

CAST LISTS

BASTIANELLO

Male Performer #1

BASTIANELLO (THE YOUNGER), LAMBENT: Paul Appleby

Male Performer #2

LUCIANO: Matt Boehler

Male Performer #3

BASTIANELLO (THE ELDER), FREDIANO, IPPOLITO, LINO: Patrick Mason

Female Performer #1

AMADORA, ETTALINA, STELLADORA: Lisa Vroman

Female Performer #2

ORTENSIA, EUSTACIA: Sasha Cooke

LUCREZIA

LUCREZIA: Sasha Cooke

CHUCHO: Matt Boehler

LORENZO: Paul Appleby

IGNACIO: Patrick Mason

ANNUNCIATA: Lisa Vroman

Bastianello

(Singers Listed in Order of Appearance)

- 1) Aria: "Up here..." (*Appleby*) [3:09]
- 2) Arietta: "A wedding party's aftermath..." [3:31]
(*Appleby, Boehler, Mason, Vroman, Cooke*)
- 3) Trio: "Life, life...so sad, so sad..." (*Cooke, Vroman, Mason*) [8:22]
- 4) Aria: "Wasted wine" (*Boehler*) [4:31]
Duet: "I'm putting on my pants" (*Mason, Cooke*)
- 5) Quarter: "Behold this maiden blushing" (*Vroman, Cooke, Appleby, Mason*) [7:47]
Aria: "As is the custom of this town" (*Appleby*)
- 6) Aria: "The sun soon set" (*Appleby*) [7:11]
Aria: "Every month, I can find her here" (*Mason*)
- 7) Arietta: "So he returned that very night" (*Appleby*) [1:16]
- 8) Quarter: "A toast ...to love" (*Boehler, Appleby, Vroman, Cooke*) [2:56]

Lucrezia

(Singers Listed in Order of Appearance)

- 1) Introduction (*Blier, Barrett*) [:40]
- 2) "Friend, I came as quickly as I could" (*Boehler, Appleby*) [1:02]
- 3) Duet: "I do not know her name" (*Appleby, Boehler*) [3:05]
- 4) Duet: "Okay I think I have a plan" (*Boehler, Appleby*) [1:31]
- 5) "Now go!" (*Boehler, Appleby*) [1:13]
- 6) Aria: "An admirer" (*Cooke*) [4:46]
- 7) "Friend, this man was brought to us by God" (*Boehler, Mason*) [2:42]
Duet: "A son!" (*Boehler, Mason*)
- 8) "Ah, look the miracle is here" (*Boehler, Appleby, Mason*) [6:27]
- 9) "Has the world produced a bigger ass?" (*Boehler, Appleby*) [1:12]
- 10) "Señora, congratulations" (*Boehler, Vroman, Cooke*) [5:23]
- 11) "Not yet, but in a while" (*Vroman, Cooke*) [1:55]
- 12) Duet: "We women" (*Vroman, Cooke*) [2:02]
- 13) "Come let us approach" (*Vroman, Cooke*) [2:29]
"Peace be with you, Padre" (*Cooke, Appleby*)
- 14) Aria: "His manner is gentle" (*Cooke*) [3:42]
- 15) Aria: "Never let it be said" (*Cooke*) [1:19]
- 16) Arietta: "Oh I am a wand'ring fool" (*Appleby*) [1:11]
- 17) Duet: "Come back to bed" (*Cooke, Appleby*) [5:06]
- 18) "Six on the dot" (*Mason, Cooke, Boehler, Appleby*) [02:44]
- 19) Quintet: "Out into the morning" (*Ensemble*) [3:55]

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AYOLA IS A TERRIBLE THING, a serious violation of the law, and I am 100% against it. But in 2007 the dark cloud of payola had an unexpected silver lining for NYFOS. A group of major record labels came under investigation for allegedly paying off radio stations to air their CDs—"pay for play," it's called, and it was not something upon which our former State Attorney General Eliot Spitzer smiled. When the music companies settled, the funds were earmarked to support "music education and appreciation for New York State residents."

As soon as NYFOS' Executive Director Elizabeth Hurwitt got wind of the grant that summer, she called from her cell phone. We had an intense mobile-to-mobile brainstorming session, batting around ideas for a project to cap our twentieth anniversary season. "Think big," she said, "like maybe an evening-length song cycle." But I gravitated to the idea of a double bill. "Two song cycles?" asked Elizabeth. And then I heard myself say, "No. Two operas. Two comic operas."

A quick phone call to Michael Barrett and we were on our way. There was never any doubt about the artists we wanted to commission. Bill Bolcom has been a role model, mentor, and friend to Michael and me for decades. All of us groove to Bill's iconoclastic, uninhibited embrace of every musical style from plainchant to hip-hop, and we treasure his organic, free-range sense of humor. It didn't cross my mind at the time that this opera would commemorate Bill's seventieth birthday year—to me, Bill will always be the youthful 38-year-old guy he was when I met him. It was great to be part of his platinum year, but he's been platinum for decades.

John Musto was the other composer that instantly sprang to my mind that day. He too is a friend of long duration. All of us have been gratified to watch John move

successfully from song and chamber music to the larger scale of concertos and operas in the last few seasons. He's family to us—an artistic brother, and perhaps the most brilliant of all the siblings.

I knew the lightning rod this project required: the librettist and lyricist Mark Campbell, who had written the librettos for John's operas, *Volpone* and *Later the Same Evening*. I was quite sure that John would choose Mark as his librettist in any case. But I also knew that Bill was looking for a new collaborator after the death of his longtime creative partner Arnold Weinstein in 2005. I felt that Mark shared many of Arnold's gifts: humor, literary depth, musical savvy, and a command of rhymed verse that was both patrician and irreverent. And he, too, is part of our creative family.

With a little persuasion from the very persuasive Elizabeth Hurwitt, everyone signed on for the project: a pair of comedies using a cast of five, with an "orchestra" of two pianos—family-sized operas written by and for the NYFOS family. Bill Bolcom's music for *Lucrezia* is exuberant and tonal, the opulent sound of desire. John Musto's musical world in *Bastianello* is more elusive and complex: chords often include elements of both major and minor, defying easy categorization. It is a fitting musical landscape for a piece that explores the way one moment can embrace many conflicting feelings. In an act of true poetic justice, the sin of payola gave birth to *Lucrezia*, a riotous piece in which greed and deception are thwarted, and *Bastianello*, a complex work in which a man learns the lesson of forgiveness.

How appropriate that our first commissioned operas would be opera *buffas*. NYFOS has always placed a high value on humor, and we take comedy pretty seriously. It has a special way of opening people's hearts, creating a sense of complicity between performer and listener. For this reason, I think comedy is a wonderful way

to help audiences appreciate new musical experiences. These two works, created and performed by cherished friends, beautifully fulfill the original mission of the New York State Music Fund. This recording is taken from a live performance at the Caramoor Center for Music and the Arts, along with a supplementary session the next day to quiet some of the audience noise (mostly laughter, thank goodness), and to polish the operas for their CD debut.

—STEVEN BLIER

The above is excerpted from the original program notes written by Steven Blier for the premiere of Bastianello/Lucrezia in March, 2008. To read the notes in full, please visit <http://nyfos.org/BastianelloLucreziaProgramNotes.php>.

BIOGRAPHIES

PAUL APPLEBY is in his first year of the Metropolitan Opera's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program. He is also in his second year of The Juilliard School's Artist Diploma in Opera Studies Program, where he recently performed the role of Fenton in Verdi's *Falstaff*. Other recent engagements include Agenore in Mozart's *Il re pastore* at the Opera Theatre of St. Louis

and Eumete in Monteverdi's *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* in his debut with the Wolf Trap Opera Company. As a recitivist, he has performed extensively with Steven Blier, both with the New York Festival of Song and in solo recital. In addition to his *Lucretia* and *Bastianello*, Mr. Appleby's other NYFOS appearances include *Island Journeys* (2007); *No Song is Safe From Us* (2008); and *The Last Time I Saw Paris* (2008). Mr. Appleby is a

National Winner of the 2009 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, and a recipient of a 2009 Sara Tucker study grant from the Richard Tucker Music Foundation. He received his master's degree from The Juilliard School in 2008 where he continues to study with Marlena Malas, and received his bachelor's degree in English literature and music from the University of Notre Dame.



NYFOS co-founder and Associate Artistic Director **MICHAEL BARRETT** is Chief Executive and General Director of the Caramoor Center for Music and the Arts. In 1992, he co-founded the Moab Music Festival with his wife, violist Leslie Tomkins. Mr. Barrett has been a guest conductor with the Orchestra of St. Luke's, the New York Philharmonic, the London Symphony, and the Israel Philharmonic, among others. He also has served variously as conductor and producer of numerous

special projects, including the world premiere of John Musto's *Volpone*.

Mr. Barrett's discography includes: *Spanish Love Songs*, with Lorraine Hunt Lieberson, Steven Blier, and Joseph Kaiser; *Evidence of Things Not Seen* (New World Records); *Aaron Kernis: 100 Greatest Dance Hits* (New Albion); *On the Town* (Deutsche Grammophon); *Kaballah* (Koch Classics) by Stewart Wallace and Michael Koric; *Schumann Lieder* with Lorraine Hunt and Kurt Ollman (Koch); and *Arias and Barcarolles* (Koch) by Leonard Bernstein (Grammy Award).



STEVEN BLIER co-founded the New York Festival of Song in 1988 with Michael Barrett. Since the Festival's inception he has programmed, performed, translated and annotated over 120 vocal recitals, in programs spanning five centuries of vocal music. He has premiered works of John Corigliano, Ned Rorem,

William Bolcom, John Musto, Paul Moravec, Tobias Picker, Robert Beaser, and Lee Hoiby, many of which were commissioned by NYFOS. Mr. Blier has also appeared in recital with Cecilia Bartoli, Renée Fleming, Susan Graham, Samuel Ramey, and Frederica von Stade on stages ranging from Carnegie Hall to La Scala.

Mr. Blier is on the faculty of The Juilliard School, and has been active in encouraging young recitalists at the Wolf Trap Opera Company, Glimmerglass Opera, and the San Francisco Opera Center. He is also part of the artistic team at New York City Opera, where he is a consultant on casting.



MATT BOEHLER's first appearance with The Metropolitan Opera takes place in the 2009-2010 season with Shostakovich's *The Nose*; in the same season, he returns to the Minnesota Opera for Argento's *Casa-*

nova's Homecoming, and to The Juilliard School's FOCUS! Festival for Copland's *The Tender Land*. He has appeared with Five Boroughs Music Festival in the concert, "Manning the Canon: Songs of Gay Life," with Steven Blier; performances with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Opera Theater, Minnesota Opera and the New York Philharmonic. Career highlights include performances of *The Mikado* with the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, *Sweeney Todd* with Wolf Trap Opera.



Composer/pianist **WILLIAM BOLCOM** has received the Pulitzer Prize in Music for *12 New Etudes for Piano*, the National Medal of Arts, and a Grammy for Best Classical Contemporary Composition [one of four awarded his setting of William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*], and was named Composer of the Year by Musical America in 2007. Bolcom's compositions include symphonies, chamber music, concertos,

operas, works for both symphony and brass bands, piano and organ works, and vocal and choral music, and are widely performed and recorded by organizations all over the world.

For over 35 years Bolcom has accompanied his wife, mezzo-soprano Joan Morris, on over two dozen recordings and in concerts of American popular songs as well as *Cabaret Songs* he composed for her with poet Arnold Weinstein, his collaborator for 45 years. Bolcom is retired from the University of Michigan where he taught composition from 1973–2008.



MARK CAMPBELL (librettos). Opera: *Volpone* (Wolf Trap Opera, music by John Musto); *Later The Same Evening* (University of Maryland, National Gallery of Art, music by Musto); *Bastianello/Lucrezia* (New York Festival of Song, Weill Recital Hall, music by Musto and William Bolcom).

Musicals: *Songs From An Unmade Bed* (New York Theatre Workshop); *The Audience* (Transport Group); *Splendor* (American Place Theatre); *Light Shall Lift Them* (Brooklyn Academy of Music). Awards: three Drama Desk Award nominations, two Richard Rodgers Awards from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, a New York Foundation for the Arts Playwriting Fellowship, NEA, First recipient of the Kleban Foundation Award for Lyricist. Upcoming: *The Inspector* (Wolf Trap, music by Musto); *Wheatley's Folly* (DC's Signature Theatre, music by Joseph Thalken, book by Michael Slade); *Silent Night* (Minnesota Opera, music by Kevin Puts); *Rappahannock County* (Virginia Opera, Virginia Arts Festival, University of Richmond, music by Ricky Ian Gordon).



SASHA COOKE starred at the Metropolitan Opera in the premiere of John Adams's *Doctor Atomic* in the role of Kitty Oppenheimer, a role which she subsequently performed with the English National Opera in her European debut. Ms. Cooke's other distinguished performances include Stravinsky's *Pulcinella* and Berlioz's *Les Nuits d'Été* San Francisco Symphony under the baton of Michael Tilson Thomas; the role of Meg in *Falstaff* with the Seattle Opera and the role of Medea in *Giasone* with the Chicago Opera Theater. Ms. Cooke has delivered song recitals at the Lied Center of Kansas, for the Marilyn Horne Foundation, SummerFest in La Jolla, the Bridgehampton Chamber Music Festival, with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, and at the Cosmos Club in Washington, D.C. Upcoming engagements include appearances with the Hong Kong Philharmonic, the Milwaukee, Colorado, Seattle, Modesto, Kansas City, San Diego, and Chicago Symphony Orchestras, and with the

Aspen Festival Orchestra. Ms. Cooke holds degrees from Rice University and The Juilliard School and is a graduate of the Lindemann Young Artist Development Program of the Metropolitan Opera. She was the First Prize winner of the 2007 Young Concert Artists International Auditions.



BARITONE PATRICK MASON has performed and recorded an astonishingly wide range of music spanning the last 10 centuries. Patrick Mason began his career singing early music with groups such as The Waverly Consort, Schola Antiqua and The Boston Camerata, recording for Sony, Erato, Nonesuch and L'Oiseau Lyre. Mason has appeared with orchestras throughout the United States in works by Johannes Brahms, Gustav Mahler, Benjamin Britten (*War Requiem*) and John Adams (*The Wound Dresser*).

Mason's abiding commitment to the

music of our time has led to collaborations with composers Leonard Bernstein, Elliott Carter, George Crumb, and Stephen Sondheim among dozens of others. Patrick Mason has made numerous recordings for Bridge Records: *Songs of Amy Beach* (Grammy finalist, 2006); Franz Schubert's *Winterreise*; *Méodies* (French Songs); *American Orchestral Song*, featuring works of Horatio Parker, Virgil Thompson, Charles Griffes, John Alden Carpenter and Roy Harris; and songs by John Musto (with the composer at the piano). Mason is a Berton Coffin Faculty Fellow at the University of Colorado in Boulder and is the vocal coordinator of the John Duffy Composer's Institute.



JOHN MUSTO, one of our most versatile musicians, is now composing his fourth opera, which will be premiered in 2011. He is pianist for the Bridge recording of nineteen of his art songs, which are universally regarded as among the fin-

est of any living composer and which Peermusic has published in his *Collected Songs* for voice and piano. His orchestral works are highly regarded, as are the other compositions in which he appears frequently as a performer: his chamber and solo-piano works, and his two piano concertos. He has embarked on performances of those concertos that will culminate in their release by Bridge Records.

John Musto has been the recipient of an enviable list of major awards, grants, and residencies, has lectured or given master classes in the most prominent music schools and festivals and as composer-in-residence at New York's Mannes College of Music.



From Broadway to Classics, on Stage and in Concert, **LISA VROMAN** has established herself as one of America's most versatile voices. Lisa starred for several years on Broadway as Christine Daaé in

The Phantom of the Opera. As Christine, she garnered Theatre Critic's awards for the role in a record breaking run in San Francisco, and did a return engagement at the Ahmanson Theatre in Los Angeles. Ms. Vroman starred as Rosabella in *The Most Happy Fella*, making her New York City Opera debut with Paul Sorvino in the title role. This season Lisa made her Carnegie Hall debut with the New York Pops, starred as Lili Vanessi in *Kiss Me Kate* with Glimmerglass Opera, played Marian Paroo in *The Music Man* with Shirley Jones (Mrs. Paroo) and Patrick Cassidy (Harold Hill) at The Bushnell Theatre in Hartford CT; sang the role of Birdie in *Regina* with Utah Opera, conducted by Keith Lockhart; and made her New Jersey Opera debut as Rosalinda in *Die Fledermaus*. Her Broadway debut was in *Aspects of Love*, and she is the first to play both Pantine and Cosette in *Les Misérables*.



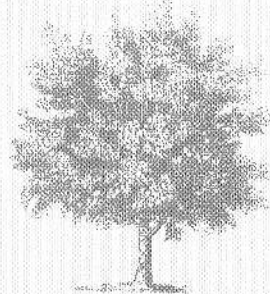
BASTIANELLO

Based on an Italian folktale

Libretto by Mark Campbell

Music by John Musto

Libretto © 2008 by Mark Campbell



CAST

There is much doubling, tripling and quadrupling of roles, as outlined below.

Male Performer #1

BASTIANELLO (THE YOUNGER), a student in his early 20s who has returned home from college for the summer. Energetic and engaging.

LAMBENT, the horse, laconic, an aesthete. An equine Noël Coward.

Male Performer #2:

LUCIANO, in his late 20s. Recently betrothed to Amadora, he is the son of Ortensia, son-in-law of Bastianello (the elder). Rash and somewhat callow at the start with a bad case of Italian male pride.

Male Performer #3:

BASTIANELLO (THE ELDER), late 60s, Amadora's father, Luciano's father-in-law. A sweet old man. And wise.

FREDIANO, mid-50s, a farmer who can't get his pants on. Married to Ettalina.

IPPOLITO, mid-50s, the master of Lambent, the horse. Pragmatic, given to efficient if inhumane solutions.

LINO, an elderly man whose wife has drowned in a lake.

Female Performer #1:

AMADORA, mid-20s, recently betrothed to Luciano. A beautiful and generous woman, but not without her moods.

ETTALINA, late 40s, the nagging wife of the farmer, Frediano.

STELLADORA, late 60s, the mother of the bride, Eustacia. A pious woman.

Female Performer #2:

ORTENSIA, late 50s, Luciano's mother, Amadora's mother-in-law. A typical mother-in-law, overly protective of her son, combative with his wife.

EUSTACIA, late 30s, about to be a bride. Plain, sad, whiny.

SETTING

Rural Italy, c. 1700.

Scene 1: A tree, now.

Scene 2: A wooden table with chairs, the yard of Luciano's farmhouse, twenty-some years ago.

Scene 3: The wine cellar of Luciano's farmhouse, twenty-some years ago.

Scene 4: A wooden chair, another yard of another farmhouse, twenty-some years ago.

Scene 5: A low Gothic arch with angels, standing outside a small village, twenty-some years ago.

Scene 6: A lake, a full moon, twenty-some years ago.

Scene 7: The tree again, now.

Scene 8: A wooden table with chairs, the yard of Luciano's farmhouse, now.

SCENE 1.

[A tree. A young man, who we later—much later—learn is Bastianello (the younger), is partially hidden among the branches at the top. He addresses the audience directly and warmly.]

Bastianello (the younger):

Up here...

No, not there...

Not there...

Up here.

That's right. Here.

You may want to know
And rightfully so

Why someone like me
Would be in a tree.

The reason is this:
At college I miss

The unbridled joy
I felt as a boy...

Up here
Close to the sky
Among the branches
Above the world...

My spirit these days
Is lost in a maze

Of scholarly thought
And well-worded rot.

Of theories of art
And Hobbes and Descartes.

The murky morass
Of hours spent in class.

No wonder when there
I long for the air...

Up here
Close to the sky,
Among the branches,
Above the world.
Up here
Where the view is clear
And goes on forever.

As it did
When I was a boy,
This tree bestows
Incredible sight.
There on the left
Is the great wall of China
And that's the Amazon
There, on the right.
And in front of me...

The future!
Bright and open and vast.
And in back of me—
Of course, you
Can see it, too—
The past.

This story (at last)
Is one from the past.

(Well, you're not here to see
Me talk about a tree.)

Though it was oft told
The story's not old.

In fact, one would gauge
We're near the same age.
It happened not far
From where we now are...

SCENE 2.

[A wooden table is brought on/revealed with five chairs. Four guests sit around it: The bride Amadora, the groom Luciano, the father of the bride, Bastianello (the elder), and the mother of the groom, Ortensia.]

Bastianello (the younger): *[Describing the scene.]*

A wedding party's aftermath...
It's late and all the guests have gone.
Just the mother of the groom,
The father of the bride,
And the young bride and groom, their knot newly tied,
Still linger on...

Bastianello (the elder):

One last toast:
To the bride,
My beloved daughter, Amadora!
May you enjoy the life
Your mother and I enjoyed.

Ortensia:

One last toast:
To the groom,
My beloved son, Luciano!
I pray you avoid the life
Your father—the rat!—
May he rest in peace,
And I had.

Bastianello (the elder):

And may I add:
A toast
To love...

Ortensia, Luciano, Bastianello (the elder):

To love,
Hear, hear!
To love,
Hear, hear!
To love...

Bastianello (the elder): *[With a quiet dignity.]*

May it greet us every morning
With an open smile,
Fill every corner of our houses,
Conquer every trivial trial.
May it warm us when we're cold,
Thrill us when we're old,
And may it grace our children.
And lastly,
May it brighten in the fading light
And lead us sweetly into night.

Ortensia, Luciano, Amadora, Bastianello (the elder):

May it brighten in the fading light,
And lead us sweetly into night.
[They raise their glasses and toast.]

Ortensia, Luciano, Amadora, Bastianello (the elder):

To love.
To love.

[There is a brief pause, a moment of melancholy. Amadora looks at her father and realizes he looks elder.]

Amadora: *[Recovering.]*

A fine toast.

Luciano:

Very fine.

Bastianello (the elder):

Thank you.

Ortensia:

I'm out of wine.

Luciano:

I'll get it—

Amadora:

No, let me.

Luciano:

I will count the seconds till your return.

One...

[They kiss warmly.]

Two...

[They kiss a little too warmly.]

Three...

Ortensia: *[Impatiently.]*
The wine?!

[Amadora carries an empty jug to a humble wine cellar with two barrels.]

SCENE 3.

Bastianello (the younger): *[Describing the scene.]*

She went to the cellar
And undid the tap.
But while the wine poured out,
Something began to snap.

[Amadora undoes the tap of a barrel and places the jug under it. She looks up to muse, forgetting the tap is still running.]

Amadora:

This is the happiest moment of my life!
The happiest, happiest, happiest moment of my life!
Happiest, happiest, happiest...

[She starts to sob.]

Moment of my...

[Maudlinly.]

Life...

Life...

So sad.

So sad.

Bad and fragile and brief.
A few precious seconds of joy,
And decades of grief.

Life...

Life...

Why try?

Why try?

Why not give up instead?

You're born, go through life, fall apart

And then wake up dead.

(Maybe I should have stopped at that last swig of red.)

And when you're gone,

When you're gone

Bam! Forgotten!

Not even missed!

Life has the horrible taste to go on

As if you didn't exist.

[Suddenly happy.]

Ah, but Luciano!

Luciano!

He is a beautiful man.

And I will give him a beautiful son.

And we,

We will call the little fellow

Bastianello! After my father!

Bastianello!

He'll have sparkling eyes.

Bastianello!

And a smile as bright as day.

But then...

But then...

[Suddenly tragic.]

What if the little bastard DIES!?

[Suddenly indignant that her Italian son could commit a worse crime.]

Or worse, MOVES AWAY!?

[Miserable again.]

Strife...

Strife...

That's all

Life is...

[Amadora is interrupted by Ortensia rushing on.]

Ortensia:

Amadora, where's the wine?

You're ruining our drinking!

Amadora:

I don't know.

I came down here

And started thinking...

Ortensia:

Oh, don't do that!

Amadora:

Life...

Life...

So sad.

So sad.

So sad and fragile and brief

A few precious seconds of joy

And decades of grief.

[Now Ortensia gets caught up in the maudlin mood.]

Life...

Life...

Why try?

Why try?

Why not give up instead?

You're born, go through life, fall apart

And then wake up dead.

And when you're gone,

When you're gone!

Bam! Forgotten!

Not even missed!

Life has the horrible taste to go on

As if...

Ortensia:

As fragile as me without wine?

Decades? Try centuries!

Life...

So sad.

So sad.

You're lucky you didn't have mine!

Dead, dead, so very, very dead...

And when you're gone,

When you're gone!

Bam! Forgotten!

Not even missed!

Life has the horrible taste to go on

[Bastianello (the elder) rushes on, interrupting them.]

Bastianello (the elder):

Where is the wine, my cherished daughter?
We've been reduced to drinking water!

Amadora:

Life...
Life...
So sad...
So sad...
Sad and fragile and brief.
A few precious seconds
of joy
And decades of grief.

Ortensia:

Life...
Life...
So sad...
So sad...
Sad and fragile and brief.
A few precious seconds
of joy
Centuries!

Bastianello (the elder):

Sad and fragile and brief.
Decades!
Millenniums!

[Bastianello (the elder) is also caught up in the maudlin mood.]

Amadora:

Life...
Life...
Why try?
Why try?

Ortensia:

Life...
Life...
Why try?
Why try?

Bastianello (the elder):

Life...
Life...
Why try?
Why try?

[Luciano rushes on, interrupting them. He is angry.]

Luciano:

Can't you do a simple errand?
I've waited long enough up there, and...

[Suddenly noticing that the tap on the barrel is still running and the wine has overflowed the jug, creating a puddle on the cellar floor.]

Luciano:

You let the wine run out...

Amadora:

I let the...?

Luciano:

You let the wine run out.

Bastianello (the elder):

We let the...?

Ortensia:

She let the...

Luciano:

Wine run out.

Bastianello (the elder):

Luciano! It's only wine.

Amadora/Bastianello (the elder):

It's only wine.

Luciano:
It's only wine?
It's only wine?
It's only wine?!
Wasted wine...
Nothing is worse
Than wasted wine.
Wasted tears, no,
Or wasted years, no!
They don't compare
To the despair
Of

Wasted wine...
Worse than a curse
Un-tasted wine.
Swig it, swill it
But PLEASE don't spill it,
That's only cruel.

Amadora:
Oh, what a fool!

[This is no longer just about the wine; Luciano's masculinity is on the line.]

Luciano:
Think of the vines
That rose from the mud.
Think of the sun
That blessed every one.
Think of the grapes
That gave of their blood!
Think of the time
To reach that sweet goal:
All the weeks spent
To watch it ferment,

Amadora: *[Mockingly.]*
Think of the foot
That gave of its sole!

Luciano: *[Enraged.]*
To end up as nothing more
Than a purple puddle on the cellar floor!

Wasted wine...
It's just perverse!
You've crossed the line.
It may grieve you
But I must leave you,
Leave you, now!

Amadora:
Leave me!

Ortensia/Bastianello (the elder):
Leave her!

And won't return
Until I've found six people
Six people who
Are more foolish, more idiotic, truly stupider
And more without a clue
Than the three of you!

[Suddenly, there's a shouting match—Ortensia, accusatory, Bastianello (the elder), pacifist, and Amadora, defiant.]

Ortensia:

You can't leave her!
It's your wedding night!
That isn't right!
You can't start a marriage this way!
Luciano, I tried to tell her
But would she listen to me? No!
You should have married Prunella!

Bastianello (the elder) *[With above]:*

Think what you're doing!
This is your wedding night!
You can't start a marriage this way.
[Resorting desperately to his "Toast to Love".]
A toast to love
May it warm us when we're cold
Thrill us when we're old!

Amadora [With above.]

Oh, let him go.
He's only trying to prove who wears the pants!
And that's HIS mistake!
His head is too big!
He can jump in a lake!
And who the Hell is Prunella?!

[They freeze. Lights down on the cellar; up on Luciano walking.]

Bastianello (the younger):

And so he left his home that night
And slept beneath this very tree.
He started out at dawn
To find the fools he sought.
Then met a man and wife both very distraught
As you'll soon see...

SCENE 4.

[Another small farmhouse. Frediano stands on a chair with Ettalina below him holding the open waist of a pair of pants. Luciano enters unseen and observes them.]

Frediano:
Ready?

Ettalina:
Ready.

Frediano:

One...

Two...

Three...

[Frediano jumps from the chair to try to land in his pants, but misses by a long shot.]

Frediano:

You moved them.

Ettalina:

I did not!

Frediano:

I saw you!

At the last second

You moved them!

I'm telling you, you moved them and if I have said it once I've said it many times you know I can't get into them unless you hold them absolutely still! Shut your mouth!

Frediano:

Let's try it again.

One...

Two...

Ettalina:

I did not, I did not

I did not!

I didn't move them and as I have said a thousand times before the only reason you cannot get into them is that you have a rotten sense of aim! Shut your mouth!

[Ettalina crosses herself and "prepares" the pants. Frediano is about to jump when Luciano interrupts him.]

Luciano:

Excuse me, friend:

What are you trying to do?

Frediano:

"What am I trying to do?" he asks...

"What am I trying to do?"

What does it look like I'm trying to do!

What does it look like I'm trying to do?

Think man think!

Only the biggest ignoramus...

The simplest simpleton...

Couldn't tell...

That I'm trying to...

Put on my pants!

Ettalina:

"What am I trying to do?" he asks...

"What am I trying to do?"

What does he look like he's trying to do?

What does he look like he's trying to do?

Use your brain!

The dimmest imbecile...

At a glance...

Dying to...

Put on his pants!

Frediano:

I'm putting on my pants.
And that one was my
One hundredth try.

I'm putting on my pants.
But haven't advanced
Beyond unpants'd.

It's the same damn thing
Every morning!
Up with the sun...

Wood to be chopped...

Pigs to be slopped...

Grain to be ground...

The day's half-gone
And I still don't have my trousers on!

Frediano:

If there is any chance
That you might convey
A better way

Ettalina:

Chores to be done...

Cows to be milked...

Grapes to be picked...

Goats to be kicked...

Utterly pants-less!

Of putting on my pants,
Then you get the prize.
But otherwise...

Keep your goddam questions
To yourself!

Luciano:

Good friend...

There is indeed a better way.

If I may...

[Luciano takes the pants from Ettalina and demonstrates how to put them on.]

Luciano:

Lift one leg,

Find the cuff and stick it through.

When that's done

Do leg number two.

Once both legs

Have been very squarely placed,

Pull the pants

Right up to your waist.

[Luciano gives the pants to Frediano. He awkwardly tries it.]

Ettalina:

Keep your goddam questions
To yourself!

Frediano:
Lift one leg...
Find the cuff...

Luciano:
And stick it through.
When that's done...

Frediano:
Do leg number two.
Ettalina:
It won't work!

Frediano:
Once both legs.

Luciano/Frediano:
Have been very squarely placed
Pull the pants/pull the pants
Right up to your waist.

[Frediano succeeds.]

Frediano/Ettalina:
Blessed Madonna!

[Frediano takes the pants off and tries it again, very excitedly.]

Frediano/Ettalina:
Lift one leg,
Find the cuff and stick it through.
When that's done
Do leg number two.
Once both legs
Have been very squarely placed,
Pull the pants
Right up to your waist.

[Frediano does it again as he sings; Ettalina rumbas.]

Frediano:
Thank you! Thank you!
For your sage advice!
My lot's much improved
And therefore I'm moved
To thank you not just once but twice!

Frediano/Ettalina:
Thank you! Thank you!
For the change you've made!
The grapes can get picked!
The goats can get kicked!
How can such wisdom be repaid?

Luciano:
A good deed is its own reward.

And now your lives have been restored,
Friends, I must bid you adieu.
[Aside, drawing Roman numerals in the air.]
That makes fools
Numbers one and two.

[Bastianello descends the tree, narrating.]

Bastianello (the younger):
He started on his quest again
And felt the midday sun beat down.
He wandered here and there,
His hope had nearly died,
When he approached an arch that stood just outside
A one-horse town.

SCENE 5

[Outside the gate of a village. A Gothic arch with little angels on it. A scene comes together with Ippolito, a horse owner, Stelladora, the mother of the bride, and Eustacia, the bride, who sits sadly atop Lambent, the horse (played by Bastianello the younger). A rather pathetic procession is in progress.]

All (except Eustacia):
Behold this maiden blushing,
Arrayed in fin'ry splendid,
Atop a stallion rushing
To meet her sweet intended.

Eustacia *[Singing dispiritedly with above, belying the forced gaiety of the music.]*
Hosanna! Hosanna!
I am about to be wed...
Hosanna! Hosanna!
When I pass through this gate
To the other side
I will meet my future mate
And be a happy bride.

All (except Eustacia):
Hosanna! Ho—*[Attempting to pass through the low arch, Eustacia hits her head.]*

Eustacia:
Ow, I hit my head.

Ippolito:
She hit her head!

Stelladora:
She hit her head!

Stelladora/Ippolito:
She hit her head!

Stelladora:
Let's try it again.

Ippolito:
From measure ten.

[Lambent backs up. The procession starts again, later in the song.]

All (except Eustacia):

Behold this maiden blushing,
Arrayed in fin'ry splendid,
Atop a stallion rushing
To meet her sweet intended.

Eustacia: *[With above.]*

Hosanna! Hosanna!

I am about to be wed...

Hosanna! Ho—!

[Again, attempting to pass through the low arch, Eustacia hits her head.]

Ow, I hit my head!

Ippolito:

She hit her head!

Stelladora:

She hit her head!

Ippolito/Stelladora:

She hit her head!

Stelladora:

Let's try once more.

Ippolito:

From measure thirty-four.

Eustacia:

I'm getting a lump the size of Mt. Etna!

Eustacia:

I think I detached a ret'na!

[Lambent backs up with a woozy Eustacia. The procession starts again, even later in the song.]

All (except Eustacia):

Behold this maiden blushing,
Arrayed in fin'ry splendid,
Atop a stallion rushing
To meet her sweet intended.

Eustacia: *[Over above, groggy from having hit her head too many times.]*

Ho—! Ho—!

I am a—

Ho—! Ho—!

When I pass...

To the other side...

I will....mate

And be a brappy hide.

[Eustacia hits her head again.]

God damn it to Hell!

Ippolito:

Well, she's clearly too tall.

And the wedding can't be nixed.

I have to say

There's just one way

This can be fixed:

[Offhandedly.]

Cut off her head.
Cut off her head.
Just give her a chop,
And she'll clear the top.

Stelladora: *[Appalled.]*
Cut off her head?!

Ippolito:
That's what I said.
A whack with an axe,
And we can relax.

Stelladora:
But she's my daughter!
You call yourself a Christian?
Someone who lives by the cross?

Ippolito:
Okay, okay, she'll lose her head—
But is that really such a loss?

[Stelladora pauses to consider the question. She doesn't answer it and goes on.]

Stelladora:
This is immoral
As I am a Christian!—
Someone who's much more evolved.
And have to say
There's just one way
This can be solved:

[Equally offhandedly, pointing to Lambert.]

Cut off his legs.
Cut off his legs.
We de-knee the nag
And it's in the bag.

Ippolito:
Cut off his legs!?

Stelladora:
Pop on some pegs,
Attach them with glue,
And then push him through.

Stelladora:
Cut off his legs!

Ippolito:
Cut off her head!

Stelladora:
Cut off his legs!
Just the shanks!

Ippolito:
Thanks, but no shanks!
Cut off her head!

Eustacia:

I want a divorce!

Ippolito:

You have to get married first!

Stelladora:

I won't stand for this lying down!

Eustacia:

I want another horse!

Ippolito:

You heard the boy: this is a one-horse town!

[Luciano has entered. He approaches Lambent. Everyone freezes, fists up.]

Luciano:

Tell me, Dobbin, since your sense
Seems better than anyone's—

Lambent: *[Spoken, very dryly.]*

Oh I get it "sense." As in "horse sense!" Isn't that brilliant!

[Sung.]

The name is Lambent and please dispense
With the asinine equine puns.

Luciano:

Sorry, Lambent, tell me please,
Exactly how this fight began.

Lambent:

...As thrillingly and succinctly as I can.

As is the custom in this town

The bride astride this bay,

(The one in the disastrous gown

And unfortunate décolleté),

Is going to be wed this very day.

She must endure this awful march

To meet her shiftless groom

By passing through this very arch

[Suddenly an interior decorator.]

—Mid-century, fine detail, clever whimsy in the seraphims, often attributed to—

Luciano:

You were about to say?

Lambent:

The arch has got us in this spot

And filled us with such dread.

For it is short and she is not.

And she cannot ascend her wedding bed

Unless I lose my legs or she her head.

A solution that at best is flawed

Especially as I've been freshly shod.

[The fight unfreezes.]

Stelladora/Eustacia:	Ippolito/Other voices:
Cut off his legs!	Cut off her head!
Cut off his legs!	Cut off her head!
Cut off his legs!	Cut off her head!

Ippolito:
Look, we're both Christian,
I know what you're feeling,
In my heart these feelings aren't foreign.
To end this fight
We'll do what's right
And flip a florin.

[Ippolito removes a coin from his pants.]

Ippolito:
Heads, head,
Tails, legs.

Stelladora:
No, heads, legs,
Tails, head.

Ippolito:
No, legs, head,
Head, tails!

Stelladora:
No, heads, head,
Tails, legs!

Ippolito:
Very well then...

[Ippolito tosses the coin; Luciano either catches it in mid-air (if the actor is that dexterous) or puts his foot on it when it lands.]

Luciano:
Good friends...
I think I know a better way.
If I may...

[To Eustacia.]
At the arch
This is all you have to do:
Bend your neck
And simply go through.
Once you're through
And that's then and only then,
You can raise
Your head up again.

Ippolito: *[As if it's the theory of relativity.]*
At the arch...

Stelladora:
This is all...

Luciano:

All she has to do...

Ippolito:

Bend her neck...

Stelladora:

And simply go through.

Ippolito:

Once she's through...

Luciano:

And that's then and only then...

Stelladora/Ippolito:

She can raise her head up again.

[Eustacia tries it again. She is nervous, this is new to her, but she succeeds.]

All (except Eustacia and Lambent):

Hosanna! Hosanna!

She's passed! She's passed!

And now she'll meet her groom at last!

Hosanna! Hosanna!

Stelladora/Ippolito:

Thank you, thank you

For your sage advice!

Our lot's much improved

And therefore we're moved

To thank you not just once but twice!

Thank you! Thank you!

For the change you've made

She can keep her head!

And no blood was shed!

How can such wisdom be repaid?

Luciano:

A good deed is its own reward.

And now your lives have been restored,

Friends, I must bid adieu to yer

[A nod to The Sound of Music.]

(And yer and yer and yer.)

[Aside, counting in air with Roman numerals.]

That makes fools

Numbers three to five.

(I won't, of course,

include the horse.)

On to number six!

SCENE 6.

[A full moon, a lake. Bastianello (the younger) returns to the top of the tree to describe the scene.]

Bastianello (the younger):

The sun soon set, the moon rose full
And all around his world was still.
He came upon a man
Who stood beside a lake
Casting a net as if his life were at stake,
And felt a chill.

*[Lino casts a net into the water, withdraws it, watches the reflection, then casts it in again.
Luciano has observed him unseen.]*

Luciano:

Excuse me friend, what are you trying to catch?

[Lino does not look up. He is haunted.]

Lino:

Every month
I can find her here:
My wife
In the lake that took her life,
And she's singing softly,
"Save me, save me."

Every month
If the night is clear...
Her face
Shining with a kind of grace.
Singing softly, softly,
"Save me, save me."

I throw my net
To draw her to shore.
But her face shatters
Into a hundred pieces,
Only to come together
As before...

Luciano: *[Pointing to the sky.]*

But that's only the reflection of the full moon...

Lino:

The what?

Luciano:

Only the reflection of the full...

Lino:

The what?

Luciano:

The full...

[Luciano withdraws his argument, as it has dawned on him that Lino cannot, will not bear it.]

Lino:

Every month,
I will reappear
Until
We are lying together, lying still,
And she's singing softly,
"Love me, love me, love me."

Luciano:

May I ask, my friend,
How she came to such a horrible end?

Lino:

Bad soup and stupidity.
The soup had too much garlic
And I had too much of the other.
We fought,
I walked out,
She ran after,
Fell in this lake
And drowned.
Mine, of course, was the greater crime.
When you love...
When you love someone...
You should love all of them
All the time.

[Suddenly seeing the reflection in the lake.]

Ah, there she is again...

Luciano: *[Ironically, to Lino, who doesn't hear it.]*

Thank you, thank you...

What a change you've made

How can such wisdom be repaid?

Dear friend...

Here is where I go.

For I think I see

Fool number six:

[To Bastianello (the younger) in his tree.]

Oh, not him...me.

[Once again, he has crossed the air with Roman numerals, crossing the "I" in "VI" on the word "me."]

SCENE 7.

[The tree, now, but twenty-some years later.]

Bastianello (the younger):

So he returned that very night,

His search for fools all done.

He rushed into the arms

Of his forgiving wife

And soon thereafter they conceived a new life:

A perfect son.

And that person, I avow,
If you haven't guessed by now,
Would be...

[Amadora has entered and yells up to the tree. She is twenty-some years older.]

Amadora:
Bastianello! Bastianello! Bastianello!

Bastianello:
Me.

Amadora:
Dinner is ready!
What would your fellow graduates feel
If they saw you in that tree?

Bastianello (the younger):
Jealousy, mother of mine!

Amadora:
And don't forget to go to the cellar
And bring up some wine.

SCENE 8.

[Bastianello (the younger) comes down from the tree and exits to the cellar. The family gather as it did before, though everyone is now twenty years older. There is one very noticeable absence: Bastianello (the elder), who has died. The family take their respective places at the table, Bastianello (the younger) returning from the cellar with a jug of wine. The one chair in the middle, which is where Bastianello (the elder) sat during the beginning scene is now unoccupied. They sing.]

Luciano:
A toast. To love....

Amadora, Luciano, Ortensia, Bastianello (the younger):
To love.
May it greet us every morning
With an open smile
Fill every corner of our houses
Conquer every trivial trial
May it warm us when we're cold
Thrill us when we're old
And may it grace our children
And lastly
May it brighten in the fading light
And lead us sweetly into night.
And lead us sweetly into night...

[THE END.]

LUCREZIA

A riff on Niccolò Machiavelli's *La Mandragola*

Libretto by Mark Campbell

Music by William Bolcom

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CAST

CHUCHO. A facilitator.

LORENZO. An innamorato, enamored of Lucrezia.

LUCREZIA. A woman of great intelligence, pragmatic about her sexuality.
Married to Ignacio.

IGNACIO. A lawyer, a pedant, a fool, married to Lucrezia.

ANNUNCIATA. Lucrezia's mother. Pious. Miserably so.

SETTING

Córdoba, Argentina, c. 1900

Scene 1: The exterior of Ignacio's house, late morning.

Scene 2: A street in town, early evening.

Scene 3: The bedroom of the house, just before dawn.

Scene 4: The exterior of the house, later the same morning.

Scene 1.

[Exterior of Ignacio's house, a front door, a few windows. Tropical vines bursting with bright flowers sinew up the walls to a balcony with open doors. Lorenzo stares up at the balcony, clutching a red rose that has wilted somewhat in his sweaty palms. Chucho enters hurriedly.]

Chucho:

Friend, I came as quickly as I could.

Lorenzo:

Friend, I think this time I'm gone for good.

I've never been so miserable,

In such a fix,

In such distress,

In...

Chucho:

Let me guess:

You are "in love."

Lorenzo:

How did you...?

Chucho:

It's what you do.

Others dance the tango,

Cobble a shoe,

Stitch a glove,

You,

You fall in love.

So friend, speak:
Who is the victim this week?

Lorenzo: *[Suddenly rhapsodic.]*
I do not know her name,
We've never met before,
She appeared this morning
On that balcony
And my life is changed forevermore.

Chucho:
Lucrezia is her name...

Lorenzo: *["All the beautiful sounds of the world in a single word."]*
Lucrezia!

Chucho:
...Her husband, Ignacio...

Lorenzo: *[Stricken.]*
Her husband!

Chucho:
My sometime employer...

Lorenzo:
What kind of man is he?

Chucho: *[Enough said.]*
A lawyer.

Lorenzo: *[Dramatically.]*
Is she his wife?
Take my life, please!

Chucho: *[Rolling his eyes.]*
Go on...

[Lucrezia appears at the balcony above. She ducks back into the doorway where she can overhear the conversation, unseen by Lorenzo and Chucho.]

Lorenzo: *[Rhapsodic again.]*
She blessed me with a smile,
Threw down this perfect rose,
In that very moment
All was beautiful,
And the universe around us froze.

Chucho: *[Pragmatically.]*
We are favored by two things:
The first thing, Ignacio,
His mind's a bit errant,
The second
He's desperate to become
A parent.
Will do anything,
Prays to God to bring,
Him a son.

Lorenzo: *[With a quiet, burning intensity.]*

Lucrezia!

You are the breeze

Whisp'ring through the feijoa trees!

Chucho:

He blames her,

Claims she's barren,

And therein

[Growing louder.]

If we offer a cure

Of our own devising...

Please! I can't think

While you're rhapsodizing

In Spanish clichés!

Lorenzo:

I know not what to do.

Please help me with my plight.

I will stop at nothing

Just to be with her

Ev'ry blessed minute of one night!

Chucho:

Okay, I think I have a plan.

Lorenzo:

Lucrezia!

You are the myst'ry and pow'r

Of an orchid in full flow'r! May lie our plot.

Lucrezia!

You are the moon

Glowing on a warm lagoon!

The strumming of a sad guitar

The...

Lorenzo:

But nothing devious I hope.

Chucho:

Of course it's devious—

A plan's a plan.

Lorenzo:

But...but...

Chucho:

It's the means to an end,

Makes no diff'rence how we get there,

If we get there,

My friend.

Quell those quaint little qualms.

Don't get morally mired.

In the worthiest endeavors,

We must do what's required.

That's what

Sets us apart

From the lowly beasts:

The knack we have

To use one another.

Doctors, abbesses,

Pleadors and priests,

Even one's own sainted mother!

Everybody's a pawn
In the scheme we will spawn.
Though right now that may seem hateful
You will be grateful,
By dawn.

Lorenzo:
What do I need to do?

Chucho:
You are going to be a doctor
Go fetch a disguise:
Get a robe, and a beard, and some specs,
It's a stretch, but you need to look wise.
Hurry, get yourself in motion.
Oh, and bring a magic potion...

Lorenzo:
Magic potion? Magic potion?

Chucho: [*Urging him.*]
Any liquid in a vial—
Hurry, get yourself in motion.
Get yourself a magic potion...
Any liquid in a vial.
Now go! And meet me here in a little while...

Lorenzo:
Wait
What's in it for you?

Chucho: [*Faux naïvely.*]
What's in it for me?!
Why you're my friend,
I don't intend...

Lorenzo: [*Cutting him off, knowing better.*]
What's in it for you?

Chucho: [*"As a favor to you".*]
Well, since you ask,
My efforts all told,
Would not amount to more than
A modest bag of gold.

Lorenzo:
Done.

[*Lorenzo starts off and is stopped.*]

Chucho:
And...
Just to make sure
All costs are defrayed:
A week in Buenos Aires—
All expenses paid.

Lorenzo:
Done.

Chucho:
And...

Lorenzo:
Done!

[Lorenzo exits.]

Chucho:
In the worthiest endeavors
We do whatever's
Required.
Now to find that fool, Ignacio...

[Chucho exits. Lucrezia enters on the balcony and smiles slyly.]

Lucrezia:
An admirer!
Very handsome...
Nicely built...
A little strange...
Maybe somewhat young...
That could be a pleasant change.

And so eager!
Why, his passion's
At full tilt.
I wonder what
scheme they're cooking up,
What intrigue, what plot,
In pursuit of me.
We'll soon see.

Oh...
I could expose their ruse,
Defuse his fuse,
And pretend that I don't care
To engage in an affair.
...But why?

I could regard his lust
With feigned disgust,
Respect my marriage vow
And reject this here and now.
...But why?
REALLY, why?

I could say "You're mistaken,
Senor, I am taken!"
In a prudish and prim way, de-
clare "I'm a lady."
Add that "This is extremely

Coarse and unseemly."
Really kick up a fuss, en-
Treat, "Please, you mustn't!"
And show him the door...
What for?

Why be chaste
When the chase is what I want?
That's a waste
When there's something this piquant.
Consider what I'd miss,
Well, it all comes down to this:

I like sex.
Sex is good
Sex is NICE.
I like sex.
GOOD sex
To be precise.

And with my "better half"—
Is the sex cold? Is it distant?
That's a laugh.
Try "non-existent."

And what of HIS fidelity?
Is he faithful?
Does he cheat?

Well, he is faithful to the girls
At Senorita Lolita's
Just down the street.

So hurry night!
Overtake the day!
Break out the fresh linens,
Warm oils,
Fine Rioja,
And neglected negligée!

In any scheme they spawn
I will be a willing pawn.
I'll let them play their game
For our aim is quite the same.
And soon I will be his,
So the question really is:
Not "why?"
But "when?"

[Lucrezia exits. Chucho enters with Ignacio.]

Chucho:
Friend, this man was brought to us by God.

Ignacio:
Friend, you're sure the doctor's not a fraud?

Chucho:

Oh no, he's of the best repute.
When we met
I thought of you
And how you rue
Not having a son.

This brilliant man
Has brought fertility
To all the nobles
In nobility.
Countless are the kings
His miracles have begot.
He's helped every head of Europe,
Be it
Guillot-
Ined or not.
If anyone can give you a son—
He's the one.

Ignacio:

A son!
A son!
God above has heard my cry!
A son!

Chucho:

A son!

Ignacio:

A son!

Chucho:

A son!

Ignacio:

I really can't imagine...

Chucho:

Try.

[Ignacio dreams of having a son, oblivious to Chucho's asides.]

Ignacio:

He will look
Like his Dad...

Chucho:

Be a crook
Like his Dad.

Ignacio:

With features that are classic,

Chucho:

If not equally Jurassic.

Ignacio:

He'll be wise
Like his Dad...

Chucho:
And draw flies
Like his Dad.

Ignacio:
A genius and a scholar...

Chucho:
With a brain that's even smaller.

Ignacio:
He'll be a prodigy—
Prodigiously perspicacious and punctilious.
And when he looks at me
His first words will be
"Ave, pater familias!"
He'll know torts
Like his Dad...

Chucho:
Screw the courts
Like his Dad.

Ignacio:
The best among attorneys!

Chucho:
And adept at chasing gurneys...

Ignacio:
And like his Dad
He'll know many languages...

Chucho:
Languages...

Ignacio:
He'll sing in Italian,
Cook in French,
Lecture in Greek,
Even give a Latin sermon...

Chucho:
Is there one his father doesn't speak?

Ignacio:
German.

[Chucho makes a mental note of that by mouthing the word "German."]

But he strives
Like his Dad...

Chucho:
Gives one hives
Like his Dad.

Ignacio:

If this dream could come true,
It would be a miracle
A miracle, a miracle!
That I would cheer!

[Lorenzo enters disguised a little strangely like a doctor and carrying the "magic potion."]

Chucho:

Ah look! The miracle is here.
[Shaking hands with Lorenzo.]
Doctor Hermann!
[To Ignacio.]
Oh, I forgot to mention...
[Pronounced "Jair-mahn."]
He's German.

Ignacio:

He's German?

Lorenzo:

I'm German?

Chucho: *[First to Ignacio, then aside to Lorenzo.]*

He's German.
You're German.

Lorenzo: *[Aside to Chucho.]*

But I don't know German.

Chucho: *[Aside to Lorenzo, then out.]*

Neither does he...
Just follow along.
Guten tag, Doctor Hermann!
Hier ist mein Freund Ignacio.
Der größte idiot der Welt!

Ignacio: *[To Chucho, shaking hands with Lorenzo.]*

Thank you, I know that's heartfelt.

Lorenzo: *[To Ignacio, in his best German 101.]*

Uh... Guten Tag!

Ignacio:

And Gluten Tag to you!

Lorenzo:

Uh...
Schweinerippchen in Kräutersoße.

Chucho: *[Appearing to understand.]*

Ja ja.

Lorenzo:

Ausgezogene Knieküchle.

Chucho: *[Appearing to understand.]*

Ja ja.

Lorenzo:
Mecklenburger Gänseschmalz.

Ignacio:
What did he say?

Chucho: [*Taking the potion from Lorenzo and dangling its contents mysteriously.*]
Taken in the afternoon,
Before the night of the quarter moon,
(That's today),
The root of the mandrake,
With just a squeeze of lime,
First leaves a woman weakened,
Then makes her fecund,
So she bears a son
In nine month's time.

Ignacio:
He said all that?

Chucho:
You know the Germans!
When it comes to words,
Why use two
When one will do?

Lorenzo: [*Suddenly German 201.*]
Pfefferkuckenspuppen!

Chucho:
Ah... he's made a fresh batch,
Naturally from scratch,
There's just one catch...

Ignacio:
A catch?

Chucho:
Nothing too dire...

Ignacio:
A catch? A catch!?

Chucho:
Nothing to dread...
Once she downs the potent potion
The next man she takes to bed...
[*Makes a gesture as if slicing his throat.*]
Dead.

Ignacio:
Dead?

Chucho:
Dead.

Ignacio:
So I would die?

Chucho:

No, that would be cruel.
We'll first make her bed some other fool.

Ignacio:

But wouldn't that make me a cuckold?

Chucho:

Not by any moral measure.
You'd only be a cuckold
If it gave her pleasure.

Ignacio:

But isn't this the same as murder?

Chucho:

Nonsense, hogwash, rubbish, twaddle!
We are just replacing one soul
With a newer model.

Ignacio:

But what about my wife Lucrezia?
She will not accept this notion.

Chucho:

Once she knows about its powers,
She will down the potion.

Ignacio:

One suggestion
If I may...

Chucho:

Do tell.

Ignacio:

Start with her mother,
She listens to her,
And she's on the way...

Chucho:

Now you be on yours as well.

Ignacio: [*Starting to leave but turning around.*]

Oh...

What's in it for you?

Chucho: [*Again faux naïvely.*]

What's in it for me?
Why you're my friend!
I don't intend...

Ignacio: [*Knowing better.*]

What's in it for you?

Chucho: [*Again, "as a favor to you."*]

Well, since you ask...

My efforts all told,
Would not amount to more than
The merest bag of gold.

Ignacio:
Done. Done!

Chucho:
And...
Don't take offense,
Or think it off-base,
If you could buy a jury,
In an upcoming case.

Ignacio:
Done!

Chucho:
And...

Ignacio:
Adios!
[Ignacio starts to leave, then stops, grabbing his heart.]
Ah, wait...
Ah, wait...
Is that a pang of guilt?
Do I feel bad?
Depraved?
Bereft?

floutless?
Naw!
It's just this morning's frijoles.
[Ignacio exits.]

Chucho:
Has the world produced a bigger ass?

Lorenzo:
Glad I took that German cooking class.

Chucho:
Part one went very well indeed.
There's no time
To sit and gloat
How we got that goat.
On to part two:
Annunciata, Lucrezia's mother...

Lorenzo:
Gosh, you know EVerybody!

Chucho:
...Personal data:
She's a wannabe Madonna,
Always looks like she's posing for the Pietà.
So you're going to be a priest.

Chuco:

You'll need to find a disguise.
A cross, a hat, a robe.
Down to the socks.

Lorenzo:

And where will I find such a thing?

Chucho:

Get one leased
From a priest.
And see if they'll throw in a confession box.

Lorenzo:

But...

Chucho:

Begone! Godspeed! Adieu!
Here comes part two.

[Annunciata enters. Lorenzo runs off.]

Señora! Congratulations!
Why, you must be overcome with joy
That your daughter is to have a boy!

Annunciata:

A boy?
Lucrezia's pregnant! Can it be?

Lorenzo:

But I just...got used...to this one!
Maybe this one is reversible.

Chucho:

You haven't heard?
We've found a cure
That will ensure
She can have a son.

Annunciata:

A grandson!
A grandson!
That fulfills my deepest wish.
A grandson!
A grandson!
Why that could make me happy. Ish.

Chucho:

One Doktor Hermann,
A man of God,
Has pulled a miracle from out of his hat.

Annunciata:

A miracle, a miracle!
And what is that?

Chucho: *[Dangling the potion mysteriously.]*

Taken in the afternoon,
Before the night of the quarter moon,
(That is soon),
The root of the mandrake,

With just a squeeze of lime,
First leaves a woman weakened,
Then makes her fecund,
So she bears a son
In nine month's time.
When she takes the drink
She'll be in the pink
There's just one kink...

Annunciata:
A kink?

Chucho:
Nothing to dread...

Annunciata:
A kink!

Chucho:
If we're discreet...
Once she takes the potent potion,
The next man who shares her heat...
[Makes a gesture as if putting a gun to his head.]
Dead meat.

Annunciata:
Dead?

Chucho:
Meat.

Annunciata:
Ignacio dead?

Chucho:
No, that wouldn't work.
We'd first make her bed some other jerk.

Annunciata:
But then she'd break her vow of marriage!

Chucho:
Never for a single minute!
She'd only break that if she
Found some pleasure in it.

Annunciata:
Isn't this the same as murder?

Chucho:
Would you prefer to slaughter
A total perfect stranger or the
Husband of your daughter?

[Annunciata considers the question for a minute. Then doesn't answer it.]

Annunciata:
But my Lucrezia won't abide,
She'll deem it morally distressing.

Chucho:
Unless I found a priest to
Offer it his blessing.

Annunciata:
A priest?

Chucho:
A priest.

[The plan suddenly clicks with Annunciata.]

Annunciata:
What's in it for you?

Chucho: *[Again, faux...]*
What's in it for me?!
Why, you're my friend
I don't intend...

Annunciata: *[Knowing better.]*
What's in it for you?

Chucho: *[Again, "as a favor..."]*
Well, since you ask...
My efforts all-told,
Would not amount to more than
A measly bag of gold.

Annunciata:
Dime.

Chucho:
And...

Annunciata: *[Cutting him off.]*
Get the priest.

[Chucho gives Annunciata the potion and exits. Annunciata knocks on the door of the house.]

Ah wait...
Ah wait...
Is that a pang of shame?
That burns my heart
And makes
My sight
Blurry?
Naw,
It's just last night's chimichurri.

[Lucrezia appears at the door.]

Annunciata:
Lucrezita! Congratulations!
You must want to sing a kyrie
Since you'll soon be in the fam'ly way.

Lucrezia:
I'm pregnant? Why, I didn't know.

Annunciata:

No, not yet,
But in a while,
For in this vial
We're blessed with a cure.

Lucrezia:

And what is that, mamacita?

Annunciata: [*Her memory not what it used to be, offering an absurdly reduced version of the recipe.*]

Mandrake...
Squeeze of lime...
Weakened...
Fecund...
A son...
Nine month's time.
He's made a fresh batch
Naturally from scratch...

Lucrezia:

So, what's the catch?

Annunciata: [*"Who said there was a catch?"*]

What catch?

What catch?

[*"Okay, there is a catch."*]

Nothing to dread...

Lucrezia: [*"Cut to the chase."*]

The catch...

Annunciata:

The slightest of things...
Nothing to dread...

Lucrezia: [*"Cut to the chase now!"*]

The catch!

Annunciata:

Once you down the potent potion
The next man who strums your strings...
[*Makes the sign of the cross.*]
Sprouts wings.

Lucrezia: [*Mystified.*]

Sprouts wings?

Annunciata: [*Despondently.*]

Yes.

[*Lucrezia imitates bird flight with her hands; Annunciate imitates bird flight with her whole arms.*]

Lucrezia: [*A trace of a smile.*]

Ignacio dies?

Annunciata:

No, that would be low.
First you'll do it with some other schmo.

Lucrezia: [*Faux offended.*]
No!

Annunciata:
Why must you be so difficult?!
Can't you for once be an adult?!

You know how much I want a grandson!

[*Curdling with maternal rage.*]
LISTEN TO YOUR MAMACITA!

Annunciata: [*Going for saintdom.*]
We women,
We women,
Of joy we know not.
Suff'ring and sacrifice,
Suff'ring and sacrifice,
That is our lot.
We women,
We women,
Know that's how it goes.
Pleasure and happiness,
Pleasure and happiness,
Pray, what are those?
Madonna,
Our Virgin,
Who gave of her Son...

Lucrezia:
Absolutely not!
You're asking me to
sleep with a stranger
Who will die! My
own mother! Why?!

Lucrezia:
(And what a Son!)

Annunciata:
Has served since the dawn of time,
As paragon and paradigm...
And when did She have fun?

Annunciata:
We mothers...

We mothers...

We never ask why
We give and give and give and give...

Lucrezia:
And give and give and give and give...

Annunciata: [*Driven not to be out-"given."*]
And give and give and give and give and give!

Annunciata/Lucrezia:
Until we die.

Lucrezia:

We daughters...

We daughters...
Never ask why...

Lucrezia:

Dear Mother,
My mother,
I know this is true.
But sadly I can only aim
For half the misery and shame
That's so distinctly you.

Annunciata/Lucrezia:

We women,
We women,
Can only find peace
When our beloved Lord
Will grant us release!
May He grant us release!
May He grant us release!

Lucrezia:

I'm sorry, dear mother
I still can't dispel
These feelings of guilt—
You've raised me that well.

Annunciata:

But what if a priest
Would bless it somehow.

Lucrezia:

I might listen then...

Annunciata:

Oh look, here's one now!

[Lorenzo enters wheeling on a confessional. Not far behind him is Chubco, prompting him.]

Annunciata:

Come, let us approach
And see what he feels.

Lucrezia:

But what is that thing?!

Annunciata:

Confession-on-Wheels.

Lucrezia:

Confession? For what?!
Why, I've done no crime,
Committed no sin.

Annunciata:

You will, though, in time.

[Annunciata pushes Lucrezia into the confessional and stands aside.]

Lucrezia:
Peace be with you, Padre.

Lorenzo:
And with you, my child.
[Suddenly priestly.]
My child...
I know of your predicament
And can tell you straightaway:
God saith
It is okayeth.
Thank you for coming,
Have a nice day.

Lucrezia:
Not so fast, Padre.
Not so fast.
Let me get this straight:
You spoke to God
Say, over café con leche,
And He said
Adultery and murder
And other things equally sketchy,
Are fine, no problem, okay by Him?

Lorenzo:
My child...

God works in mysterious ways.
You are obeying the will of your husband.
And you will bring a son into the world
To offer God His praise.

And since the act
With the stranger,
Won't give you pleasure,
There's no danger
That it's a sin.

Lucrezia:
But what if the act
With the stranger,
SHOULD give me pleasure?
And does in fact,
Thrill me,
Excite me,
Make me feel...
Beatific?

Lorenzo:
Could you be more specific?

Lucrezia:
Let's just say...

[Lucrezia sings directly, simply, which makes the sexual potency of her message all the more powerful, enough to make Lorenzo break out in a sweat and shift in his confession box.]

His manner is gentle,
Not hurried or brusque.
He's very clean of body,
Just a splash of sandalò,
But not enough
To mask his musk.

His kisses are lasting,
Not given in haste.
And when he takes my body
There's not one inch,
He doesn't yearn
To touch and please.

Our bodies merge with ease,
Turn,
Reverse,
Twist,
Revolve,
As we move with each embrace
Ever closer,
Ever closer,
Ever closer,
Ever closer,
To resolve.
[A short pause.]

Padre, are you there?

Lorenzo: *[Breathlessly.]*
Yes, my child. I am...there.

Lucrezia:
And when it's over,
And pleasure's attained,
He does not quickly bound out of bed
But holds me fast...
Until desire's regained.

Lorenzo: *[After a long pause, recovering.]*
Did you say "sandalò?"

Lucrezia:
Just a splash.

Lorenzo: *[After a long pause, recovering.]*
My child, I will tell you this:
It is not the body that sins
But the will.
And the will is only so strong.
If the body must yield
Then it is not wrong.

Lucrezia:
Thank you, Padre.
You've helped me much.
Now I must go.

Lorenzo:
And you too, child,
Have helped me much.
More than you know.

[Lucrezia leaves the confessional. She strides over to Annunciata and takes the potion from her. Ignacio appears from a window, Chucho appears from the side of the stage, and Lorenzo pokes his head over the confessional, all expectant.]

Lucrezia: *[Dramatically.]*
Never let it be said
In this world
That is morally adrift...
Never, never let it be said,
When all is said and done...
That I did not suffer.
That I did not sacrifice
That I did not give of my greatest gift
To have a son.
Never, never, never let it be said!

[Lucrezia downs the potion and smashes the vial, then falters melodramatically. Spoken:]
Oh! Suddenly I feel weakened.

[She exits into the house. Ignacio, Annunciata, Lorenzo and Chucho joyfully clap, their dreams about to be realized.]

Ignacio:
A son!

Annunciata:
My own baby Jesus!

Lorenzo:
Lucrezia!

Chucho:
Stand back, Buenos Aires!

[Blackout. End Scene 1.]

Scene 2.

[A street. Lorenzo skips on in a foppish disguise, punishing a zither.]

Lorenzo:
Oh, I am a wand'ring fool
A wand'ring fool am I!
I go yon and hither,
Strumming on my zither,
And make everybody cry.

I have neither fam'ly nor friends,
Not a person here holds me dear.
My life is very low
No one would ever know
If I were to disappear. (Aicce!)

[As if cueing his abduction.]

Oh, I am a wand'ring fool
No one would know
If I were to disappear.
(Aieee! Aieee! Aiecc!)

[Suddenly from behind a wall, four arms—those of Chucho and Ignacio—put a hood over Lorenzo's head. End Scene 2.]

Scene 3.

[A large bed. A towering candle has burned almost to the end of its wick. Lorenzo, wrapped in a sheet, stands looking out a window, the first dull light of dawn in front of him. Lucrezia is in bed also with a sheet wrapped around her.]

Lucrezia:
Come back to bed.

Lorenzo:
It's nearly dawn.

Lucrezia:
Come back to bed.

Lorenzo:
We only have a few minutes left
Before they drag me out of here.

Lucrezia:
That's why I'm saying
Come back to bed.

Lorenzo:
I have to tell you something.

Lucrezia:
Tell me in bed.

Lorenzo:
If our night had meant nothing
I could go,
Leave you right now,
And you would never know...
But that is not the case.

If our night were not perfect,
You'd stay unaware
Of my deceit.
And I would not despair
Of telling you the truth.

I am so deeply sorry,
But this whole thing was a sham.
I'm afraid I'm not the person
Who you think I am.

The mandrake, it's as phony
As the priest you spoke to.
It was all a ruse, not true
Just so I could be "abducted"
And be brought to you.

When I saw you this morning
On your balcony
You threw down a rose
After smiling at me.
So this plot came to be.

The means to an end
And now that end's been met.
Though it came off quite soundly
It's a plan I profoundly
Regret.

[Lucrezia stares off and smiles.]

Aren't you angry?
Can't you yell at me?!

[Lucrezia laughs slyly.]

Lucrezia:
If our night had meant nothing
I could let you go,
Leave me right now,
And you would never know...
But that is not the case.

But our night, it was perfect,
And it would be wrong,
Not to confess...
I knew it,
Knew about it all along.

Lorenzo:
You knew?

Lucrezia:
I knew.

Lorenzo:
You knew?!

Lucrezia:
Now come on back to bed.

Lorenzo:
But you lied to me.

Lucrezia:
Not once.

Lorenzo:
You lied to me.

Lucrezia:
Not once.
And at least
I didn't pose as a priest.
Badly, I might add:
"He saith
It is okayeth?"

Lorenzo:
But I feel deceived.

Lucrezia:
And you could leave feeling that way
Or we could continue another day.
Look,
We were both dishonest,
For the same gain.
But that kind of dishonest
Takes years to attain.
We know what we've done,
Our cards are on the table,
So come back to bed.
If you're willing...and able.
[They embrace in bed. From outside, Chucho and Ignacio approach the bedroom.]

Ignacio:
Six on the dot.

Chucho:
Let's go.

Lucrezia: *[Hearing Ignacio and Chucho; she kisses Lorenzo quickly to reassure him.]*
Just leave this to me. Give me your trust.

Chucho: *[To Ignacio.]*
Wasn't last night rough for you?

Ignacio:
Au contraire, it was fun:
At Señorita Lolita's
It was two for one.

[Ignacio and Chucho burst into the bedroom and cover Lorenzo's head with the hood. He pretends to be frightened, while Lucrezia stands in a corner looking away.]

Ignacio:
Out, fool!

Lorenzo:
Please have mercy on my life!

Ignacio:
You'll be brought to the square.
If you tell anyone
Your life is done.

Chucho: *[To Lorenzo.]*

Hey, are you wearing sandalò?

Lorenzo: *[Demurely, under the hood.]*

Why, yes, I am.

Chucho:

Smells nice!

Ignacio:

Now, go!

[Chucho exits with Lorenzo. Ignacio tries to slither out but is stopped by Lucrezia.]

Lucrezia:

Oh, look! It's my husband, the pimp.

Now you listen to me

You stupid cur,

You whimpering simp!

[Faux virtuous.]

I feel so dirty!

I'm so disgraced!

Tainted and painted,

Degraded, abased!

And every bit as cruel,

And just as unjust,

Is the fact that that fool

Will soon bite the dust!

The guilt! It's more than I can bear!

[Suddenly switching from guilt to fury.]

There is only one way,

ONE way

To cleanse my soul of this shame!

And that is this:

The priest I met yesterday

Must give his ministrations

Three times a week!

Ignacio:

But...!

Lucrezia:

You speak?!

Make it four!

Ignacio:

Mercy in heaven!

Lucrezia:

Make it seven!

And he must do it here,

Where the offense occurred.

Now not another word,

I must sleep.

Ignacio:

But dearest, we must bless this event.

And to do that, Chucho has summoned the priest.

Lucrezia: *[Suddenly interested.]*
He has?
Very well.
I will summon my pride
And join you outside.

[Ignacio exits. Lucrezia smiles and blows the candle out. End Scene 3.]

Scene 4.

[The sun has risen on the street in front of Ignacio's house. Annunciata, Lorenzo (in priest garb), Chucho and Ignacio enter.]

Annunciata, Ignacio, Chucho and Lorenzo:
Out into the morning,
The glorious morning,
Into the glorious morning,
We go.

All the world is teeming
And righteously gleaming
In God's glow.

The darkness of the night
Where we all went in blindness
Has yielded to the light
Of our Almighty's kindness...

[From behind his back, Ignacio offers Chucho his bag of gold and he takes it.]

Chucho: *[Secretly to Ignacio.]*
Thank you very much...

Annunciata, Ignacio, Chucho and Lorenzo:
And to Him we offer praise...

[From behind his back, Lorenzo offers Chucho his bag of gold and he takes it.]

Chucho: *[Secretly to Lorenzo.]*
Thank you very much...

Annunciata, Ignacio, Chucho and Lorenzo:
And to Him we offer praise...
And to Him we are beholden...

Chucho: *[Secretly to Lorenzo.]*
I'm beholden.

Annunciata, Ignacio, Chucho and Lorenzo:
For the beauty of such days...

[From behind her back, Annunciata offers Chucho her bag of gold and he takes it.]

Annunciata, Ignacio, Chucho and Lorenzo:
And all that's great and good and golden.

Chucho: *[Secretly to Annunciata.]*
Thank you very much. Good and golden!

[Lucrezia enters and sees Chucho with the bags of gold.]

Lucrezia:

Chucho!

I'm simply stunned

That you've been taking a collection

For my son's education fund!

[Lucrezia takes the bags of gold from him.]

Chucho:

But...

Lucrezia:

Thank you! Very much.

Lucrezia, Annunciata, Ignacio, Chucho and Lorenzo:

Our goals achieved fruition,

And now to His mission

We speed.

To thank Him most deserving,

For lovingly serving

Ev'ry need.

Lucrezia: *[Directly to the audience.]*

So all acquired

The thing they desired—

On that you can depend.

And these few scenes

Were merely the means...

All:

Were merely the means,

Were merely the means...

To "The End."

[Blackout. As may have been surmised, The End.]

Producers: Adam Abeshouse and David Starobin
 Engineer: Adam Abeshouse
 Mastering Engineer: Adam Abeshouse
 Executive Producers: Becky Starobin and Elizabeth Hurwitz
 Editors: Charlie Post and Doron Schächter
 Cover, CD and Back Cover Design: Gaddiel Lopez Design :: gldny.com
 Booklet Design: Paige Hoover

Bastianello is published by Songs of Peer, Ltd. (ASCAP)
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 Commission of *Bastianello* by John Musto and Mark Campbell and *Lucrezia* by William Bolcom and Mark Campbell by
 New York Festival of Song, Inc. was supported by the New York State Music Fund, established by the New York State Attorney
 General at Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors and by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

The Spring 2008 Indoors season at Caramoor Center for Music and the Arts, as part of which *Bastianello/Lucrezia* was presented,
 was made possible, in part, through generous funding from Floy and Amos Kaminski.
 Fazzioli Pianoforti F-183 Concert Grand Pianos
 Exclusively from Klavierhaus, NYC

This performance was made possible, in part,
 by Westchester Arts Council with funds
 from Westchester County Government.

This performance was made possible with
 public funds from the New York State
 Council on the Arts, a state agency.

Special thanks to Michael Barrett, Paul Rosenblum and Christopher Zimmerman for their generous help in presenting and
 facilitating the Bridge Records recording of *Bastianello/Lucrezia* at Caramoor Center for Music and the Arts

This is a sponsored project of the New York Foundation for the Arts, with funding provided in part by
 The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and The Aaron Copland Fund for Music, Inc.

For Bridge Records: Barbara Bersito, Douglas Holly, Paige Freeman Hoover,
 Charlie Post, Doron Schächter, Robert Starobin, and Sandra Woodruff

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www.BridgeRecords.com

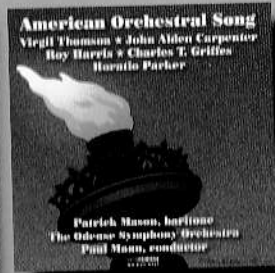


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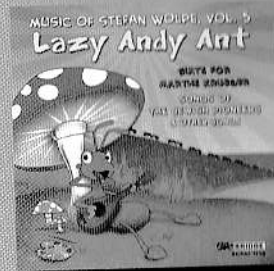
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