	3:21
32.	Aeola: 'A strange sound...'	1:55
33.	Aeola and Alcimedés: 'The night stands still.'	2:58
	<b>(end of Smith and Jane's opera)</b>	
34.	Smith: 'When the performance was over...'	0:26
35.	AIRPLANE: Stewardess and Mr. Smith	2:30
36.	Airplane taking off	2:10
37.	HOTEL: Vocalist's Song	7:05
38.	Smith: 'Back in my hotel room...'	1:26
39.	Smith: 'I called room service and ordered a coffee.'	0:27
40.	Jane: 'After the performance...'	0:16
41.	interlude A	1:07
42.	Jane: 'When he came to the door...'	0:18
43.	Interlude B	0:49
44.	Jane: 'I went into the bathroom...'	0:19
45.	Interlude C	0:24
46.	Jane: 'I got in the bed...'	0:46
47.	Interlude D	0:20
48.	Jane: 'He wanted to be nicer.'	0:38
49.	interlude E	1:07
50.	Jane: 'An hour later...'	1:04
51.	School Chorus	1:22

## COMPOSER'S NOTE

Some time in 1982, my brother Wally handed me his libretto for *The Music Teacher*. Our previous professional collaboration had been a chamber opera for two characters and an instrumental ensemble of seven musicians, called *In The Dark*, which had been presented at the Lenox Arts Center in the summer of 1976. But before that lay all of our collaborations as brothers growing up, "puppet" shows which were often extremely ambitious and tackled serious or even disturbing themes, for which he had always written the words and I had written the music. Even before I was a teenager, when I was just beginning to write my music down on paper, I was writing music for these performances under Wally's guidance. Wally was, and remains, five years my senior. Some of the spirit of these earlier efforts, performed for friends and family, was carried over into the libretto of *The Music Teacher*.

Unlike *In The Dark*, which presupposed in its libretto a consistent musical language, and in fact was written with the twelve-tone idiom I was exploring in 1976 in mind, the libretto for *The Music Teacher* called for an eclectic mix of musical idioms, and required me both to animate the outer world of Mr. Smith, the music teacher, and to inhabit his character by composing the music that he might have composed for the "Opera" that forms the central musical section of the work. In giving me this Nabokovian task, Wally dramatized the excitement of the creation of a theatrical work for humble circumstances, a situation parallel to that of the puppet shows of our youth, and also set up echoes of some of the incongruities that viewers of our puppet shows must have found amusing—the distance between our epic themes and our youthful voices, uneven artistic skills, and low budget production materials, for example. Some of the themes implicit in the libretto—loss and the passage of time, the difference between the way things look and what is really happening, the difficulty of communicating, and the illusions of romantic love—were also themes in Wally's earliest writing and in the early puppet shows we presented as young people. Having the principal protagonists confide their thoughts and experiences to the audience in quiet monologues, as the older Jane and Smith do in *The Music Teacher*, was also a technique dating back to puppet show days.

In 1982 I was not quite thirty five years old, a "music teacher" myself, teaching at several schools in New York, and also playing in shows and writing incidental music for theater. After almost twenty years of composing (I had begun writing short musical pieces at the age of ten), I felt that I had finally found my mature musical voice in a series of chamber pieces written in 1977. I enjoyed writing for theater, but was more excited by the longer, more passionate, more tightly written, more individual pieces of music I was writing for concert performances. These pieces included an early piano concerto, a string quartet and other chamber pieces, a piano sonata, etc. Yet this music still had a pronounced eclectic strain. I found that it came naturally to bring elements from my theatrical work and my broad listening tastes into my concert pieces, which often included stylized versions of dance music, jazz and cabaret alongside movements or passages that could be categorized as simply 'expressive'. This was a time in my life when, musically speaking, I tried to be open to my own ideas and not decide beforehand what was legitimate material for a concert piece. My instincts had also led me to an idiom that was rooted in tonality, but was well acquainted with the atonal tradition across the border, and frequently crossed that border. In fact it was the tension between the two territories that particularly interested me. Years later, when I had the opportunity to write a book about Schoenberg, I was particularly fascinated by the works he wrote when he was pulling away from late romantic chromatic tonality and into the as yet undefined tonal world scholars today call "free atonality".

No-one understood my multiple influences and internal contradictions better than my own brother. As children we had listened together to late Beethoven, Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, Berg's *Lulu*, Schoenberg's *Moses und Aron*, Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms*, and the music of Charlie Parker; had hung out at the New York City Ballet; and had heard Charlie Mingus, Thelonious Monk and Duke Ellington perform live. In his libretto Wally asked me to fold my many influences and different ways of composing into one work which would draw both on my theater music skills and on opera composing skills and, despite its eclecticism, achieve musical unity. Unusual as the form is—a *singspiel*, with large swaths of dialogue, in the outer

sections; continuous and operatic in the middle— the work is conceived of as a musical whole. I always pictured that the instrumental ensemble would be present and highly visible on stage throughout, underscoring in the audience's mind the continuity between Jane and Mr. Smith's daily experience and the work on which they collaborated. Who can say that their sad urban tryst is "real life," while their collaborative "Opera" is not?

In the "Opera" portion of the work I tried to write music that, despite its sophistication and my own sincerity, would still "read" as Smith's — yet would also compel involvement in the story that Smith and Jane were telling. This music needed to serve as an outlet for Smith's unexpressed passion for Jane, and at the same time, and just as importantly, animate the characters of "Aeola", "Alcimedea" and "Chronilos" and make us care about their fate. That some hilarity ensues when idioms as diverse as Gilbert and Sullivan, neo-classical Stravinsky, Bartokian recitative, musical comedy, and ragtime are juxtaposed, or when anachronistic lines are delivered by characters purporting to be living in ancient Greece, is undeniable, yet the overall effect reached for is one of strangeness and beauty, with the humor existing more as a quiet thread in the fabric than as its point. The music before and after the "Opera" section, including the music suggesting life at the school, the music of the Airplane Scene, the piano music at the restaurant and the Vocalist's song, and the musical interludes at the end of the work, are all based on themes and motives from the central opera. These portions of the work are meant to express the daily world from which Smith and Jane's collaboration is an escape. It is also fair to hear them as composed in my own voice, as opposed to "Smith's". In the interludes illustrating Smith and Jane's encounter in the hotel, the theme of Alcimedea's "Locket Aria" is heard above the accompaniment to the Schoolroom Chorus, musically bringing the imaginary and daily worlds together.

Although we presented two public readings of our work in 1983, in which three

extraordinary singers participated, — the tenor Paul Sperry as Mr. Smith/Alcimedea, soprano Jean McClelland as Jane/Aeola, and singer/writer Penny Orloff as the vocalist, — nearly twenty-five years elapsed before the first staged production of the opera was mounted by the adventurous New Group Theater in New York in 2006. It was extraordinary to see the work finally so beautifully performed. It was also an experience of double nostalgia: nostalgia for our now distant early adulthood, and for the childhood behind it.

—Allen Shawn

### ON THE LIBRETTO

My brother and I collaborated on works not totally unlike this one throughout our childhood. Certainly the juxtaposition of contrasting elements and styles of music within one work was something we experimented with from our early days. Just as, in *The Music Teacher*, an operatic section which ventures into atonality butts up against an odd version of airplane mood music, while scenes of quiet innocence in a rural school are immediately followed by harsh episodes in a somewhat sordid urban hotel, so in our early productions we would jump from an intimate domestic scene and a simple song into a violent, chaotic segment depicting war in the Congo, with turbulent, disturbed, and explosive music coming out of the piano like smoke. As was more or less the custom from our early days, I initiated work on *The Music Teacher* by writing the libretto. I was listening a lot to *Wozzeck*, *Pelleas*, and *The Rake's Progress*, as well as to a bit of Wagner and even *Moses Und Aron*, and somehow I decided that *The Magic Flute* gave me permission to write a lot of dialogue between the musical sections. In any case, I knew it was going to be a somewhat odd opera — why wouldn't it be? So many of my favorites, from *Fidelio* to *Lulu*, were leaps in the dark, improbable attempts to bring unexpected elements into the world of opera.

— Wallace Shawn



## SYNOPSIS

*The Music Teacher* is a story told by two narrators twenty years or so after the events described. Twenty years earlier, Mr. Smith, who is now about fifty years old and a married professor of music at a university, was a young, unmarried teacher at a small, artistically oriented boarding school. Jane, who today is around thirty-five and is married to her former classmate Jim, was Mr. Smith's star music student. One day at school, Jim had the idea that Jane should write an opera libretto for which she and Mr. Smith could write the music. Then, Jim proposed, the three of them could sing the principal roles, other students could make up the chorus and orchestra, and the completed work could be performed for the entire school. Jim's scheme is in fact realized, but during the course of the lengthy enterprise, the emotions of Jane and Mr. Smith run somewhat out of control.

We see the opera written by Jane and Mr. Smith, which constitutes more than half of the running time of *The Music Teacher*. The opera tells the story of a royal couple, Aeola (played by Jane) and Chronilos (played by Jim), whose life is disrupted by the visit of Chronilos's old comrade-in-arms, Alcimedus (played by Mr. Smith). It turns out that Alcimedus and Aeola are fated to fall in love. When Chronilos finds them together on the edge of a moonlit lake, he kills them and then kills himself.

While writing the opera, Jane and Mr. Smith begin to feel a romantic passion for each other, but this is not mentioned by either of them. The night before the performance, Jane is unable to sleep and wanders outside. Spotting Mr. Smith walking on a path – he too is unable to sleep, it seems – she follows him into the woods and secretly watches while he masturbates.

After the performance of the opera, Mr. Smith is in a disturbed state. He drives to a nearby airport and takes an airplane to a nearby city. He checks into a hotel and has dinner in the hotel dining room. There he encounters a vocalist. After he hears her sing a sort of lullaby, they talk for a while and end up going to a room to make love, something he hasn't done for a very long time. As his sensual side experiences an awakening of a kind, he also has sexual encounters with a waitress and with the bellman who brings a cup of coffee to his hotel room.

Meanwhile, Jane has followed him to the city. She figures out where he is staying and shows up at the door of his hotel room, very late at night, just after the bellman has left. Mr. Smith is shocked at her arrival and doesn't know what to do. When she offers herself to him, he is overwhelmed by contradictory impulses. They try to connect physically, but the experience is extremely fraught, confusing, and even disastrous. Nonetheless, there is a certain lack of embarrassment about their meeting; they have a very nice room service breakfast together, and they return to school, where Mr. Smith conducts Jane in the school chorus, and they don't experience any particular feeling of awkwardness about seeing each other again.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to offer our passionate thanks to The New Group, the theatre which first produced *The Music Teacher*, in the winter of 2006. Its Artistic Director Scott Elliott and its Producing Director Geoff Rich have set a new standard for the word "commitment." Our project was artistically unusual and even strange, and its costs were way beyond what any small theatre could seem to bear. Through many trials, their loyalty to us and to the project never wavered for a second, and somehow, incredibly, they managed to give us what we needed time and again, while supporting us emotionally with their enthusiasm and personal warmth. Managing Director Amanda Brandes carried the daily burden of finding the un-find-able and soothing with her gentle kindness the savage breasts of turbulent artists such as ourselves. Tim Long, our conductor, cocktail pianist, and Music Director, kept the whole enormous ocean liner floating calmly despite the storms battering the deck, delighting the passengers with his understated wit even as cups and saucers were flying off the tables in the dining room. And Tom Cairns, our director, created from humble materials a gorgeous, shining, multi-colored world of extraordinary intensity and purest feeling, radiating with the joy of life.

This CD, wired through the extraordinary musical mind of Da-Hong Seetoo, only came into being because an extraordinary anonymous philanthropist wanted it to happen. To this noble person, we will be forever grateful, even if it should turn out, to our surprise, that we do indeed live forever after death.

—A.S. and W.S.

## ALLEN SHAWN

Allen Shawn (born 1948) grew up in New York City and started composing music at the age of ten. He studied piano with Frances Dillon and Emilie Harris, and composition with Francis Judd Cooke, Earl Kim, Jack Beeson, Leon Kirchner, and Nadia Boulanger. Since 1985 he has lived in Vermont. He is on the faculty of Bennington College.

In addition to two operas to libretti by his brother Wallace Shawn, he has written ten orchestral works, much chamber and piano music, song cycles and choral works, a one act children's chamber opera to a libretto by Penny Orloff, music for ballet, incidental music for theater (including six scores for the New York Shakespeare Festival, music for the La Jolla Playhouse, and for Lincoln Center Theater), and music for the film "My Dinner With Andre." Recordings of his work include a performance of his *Piano Concerto* by pianist Ursula Oppens with the Albany Symphony, conducted by David Alan Miller; CDs devoted to his chamber music on the Northeastern, Opus One and Albany Records labels; and individual works recorded by the Aspen Wind Quintet, the Bennington Cello Quartet, the Palisades Virtuosi, and Ensembles from the Chamber Music Conference and Composers Forum of the East. An active pianist, he has also recorded a CD of his piano music, the first volume of a projected series, for Albany Records. His music is published by Boosey and Hawkes, Oxford University Press, G. Schirmer, and Galaxy Music/E.C. Schirmer. He has received both a Goddard Lieberson Award and an Academy Award in Music from the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

His book *Arnold Schoenberg's Journey* was awarded the 2003 Deems Taylor Award by ASCAP. His second book, *Wish I Could Be There*, was published in February, 2007.

## WALLACE SHAWN

In addition to the libretto for *The Music Teacher*, Wallace Shawn also wrote the libretto for Allen Shawn's one-act opera *In The Dark*.

Wallace Shawn's plays include *Marie and Bruce*, *Aunt Dan and Lemon*, and *The Fever*, all of which were performed in New York at the New York Shakespeare Festival Public Theatre and in London at the Royal Court Theatre. *Aunt Dan and Lemon* was done again in London in 1999 at the Almeida Theatre in London, directed by Tom Cairns, and by the New Group in 2003 in New York, directed by Scott Elliott. Shawn's play *The Designated Mourner* was first performed at the Royal National Theatre in London by Mike Nichols, Miranda Richardson, and David de Keyser under the direction of David Hare. It was performed in New York by Wallace Shawn, Deborah Eisenberg, and Larry Pine under the direction of Andre Gregory in the spring of 2000. Wallace Shawn's plays have been published by Grove Press and Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.

Wallace Shawn and Andre Gregory wrote and performed in the film *My Dinner With Andre*, and Andre

Gregory directed Shawn in *Vanya On 42<sup>nd</sup> Street*. Shawn has appeared as an actor in many films, including *Manhattan*, *Clueless*, *Scenes From the Class Struggle in Beverly Hills*, *The Moderns*, and *The Wife*. He also performed Schoenberg's *Ode To Napoleon* with the Speculum Musicae in New York. Shawn's translation of *The Threepenny Opera*, starring Alan Cumming, Jim Dale, Nellie McKay and Cyndi Lauper and directed by Scott Elliott, was done in New York in 2006. He also recently edited and published a magazine intended to have only one issue, *Final Edition*. The magazine included work by Deborah Eisenberg, Mark Strand, and Jonathan Schell, and an interview of Noam Chomsky by Shawn.



**TIMOTHY LONG**, a conductor and pianist of Muskogee Creek and Choctaw descent, is Music Director of Stony Brook Opera and Assistant to the Music Director of Opera Theatre of Saint Louis.

He was the music director and conductor for *The Music Teacher*, the opera by Allen Shawn and Wallace Shawn, throughout its seven week run at the Minetta Lane Theater in New York City, under the auspices of The New Group.

His 2005–2006 activities also included directing *Le Nozze di Figaro* for Stony Brook Opera; Peter Maxwell Davies' *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot* with the Stony Brook Contemporary Chamber Players; Mahler's *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* at The Juilliard School; and both *The Barber of Seville* and *Hansel and Gretel* at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis.

For three years, Mr. Long served as assistant conductor to Robert Spano at the Brooklyn Philharmonic where he served as a cover conductor and conducted the orchestra for their 9/11 Memorial Concert in October of 2001. He was also an associate conductor at New York City Opera for two years.

In 2005 Mr. Long had his main stage debut at Boston Lyric Opera conducting performances of Rachel Portman's *The Little Prince*. The same year marked his debut performances at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis where he conducted both *Rigoletto* and *Romeo and Juliet*.

In 2007, Mr. Long's wide ranging operatic repertoire included conducting Mark-Anthony Turnage's powerful adaptation of the Oedipus story, *Greek*, at Stony Brook Opera, Conrad Susa's *Transformations* for the Maryland Opera Studio, and *Don Giovanni* at the Théâtre Municipal de Castres in France. He returned to Boston Lyric Opera for performances of *Le Nozze di Figaro* and then to Opera Theatre of Saint Louis for *The Mikado*. The summer of 2007 marked his first appearances at the Hawaii Performing Arts Festival performing the music of Ricky Ian Gordon.



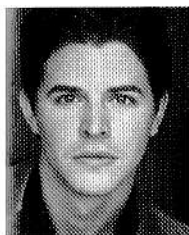
**SARAH WOLFSON** Soprano Sarah Wolfson is equally at home on the operatic or recital stage. Her roles include Susanna in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Zerlina in *Don Giovanni*, Despina in *Così fan tutte*, Poppea in *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, Euridice in *Orfeo*, Rose in *Street Scene*, and Alexandra Giddens in *Regina*. World Premieres include Celia in John Musto's *Volpone*, with Wolf Trap Opera. Companies and festivals she has performed with include Santa Fe Opera, Opera North, Florida Grand Opera, Kentucky Opera, Wolf Trap Opera, Aspen Music Festival, Spoleto Festival USA, Bowdoin Summer Music Festival, La Jolla Summerfest, and The Ravinia Festival. Ms. Wolfson has performed solo recitals in Alice Tully Hall at Lincoln Center and Weill Hall at Carnegie Hall, as well as other venues. While at The Juilliard School she was featured in the PBS documentary *The Juilliard Experience*. Upon graduating, she received the William Schuman Prize for outstanding leadership and achievement in music.



**JEFFREY PICÓN** Tenor Jeffrey Picón has performed both in opera houses and on the concert stage. Operatic highlights of recent seasons include his Arizona Opera debut as Ali in *Zemire et Azor*, Almaviva in *Il Barbiere Di Siviglia* with the Opera Company Of North Carolina, both Ramiro in *La Cenerentola* and Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni* with the Lyric Opera Of Kansas City, *Trouble In Tahiti* for the Caramoor Festival, Fenton in *Falstaff* with Mississippi Opera, and Tony in *West Side Story* with the Ash Lawn Opera Festival. Mr. Picon joins the roster of the New York City Opera this season.

On the recital stage, Mr. Picón made his Schwabacher Debut Recital in *Latin Lovers: Music From South America and Cuba* presented by the San Francisco Opera with pianist Stephen Blier. Recent concert appearances include *Teatro Espanoles* and *Songs Of War And Peace* with New York Festival of Song, Janacek's *From The House Of The Dead* with the American Symphony Orchestra, Brahms' *Liebeslieder Walzer* with the Moab Music Festival, and Ned Rorem's *Evidence of Things Not Seen* with the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society.

Mr. Picón can be heard as Mike on the recording of William Bolcom's *A View From The Bridge*, which marked his debut with the Lyric Opera of Chicago.



**JASON FORBACH** appeared in Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Phantom: The Las Vegas Spectacular!* Off-Broadway, Jason has appeared in *As You Like It* at the McGinn/Cazale Theater and *A.W.O.L.* at 59E59. Jason has also appeared in the BMI workshop of *The Hellfire - The Musical*. Jason has performed at Avery Fisher Hall with the New York Philharmonic and the American Symphony Orchestra and made his Carnegie Hall debut in *A Tribute to Hal Prince: A Prince of a Fella*. On the opera stage Jason has performed with Boston Lyric Opera, Opera Boston, and was an apprentice at Central City Opera. Jason was a Metropolitan Opera National Council Semi-Finalist. He received his MM with honors in voice from The New England Conservatory. Regionally, he has appeared at the North Shore Music Theatre and at the Mountain Playhouse. On film he has appeared in Julie Taymor's *Across the Universe*, and on television he's appeared on *One Life to Live*. Jason is also preparing his upcoming solo album debut which will be made available at [www.jasonforbach.com](http://www.jasonforbach.com).



**REBECCA ROBBINS**, a native West Virginian, studied voice at The Curtis Institute of Music and received her B.A. from the University of Charleston. She was most recently seen in the world premier, pre-Broadway production of *A Tale of Two Cities* at the Asolo Repertory Theatre. She has also been seen in New York in *The Pajama Game* and *The New Moon* with City Center Encores!, *My Fair Lady* with The New York Philharmonic, *La Gioconda* at The Clurman Theater, and several new developing musicals including *Silas Marner*, *Writing Arthur*, *Tulipomania*, *Beaches*, and *The Man Who Would Be King*.

Her regional credits include *Cats*, *She Loves Me*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and the world premier of *La Vie En Bleu* at The Walnut Street Theatre, *A Little Night Music* and *Pirates of Penzance* with Pittsburgh Civic Light Opera, *Sweeney Todd* with Baltimore Center Stage, *Ragtime* with Maine State Music Theatre, and *Candide* with The Prince Music Theatre.

She has recorded commercials for Commerce Bank and The New York Lottery as well as several demos of new musicals. For more information visit [www.RebeccaRobbins.com](http://www.RebeccaRobbins.com).



**PARKER POSEY** has appeared in over 50 films including the recent blockbuster *Superman Returns*. She was most recently seen in *Broken English* directed by Zoe Cassavetes, for which she has been nominated for an Independent Spirit Award.

Her films include four films with Christopher Guest (*Waiting for Guffman*, *Best in Show*, *A Mighty Wind* and *For Your Consideration*), Rebecca Miller's *Personal Velocity* (Independent Spirit Award nomination), the CBS film *Hell on Heels: The Battle of Mary Kay* (Golden Globe nomination) opposite Shirley Maclaine, *The Sweetest Thing*, *The Anniversary Party*, *Scream 3*, *You've Got Mail*, *Suburbia*, *Dazed and Confused*, *Clockwatchers*, *The Daytrippers*, *The Event*, and four films with Hal Hartley (*Amateur*, *Flirt*, *Henry Fool* and *Fay Grim*). For her performance in *The House of Yes*, she received a Special Jury Prize at The Sundance Film Festival.

On stage, Parker most recently starred off-Broadway in the acclaimed revival of *Hurlyburly*, for which she received a Lucille Lortel Award for Outstanding Featured Actress and in Lanford Wilson's *Fifth of July* (a Lortel nomination for Lead Actress). She also starred in the Los Angeles premiere of John Patrick Shanley's *Four Dogs and a Bone*, directed by Lawrence Kasdan, and starred on Broadway opposite Matthew Broderick in Elaine May's *Taller Than A Dwarf*.



**ELIZABETH BERKLEY** was most recently seen on Broadway in Larry Gelbart's *Sly Fox*, directed by Arthur Penn, in which she played opposite Richard Dreyfuss and Eric Stoltz. Off Broadway she was featured in Scott Elliott's production of *Hurlyburly* by David Rabe.

In 2000, Berkley made her debut on the London stage at the Queen's Theatre in the West End, where she played in *Lenny* opposite Eddie Izzard under the direction of Sir Peter Hall.

On the big screen, Berkley was last seen in the critically acclaimed *Roger Dodger*, directed by Dylan Kidd. Additional film credits include Woody Allen's *Curse of the Jade Scorpion*, Oliver Stone's *Any Given Sunday*, *The First Wives Club*, starring Goldie Hawn, Diane Keaton, and Bette Midler, Paul Verhoeven's *Showgirls*, *The Real Blonde*, and *The Last Call*. In addition to her film work, Berkley is also known for her role as 'Jesse Spano' on the hit NBC series *Saved by the Bell*. She had a recurring role on ABC's critically acclaimed series *NYPD Blue*, and guest starred on numerous other television series.

Berkley trained as a dancer and performed with The American Ballet Theatre and The New York City Ballet before segueing to acting, which she studied under Uta Hagen and at the National Theatre in London.



**HALLEY WEGRYN GROSS** has appeared in *Ever Less Free* in the *Armed and Naked in America* series for the Naked Angels Theater; *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* and *Hurlyburly* for The New Group; *True Love for The Zipper*; *Stealing Sweets and Punching People* for the Summer Play Festival NYC, and *Belongings* and *The Cottingley Caper* for the Provincetown Playhouse. She has done readings and workshops at Ars Nova, the Cherry Lane Theatre, The Flea, Manhattan Theatre Club, New Dramatists, New Georges, The New Group, The New School, The Old Vic, Primary Stages, Fresh Ink, Roundabout, The Vineyard, and Westside Theatre. She has also appeared in the films *Across the Universe* (directed by Julie Taymor) (2007), *The Babysitters* (2007), *Lying* (2006), *Leaving Gussie* (2007), *Beautiful Kid*, the Dream Street music video, and

*Pastures of Plenty*. For television, she has worked on *Gossip Girl*, *The Book of Daniel*, *Third Watch*, *The Education of Max Bickford*, *As the World Turns*, *None Without Sin*, and *Grapes of Wrath* for PBS. Halley earned a B.A. with high honors in dramatic writing from the Gallatin School at NYU, Dec. 2007.



**ROSS BENOIEL** was an international finalist in Placido Domingo's 2006 Operalia competition in Valencia, Spain. This young baritone's roles include Guglielmo in *Così Fan Tutte*, Figaro in *Il Barbiere Di Siviglia*, Valentin in *Faust* and the premiere of the role of Reverend John Wilson in Margaret Garwood's *The Scarlet Letter*. Mr. Benoiel has performed with such companies as New York City Opera, New York Philharmonic, Glimmerglass Opera, Portland Opera (Oregon), Madison Opera, Ash Lawn Opera, Chautauqua Opera, Pine Mountain, and Lake George Opera. Mr. Benoiel has been a finalist of both the 2006 Jensen

Foundation Competition and the 2004 New England Regionals of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions.





**ELISA CORDOVA** Described by Washington, D.C. critic Susan Berlin as "...an artist who sings rapturously," soprano Elisa Cordova, a native of Chile, received her operatic training from the Eastman School of Music, Binghamton University, and Tri-Cities Opera. She won the Tri-Cities Opera Guild Scholarship, was a competition winner of the Lotte Lenya Vocal Competition, and the recipient of the Clark Fellowship in 2001–2003.

In 2006 Elisa Cordova played leading roles in two Zarzuela productions in Washington, D.C., *El Barberillo de Lavapiés* and *La Verbena de la Paloma*. She has appeared with the Tri-Cities Opera, the Aspen Music Festival, the Ashlawn Opera Festival, Summer Opera Co., the Metropolitan Opera Guild, and Tulsa Opera, performing, among others, the roles of Antonia in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, Norina in *Don Pasquale*, Despina in *Così Fan Tutte*, Monica in *The Medium*, Gretel in *Hansel and Gretel*, and Adele in *Die Fledermaus*.

Ms. Cordova is also an active recitalist, specializing in Spanish language repertoire. She has premiered works throughout the United States, Italy, and Chile, including pieces by Steve Reich and Christopher Larkin.



**LAUREN JELENCOVICH** Soprano Lauren Jelencovich is a 2007 graduate of the Manhattan School of Music. She made her Off-Broadway debut in Wallace and Allen Shawn's *The Music Teacher*, and at age 17 won Ed McMahon's Star Search. She received Andrea Bocelli's National Italian American Foundation World Scholarship. Lauren has been involved with the International Vocal Arts Institute, performing in Puerto Rico, Montreal, and Tel Aviv. She has also been involved with Manhattan School of Music's Opera Studio Outreach programs. She performed in the Manhattan School of Music production of Gilbert and Sullivan's *Trial by Jury* as Angelina, The Plaintiff, and performed in the school's American Music Theatre Ensemble.

Lauren is currently studying with William Esper at the William Esper Acting Studio. She was knighted as a Demoiselle in the Sovereign Order of the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem. She has won numerous and awards and has performed at Carnegie Hall in New York, as well as the MGM Grand and Hard Rock Live in Las Vegas. Lauren has also been featured in People Magazine's 50 Most Beautiful People. She is a student of Patricia McCaffrey, Cesar Ulloa, and Joan Dornemann.



**KRISTIN KNUTSON** has performed in *La Gioconda* on Theater Row, *Behind the Limelight* at NYMF 2006, *Candide* with the New York Philharmonic, *I Remember It Well* with the American Musical Theater Ensemble, *The Magic Flute* with the Skylight Opera Theatre, and *Dido and Aeneas* with the Chataqua Voice Academy. At The Julliard School, she performed in *Cabildo*, *The Judgment of Paris*, and scenes from *Sweeney Todd*. She was also in *Zemire und Azor* at the Manhattan School of Music.



**STEFANIE NAVA** appeared in *The Sisters Rosensweig* at the The Old Globe; in *The Music Teacher* with The New Group; and in *Third*, at Lincoln Center Theater. On film she can be seen in *The Good Shepherd*, and on Television, in *Law & Order: Law and Order Special Victims Unit* and *Rescue Me*. Stefanie Nava is a graduate of The Neighborhood Playhouse.



**KRISTINA VALADA-VIARS** has participated in a wide variety of theatre: *August: Osage County* with Steppenwolf on Broadway, *This Is Our Youth* at the Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, *516* with the New York Fringe Festival, and *Summer of the Swans* for Theatreworks USA. She appeared in the film *The Door in the Floor* and also on television in *Law & Order: Criminal Intent*. Kristina studied at the London Academy of Theatre, with Michael Howard, at Circle East, and at Grinnell College.

**TEXT** – The spoken passages on this CD are meant to give the listener a sense of the story of *The Music Teacher* and to put the musical passages in their proper context. The complete libretto, which includes a great deal of spoken text, will be published as a book in the near future by Theatre Communications Group, [www.tcg.org](http://www.tcg.org).

## **LIBRETTO**

### **[1]: Overture**

(Filmed images of a winter landscape, a few buildings. It is a small boarding school. Teenaged students run between the buildings. One or two are alone, walking, lost in thought. A couple leans against a tree, kissing. Mr. Smith, the music teacher, comes on stage in front of the filmed images. He is around thirty years old. A chorus of students assembles. Mr. Smith conducts.)

### **[2]: School Chorus**

CHORUS OF STUDENTS:

The snow fills the valley,  
Ice fills every crack,  
Every creature hides away.

Great birds with giant wings  
Fly off across the water.  
Tiny beetles burrow in the ground.

Inside the trunks of trees,  
Beneath the frozen streams,  
Life lies curled up, sleeping, waiting.  
Life lies curled up, sleeping, waiting.

FIRST SOLO:

I am the squirrel, buried in my lair.

SECOND SOLO:

I am the worm,

THIRD SOLO:

the gnat,

FOURTH SOLO:

the grub.

FOUR SOLO VOICES TOGETHER:

The weeks pass slowly,  
The silence never broken.  
No one moves.  
No one speaks.

ENTIRE CHORUS:

The snow fills the valley,  
Ice fills every crack,  
Every creature hides away.

Great birds with giant wings  
Fly off across the water.  
Tiny beetles burrow in the ground.  
Inside the trunks of trees,  
Beneath the frozen streams,  
Life lies curled up, sleeping, waiting.

**[3]:**

(It is now twenty years later. Jane is around thirty-five.)

JANE:

I never knew him, and I never knew anything about him. He was my music teacher.

**[4]: Round**

(Jane remembers being a student twenty years earlier.)

STUDENTS:

My Rose wears violet,  
Sweet flowers in her hair,  
Her veil is lavender,  
Her ring is gold.  
There's a chain of lilies  
Around her neck,  
But her eyes are empty,  
And her heart is cold.

[5]:

JANE:

I still think about the school. The lake. The fields. Trees. Snow. The buildings where we slept and studied and practiced our instruments and sang. He was younger then than I am now. The daring young teacher – a bit shy. After teaching all day, he would sometimes walk through the school at night, and I remember watching him from a distance, and I always felt he was listening to all the wisps and fragments of music floating out from all the different buildings into the freezing air.

[6]:

(Mr. Smith wanders through the school at night.)

STUDENT:

Hey, Mr. Smith. Where are you going?

MR. SMITH:

Oh, nowhere, I guess. Just "taking a walk," as people say.

STUDENT:

Well, try not to get lost, Mr. Smith.

MR. SMITH:

No, no... Do you know who that is singing over there?

STUDENT:

Oh, just Margie and Darcy and some of the girls. That's the song they wrote last week.

MR. SMITH:

Is that right. Well, see you later.

STUDENT:

Goodnight, Mr. Smith.

[7]: **Rock Song**

JANE AND GIRLS:

Mirrors are shattered,  
Letters are scattered,  
Pages of books have been ripped out and torn.  
I loved you once,  
You used me badly,  
You lied and you cheated and left me forlorn.  
Closets are emptied,  
And heaped up beside me  
Are the toys that I've played with, clothes that I've worn.  
I loved you once,  
You used me badly,  
You lied and you cheated and left me forlorn.  
Closets are emptied,  
And heaped up beside me  
Are the toys that I've played with, clothes that I've worn.  
My tears are over,  
Yours are just starting,  
I'll make you wish you had never been born.

[8]:

JANE:

And for me, during that time, the most important thing in my life was studying music with Mr. Smith. And very often, after our regular music classes, Mr. Smith and Jim and I – Jim was the

next best student in the class, after me – Mr. Smith and Jim and I would sit around together, talking about music, and one day Jim said that we really ought to perform an opera at our school – that he and Mr. Smith and I should sing the principal roles, and that I should write the libretto, and that Mr. Smith and I should write the music.

**[9]:**

JANE:  
And I remember, in the final weeks before the performance, when Mr. Smith and I were copying all the different parts, sitting next to him in the music room night after night, by the glowing lamp, before the huge school bell rang out for bed. And then I remember running to my room in my dormitory and climbing into my pajamas. And I would fall asleep with streams of notes still racing through my head.

**[10]:**

(The opera written by Jane and Mr. Smith is performed at the school. Jane plays Aeola, Jim plays her husband Chronilos, the king, and Mr. Smith plays Alcimedes. . The First Act is set on the terrace of a palace overlooking the sea. Aeola enters, followed by the Chorus of Servant Girls.)

**[11]:**

AEOLA:  
The waves break quietly on the shore,  
The summer sun lies white in the sky,  
Why does my heart beat so feverishly within my breast?

My adoring, noble husband  
Sits at our breakfast table,  
Our children smiling all around him.  
How handsome he looked this morning –  
How kind his demeanor,  
How gentle his face.  
A fine man!  
A wonderful man!  
Why do my hands tremble today?

Why is my forehead damp with sweat?

CHORUS OF SERVANT GIRLS:

Why do her hands tremble today?  
Why is her forehead damp with sweat?

**[12]:**

(Chronilos enters.)

CHRONILOS:

My dear, some wonderful news!  
You remember I've often told you  
Of the noble Alcimedes,  
My comrade true from the wars,  
He who above all others  
Won my love and trust in battle,  
He for whom I would give my life,  
My dearest friend,  
My most loyal companion.

AEOLA:

Yes, of course –  
I recall how often you've spoken of him.

CHRONILOS:

Well, you'll never guess –  
Who do you suppose has come to visit us this day?

AEOLA  
Not he?

CHRONILOS:

Yes! Yes! My noble friend,  
My dearest companion,



The man who saved my life in battle! –  
Alcimedea! Alcimedea!

AEOLA:  
(joyfully) Oh no!

CHRONILOS:  
Yes!

AEOLA:  
Oh no!

CHRONILOS:  
Yes! Ha ha! Ha ha! I'll bring him to meet you now!  
(He exits.)

**[13]:**

AEOLA:  
Ah, how pleasant  
To see such joy on my husband's face –  
Yes, my husband's joy  
Makes my heart beat faster.  
Yes, my husband's joy  
Makes me float through the air.

SERVANTS  
Ah, how pleasant  
To see such joy...  
Yes, to see such joy...  
Yes, her husband's joy  
Makes her heart beat faster.  
Yes, her husband's joy  
Makes her float through the air.

AEOLA:  
Ah, he approaches –  
Ah, he approaches –

SERVANTS:  
Ah, he approaches –  
He approaches –

(Chronilos and Alcimedea enter.)

CHRONILOS:  
My dear, this is my friend Alcimedea!

SERVANTS:  
Ah! Alcimedea!  
Ah! Alcimedea!

(Alcimedea suddenly seems to stagger violently.)

**[14]:**

CHRONILOS:  
Good Lord – Alcimedea!  
What's wrong, Alcimedea?

ALCIMEDES:  
Nothing.  
I think some ill wind  
Blowing from the North  
Has given me a chill.

CHRONILOS:  
How dreadful...

ALCIMEDES:

No – It's nothing – (He totters to a chair.)

CHRONILOS:

Allow me to bring you your coat...

(Chronilos exits, along with the Chorus. Aeola stands at the back, leaning on a column. Alcimedes sits, then stands, in front. She does not hear him.)

**[15]: Locket Aria**

ALCIMEDES:

My mother kept a locket  
Round her neck –  
She forbade me to look inside it.  
She said if ever I disobeyed,  
The face I saw would be my doom,  
The face I saw would be my doom.

One night while I was sleeping  
I heard a noise quite near me.  
It sounded like wings were beating  
On the window to my room.

I awoke and ran to the window,  
But all I saw was darkness.  
I ran to the hallway,  
But everything was still.

The doorway to my mother's room  
Stood open beside me in the hall.  
I entered her chamber.  
She lay there asleep.  
The locket lay on a chest beside her.  
I stole it swiftly –

The moon shone bright through the window.  
I opened the clasp.  
I stared at the face.

All night long I stood by the window,  
A woman's portrait in my hand,  
But this was no ordinary portrait –  
The woman that I saw was alive!

She smiled at me,  
She spoke to me,  
She told me hundreds of stories,  
But who she was  
And where she was living  
She did not say,  
But who she was  
And where she was living  
She did not say.

Finally she told me to close the locket  
And put it back in my mother's bed.  
I left the chamber and went to my room,  
But all night long I lay there unable to sleep.  
The following night I went back to my precious locket  
And spoke again to the face that was locked inside it –  
And the next night too, and the next, and the next,  
Until I hadn't slept for a week!  
Yet I still felt refreshed and healthy,  
Vigorous and happy and full of strength!  
My only concern was the fact that my mother  
Seemed to grow weaker every day.

No one knew what illness  
Was slowly consuming her life

Until the week was over, and she died!

The locket, of course, was around her neck  
As she went into her grave.

And now, this morning, I see that face,  
And now, this morning, I see that face.

**[16]:**

(Chronilos returns, carrying an overcoat, accompanied by the servants.)

CHRONILOS:

Your coat, my dear Alcimedes!  
I hope you are feeling better? (Alcimedes is silent.)

AEOLA:

Dear, we must bring Alcimedes  
A simple breakfast to eat.

CHRONILOS:

Yes, yes, a simple breakfast –

SERVANTS:

Yes, yes, a simple breakfast –

AEOLA: (to servants)

Fetch it for me right now!

(The servants exit and return almost immediately with breakfast.)

CHRONILOS:

And now, my Alcimedes –  
Tell us how you have come here –  
Tell us about your travels

And all that has happened to you.

**[17]: Bird Aria**

ALCIMEDES:

Ah, my dear Chronilos,  
A wild bird brought me hither.  
I wonder now if maybe  
It was an enchanted bird.  
I was hunting in the forest,  
My servants and dogs all around me,  
When I saw a shining bluebird  
Flashing through the sky.

Its wings were gold and silver,  
Its body the brightest blue.  
It seemed to fly faster and higher  
Than any ordinary earthly bird.

I shot my arrows towards it,  
But it always climbed higher and higher.  
Then it circled back to mock me  
And led me right down to the sea.

Out in a boat I followed.  
My servants fell behind me.  
My dogs swam out a few miles,  
Then paddled back to shore.

After three nights of sailing,  
The bird flying always above me,  
I landed here in your kingdom,  
And the bird flew out of my sight.

CHRONILOS: (to Alcimedés)

Ah!

ALCIMEDES:

The bird flew out of my sight.

[18]:

(Alcimedés tastes the breakfast.)

ALCIMEDES:

Oh, delicious breakfast!

I've really been quite starving –

CHRONILOS:

I'm glad you like your breakfast.

Now I'll go and prepare your rooms.

Aeola will entertain you

While we make things ready for you.

(Chronilos leaves. Aeola and Alcimedés sit in front of the breakfast, not knowing what to say.)

[19]:

(The servants consider Alcimedés.)

SERVANTS:

My, what an attractive man!

Any woman would enjoy

Stroking his beard.

I'm sure I'd feel quite nervous

Eating breakfast with him.

Oh wouldn't it be nice

To stroke that beard?

Oh wouldn't it be nice

To stroke that beard?

Yes, it would be nice

To stroke that beard.

[20]:

(Aeola and Alcimedés try to converse.)

AEOLA:

How do you like your toast, Alcimedés?

ALCIMEDES:

It's excellent, thank you.

I really enjoy it.

[21]:

(The servants reflect.)

SERVANTS:

There are things we'd all like to do

That might be very pleasant –

Things that would be quite delightful –

But we can't, because they're wrong.

They're wrong! They're forbidden!

They're wrong! They're forbidden!

We can't, because they're wrong.

Maybe we'd like to do them,

But we can't, because they're wrong!

Maybe we'd like to do them,

But we can't, because they're wrong!

Ha ha ha ha –

Yes, they're wrong!

Ha ha ha ha –

Yes, they're wrong!

Maybe we'd like to do them,

But we can't, because they're wrong!

Maybe we'd like to do them,

But we can't, because they're wrong!



[22]:

(The servants dance wildly. The dancing ends.)

[23]:

ALCIMEDES:

Your servants seem a little wild this morning.

AEOLA:

Yes – I think I'll punish them today.

(Aeola and Alcimedes are silent again.)

ALCIMEDES:

And this coffee –

AEOLA:

Yes –

ALCIMEDES:

You've brewed it so well –

AEOLA:

Yes, I use –

ALCIMEDES:

It's really like a drink –

AEOLA:

– fresh beans. . .

ALCIMEDES:

– of the gods. . .

AEOLA:

Oh! (He has dropped his spoon.)

ALCIMEDES:

Ha!

AEOLA:

You've dropped your spoon!

ALCIMEDES:

Ha ha!

AEOLA:

Wait – (She crawls under the table.)

ALCIMEDES:

No –

AEOLA:

I'll get it –

ALCIMEDES:

No, please – (He follows her.)

AEOLA:

Wait –

ALCIMEDES:

No – no – Please – (Their hands touch.)

AEOLA:

Ah!

ALCIMEDES:

An inadvertent gesture –

AEOLA:  
Here's – your – spoon –

[24]:  
(They are silent for a long time. They sit back at the table.)

[25]:  
(Chronilos returns.)

CHRONILOS:  
Oh – is something the matter?

SERVANTS: (in a flurry)  
What? Why?

AEOLA:  
What do you mean?

CHRONILOS:  
Your expressions seem so serious, so grave –

ALCIMEDES:  
I'm sure it's my tiring journey  
That has made me so grave,  
And your wife must be feeling  
Compassion for me.

CHRONILOS:  
Oh – yes – compassion –  
She feels compassion for you. . .

ALCIMEDES:  
Oh – yes – compassion –  
She feels compassion for me. . .

AEOLA:  
Oh – yes – compassion –  
I feel compassion for him. . .

SERVANTS:  
Oh – yes – compassion –  
She feels compassion for him. . .

ALL:  
Oh – yes – compassion –

{ I feel compassion for him. . .  
She feels compassion for him. . .  
You feel compassion for me. . .

{ I feel compassion for him. . .  
She feels compassion for him. . .  
You feel compassion for me. . .

[26]:  
(The First Act of the opera written by Jane and Mr. Smith is over. The scene slowly shifts to a moonlit lake in a forest. There are bells in the distance. Act Two begins.)

[27]:  
(Aeola enters, in a nightgown.)

AEOLA:  
When did the clock strike midnight?  
I didn't hear it.  
Yet now it calls out one – two – three.  
And now – such silence.  
Nothing stirs.  
Every creature sleeps.  
Yet I, cold and tired,

Driven from my bed by a restless fever,  
Am chased through the night like a hunted beast,  
My feet carrying me forward to an unknown purpose.  
Why have I run through briar and bush to this silent ground,  
As if it were a field of battle,  
And I a soldier commanded to fight upon it?  
Ah! What was that? (She sees Alcimedes.) Ah!

ALCIMEDES:  
You? . . .

AEOLA:  
Yes. . .

[28]:

ALCIMEDES:  
Does no one sleep in this accursèd land?

AEOLA:  
accursèd?

ALCIMEDES:  
Yes – accursèd to me.  
Because before I arrived upon it  
I enjoyed a proud and virtuous life.

AEOLA:  
Yes? And now?

ALCIMEDES:  
Don't pretend you do not see it!

AEOLA:  
See? See?

ALCIMEDES

It is destiny's hand that has guided us here,  
As surely as it is my hand that holds this sword!

[29]:

AEOLA:  
Your words mean nothing.  
I do not understand...  
Oh, what a wonderful tunic!  
Such a noble design.

ALCIMEDES:  
Why have you unfastened your hair tonight,  
So it lies across your shoulders?  
Why is your cheek so red?  
Your dress is made of the sheerest stuff –

AEOLA:  
A lusty beard becomes a warrior's face.  
And full lips – ah –  
Denote a manly heart. (They kiss.)  
Ah – many kisses have I enjoyed in my husband's bed,  
But none like this.

ALCIMEDES:  
Hold me close to you, Aeola.  
I feel we are riding on a stream of joy  
Which will soon flow into an ocean of grief.

AEOLA:  
This moment is a tiny candle's light  
Trembling in the face of dark eternity.  
But the light itself holds eternity in it.

**[30]:**

AEOLA AND ALCIMEDES:

The night stands still.  
All motion stops around us.  
We stand at the edge of a forest lake  
Under the starry sky,  
You hold my hand –  
Suddenly we're flying,  
The lake shines up below us  
Under the starry sky.

Your skin grows cold.  
There's an icy wind in our faces.  
Our lips and eyes are burning  
Under the starry sky.

We won't come home.  
We're climbing higher and higher.  
The earth grows gray and distant  
Under the starry sky.

The night stands still,  
But we are racing through it,  
Under the starry sky.  
(They turn towards each other, embrace, and sleep. Alcimedes's sword lies beside them.)

**[31]:**

(Chronilos enters. He doesn't see the sleeping figures.)

CHRONILOS:

Ah, what a magical night!  
As I lay in bed,  
Thinking of the blessings of my life,  
Too happy to sleep,

A beautiful bird flew by my window,

As blue as the sea.

If I follow this beautiful bird, I thought,

He will lead me to some beautiful sight.

But where has he gone? (He sees Aeola and Alcimedes.)

Ah!

What horror is this?

You vile beasts!

(He seizes Alcimedes's sword and stabs Aeola and Alcimedes as they sleep. For a long while he stands there transfixed, and then he finally cries out:) Oh, what have I done? (He stabs himself, crying out in pain.)

**[32]:**

(Aeola and Alcimedes slowly awaken. They can't see the body of Chronilos, who has fallen some distance away.)

ALCIMEDES:

A strange sound? . . .

AEOLA:

What?

ALCIMEDES:

Aeola. . . your dress is red. . .

AEOLA:

Your tunic also. . . I can hardly stand.

ALCIMEDES:

I can hardly breathe. (They manage to rise. Aeola suddenly points to the sky.)

AEOLA:

Oh, look, Alcimedes!



The shining, glittering bird!  
It's flying higher and higher.  
Let's follow it now.  
Let's see where it goes!

ALCIMEDES:  
Oh no! No!

AEOLA:  
Oh – yes –

ALCIMEDES:  
Oh no – no!

AEOLA:  
Don't be frightened.  
We'll be together.  
I'll protect you.  
Take my hand. (They are silent for a moment. He does not take her hand yet.)

**[33]:**

AEOLA AND ALCIMEDES:  
The night stands still.  
All motion stops around us.  
We stand at the edge of a forest lake  
Under the starry sky.

AEOLA  
You hold my hand – (They hold hands.)  
Suddenly we're flying.  
The lake shines up below us  
Under the starry sky.

ALCIMEDES:  
Your skin grows cold.  
There's an icy wind in our faces.  
Our lips and eyes are burning  
Under the starry sky. (They sink to the ground.)

ALCIMEDES AND AEOLA:  
We won't come home.  
We're climbing higher and higher.  
The earth grows gray and distant  
Under the starry sky.  
(They die. The chorus of servants enters.)

SERVANTS:  
The night stands still,  
But they are racing through it,  
Flying past the moon,  
Under the starry sky.

(The opera written by Jane and Mr. Smith ends.)

**[34]:**

(Mr. Smith, now around fifty years old, recalls what happened next.)

SMITH:

When the performance ended, I was sweating like a pig. I didn't speak to anyone or look at anyone. I took off my Alcimedes costume, got dressed, got in my car, and headed for the airport to go to the city. As soon as I sat in my seat on the plane, I started to experience an unbearable sort of anxiety.

**[35]:**

(Mr. Smith sits anxiously on an airplane, waiting for it take off. Mood music plays. A stewardess approaches him.)

STEWARDESS:  
Are you all right, Sir?

MR. SMITH:  
Fine, thanks.

STEWARDESS:  
Guess you're just feeling a bit jittery this evening – ha ha – you look a bit pale –

MR. SMITH:  
Oh no, no –

STEWARDESS:  
I mean, your teeth are chattering...

MR. SMITH:  
Thanks. I'm fine.

STEWARDESS:  
Are you afraid of flying?

MR. SMITH:  
Yes, it's frightening. Thank you.  
(The stewardess goes away and comes back with a tray of drinks.)

STEWARDESS:  
Would you like a little something to calm your nerves, Sir?

MR. SMITH:  
What do you mean? Like what?

STEWARDESS:  
Well, they're promoting a new kind of vodka this month. Here, try some. It goes down very smoothly.

MR. SMITH:  
Christ, it gets down to your toes in a hurry, doesn't it? Ha ha!

STEWARDESS:  
It really does.  
(She goes away and returns with some magazines.)

STEWARDESS:  
Sir, would you care for some reading material during your flight? We have "Sexual Intercourse," "Sex Today," "Sexual needs," "Mind-boggling –"

MR. SMITH:  
No, I'm fine. Thank you.

(She goes away. After a few moments, he calls out to her.)

MR. SMITH:  
Hey – have they closed the doors already?

STEWARDESS:  
Yes – they have.

MR. SMITH:  
But – I'm not sure I want to go. I –

STEWARDESS:  
Well – try to relax, Sir – well be taking off in just a moment.

[36]:  
(The other passengers on the plane form a chorus as the plane takes off.)

MR. SMITH:  
I fell asleep on the plane. The stewardess had to wake me when we landed.  
(Landing in a large city, Mr. Smith goes to a hotel.)

MR. SMITH:

I ate my dinner in the hotel dining room. I had a couple of glasses of wine. I relaxed.

**[37]: Vocalist's Song**

MR. SMITH:

Although there weren't many customers in the dining room, a vocalist was performing there.

VOCALIST:

The day will soon be over,  
The night will give us rest.  
Sweetly sleeping heads will  
Lie on Mother's breast.  
The cows are in their barn now,  
The horses in their stalls,  
And in the house the little mice  
Lie down inside the walls.

Tonight

Tonight

The dove will fly tonight.

Tonight

Tonight

The pussycat will cry.

Tonight

Tonight

The crow will fly tonight.

Tonight

Tonight

The pussycat will cry.

The sun has gone to China,  
The moon is here with us.  
Not even the littlest baby  
Is making any fuss.  
The ducks are in their pond now,

The deer are in their glades.

The flies are all asleep now

Behind our window shades.

Tonight

Tonight

The dove will fly tonight.

Tonight

Tonight

The pussycat will cry.

Tonight

Tonight

The crow will fly tonight.

Tonight

Tonight

The pussycat will cry.

MR. SMITH:

As I finished my dessert, the vocalist came over to my table. We had a few drinks together and became friendly. Then we went to a small room she knew about and made love. It was the first time I'd touched another person in many, many years.

**[38]:**

MR. SMITH:

Back in my own hotel room, I lay in bed and thought about all my years at the school. (Images of his years as a teacher come back to him. He thinks of the school chorus.)

CHORUS OF STUDENTS:

The snow fills the valley,  
Ice fills every crack,  
Every creature hides away,  
Great birds with giant wings  
Fly off across the water.  
Tiny beetles burrow in the ground,  
Inside the trunks of trees,

Beneath the frozen streams,  
Life lies curled up, sleeping, waiting.  
Life lies curled up, sleeping, waiting.

**[39]:**  
MR. SMITH: I called room service and ordered a coffee. A bellman brought it to me, and we decided to have sex.

**[40]:**  
JANE:  
After the performance of the opera, he left for the city, but I followed him there. I figured out where he was staying. And around four in the morning, I went to see him, unannounced.

**[41]: Interlude A**  
(Jane travels to find Mr. Smith. She approaches the door of his hotel room.)

**[42]:**  
JANE: When he came to the door of his hotel room, dressed in a bathrobe, he was ruined-looking – weak, sweaty, maybe a bit crazy. He motioned me in with an odd gesture, and we sat silently in two chairs for a long time.

**[43]: Interlude B**  
(Mr. Smith lets Jane into his room. They sit awkwardly together.)

**[44]:**  
JANE:  
I went into the bathroom, then came out naked. He stood up and let out a gasp of terror, panic – as if I were a killer, loose in his room, as if I were a gigantic insect, chasing him in the room.

**[45]: Interlude C**  
(Mr. Smith is agitated as Jane comes into the room naked.)

**[46]:**  
JANE:  
I got in the bed and hid under the covers. I was crying, sobbing. He came over to comfort me. I screamed, I slapped him, he held my wrists, and we struggled. His robe fell open. Then I held on to him, and for a moment he became like a lamb. Then he became like a dog. He was rough, brutal, kissing me harshly with a mouth like iron.

**[47]: Interlude D**  
(Jane and Mr. Smith struggle.)

**[48]:**  
JANE:  
He wanted to be nicer. He didn't know what to do. For what seemed like hours, he squirmed and crawled over every inch of my body, hoping to make me come, to no avail. And then after a while I got up and took a shower, and by the time I came out of the bathroom, dawn was peeping through the window. I put on my underwear, we sat together quietly for a while, and then he called room service and ordered up a lovely breakfast for the two of us.

**[49]: Interlude E**  
(They eat breakfast.)

**[50]:**  
JANE:  
An hour later, we said goodbye. No hugs or kisses. He was looking at the floor, and he took my left hand, and he squeezed it very hard for a long time, and then I left. Then back to the airport, back to school. And the next day, Monday, there we were. He was there, and I was there. I had wondered if maybe it might be awkward, but it wasn't at all. I sang in the chorus, and he conducted, and it all was fine.

**[51]:**  
(Mr. Smith conducts, and the chorus sings.)  
CHORUS OF STUDENTS:  
The snow fills the valley,  
Ice fills every crack,

Every creature hides away.

Great birds with giant wings

Fly off across the water.

Tiny beetles burrow in the ground.

Inside the trunks of trees,

Beneath the frozen streams,

Life lies curled up, sleeping, waiting.

Life lies curled up, sleeping, waiting.

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*The Music Teacher* was originally produced in New York City

by The New Group: Scott Elliott, Artistic Director

Stage Director and Set Designer: Tom Cairns

Lighting Designer: Matt Frey

Costumes: Kaye Voyce

Sound: Shane Retig

Video Design: Greg Emetaz

Choreography: David Neumann

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