

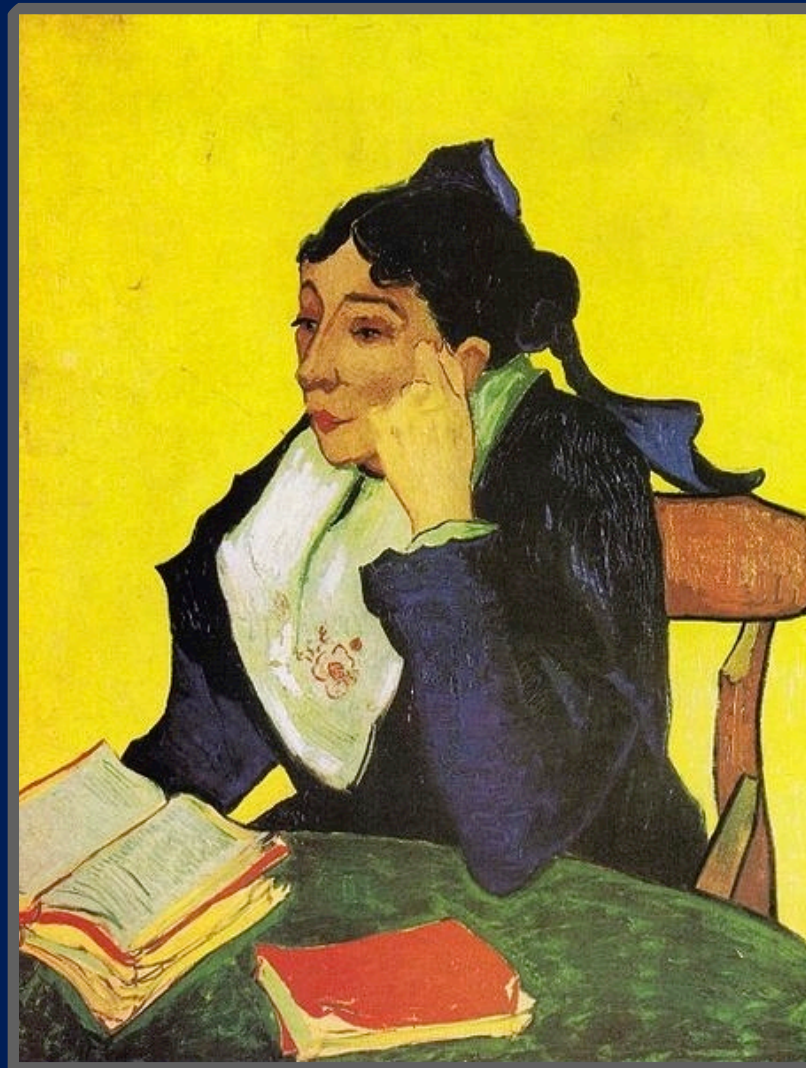
Starry Nights

The Musical

by Fred Pohlman

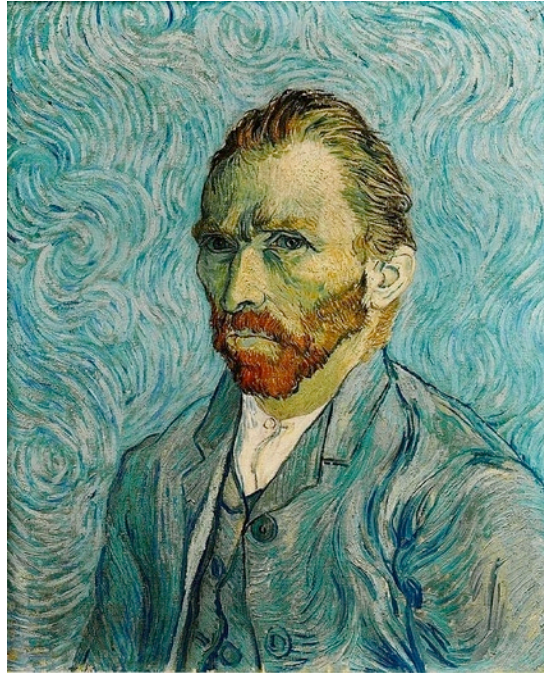
The life and Times of the Brothers

Vincent and Theo Van Gogh



Full Libretto with
Lyrics

Starry Nights



The Life and Times of the Brothers Vincent and Theo Van Gogh

A Work for Musical Theatre in
3 Acts

By **Composer, Lyricist, Librettist**

Fred Pohlman

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Songs of
ACT I

His Memory
(Memories)

Brother

Theirs for Spring

Instrumental

The Bird in a Cage

Maria

Friendly star

Vincent

Sorrow

New Poppy

Back on the Street

Christmas Day

Kyrie

A New Day

Blue Gloves and Basket

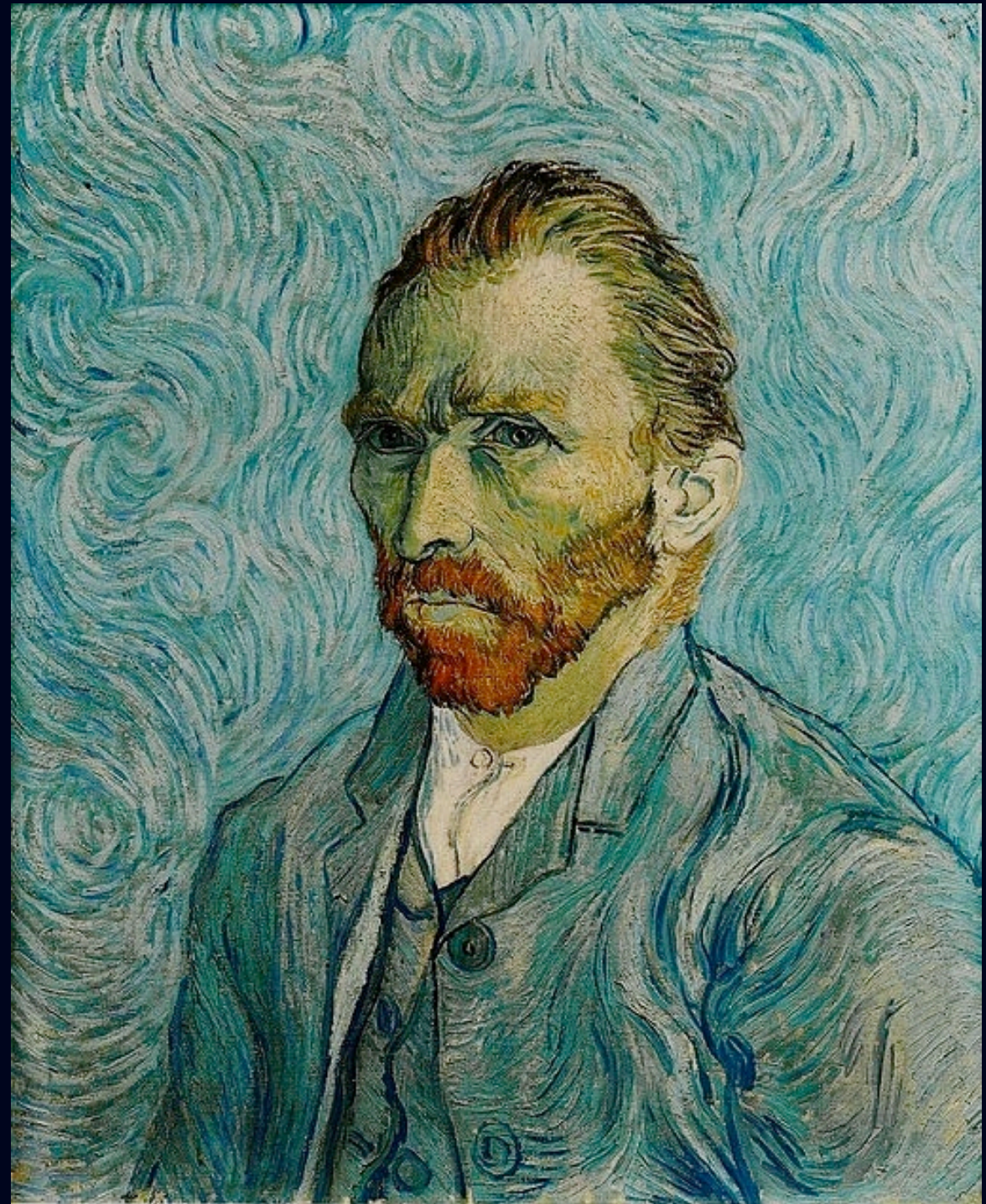
How Shall the Sun Go Down

Rain

The Letter Pt.1

Potato

Letter Pt. 2



Starry Nights



Scene 1



Scene 1



Johanna Van Gogh Bonger as a young woman

Loc: Off to the corner and slightly below the left side of the stage (which is stage right) * we see a beautiful old women rocking slowly in a chair and reading a letter. She is illuminated by the light of an oil lamp.

On the stage there is a furnished cell with a barred window on the second floor of the mental asylum at St. Remy.

Action: We see in the room two orderlies who are about to leave after making one final check on a bed that is to the right of a seated Vincent. Three nuns enter the room with brooms and sheets and move about frantically setting the room in order. The voices of two men climbing steps are heard discussing something over the sound of strange moans and an occasional shriek. As they near the cell we hear that the administrator seems to be choosing his words very carefully and is explaining Vincent's current state of mind to Vincent's brother Theo. At one point we see the 'Mother Superior' firmly scolding the young novice in very hushed tones. As the orderlies are leaving the nuns are finishing up. Within 10 seconds then, the Iron door to

Vincent's room is opened, and the two men appear. Theo immediately moves to his knees at his brother's side as the three nuns exit. It is obvious as they exit that the elder Nun is still upset with the novice. Theo and the Administrator are oblivious to the friction between the elder nun and the novice.

Action reiterated in more detail: We hear the voice of Vincent in voiceover from mid sentence describing his quarters at the hospital. As the voices of Theo and the administrator become increasingly audible, the voice of Vincent fades...

V.O.

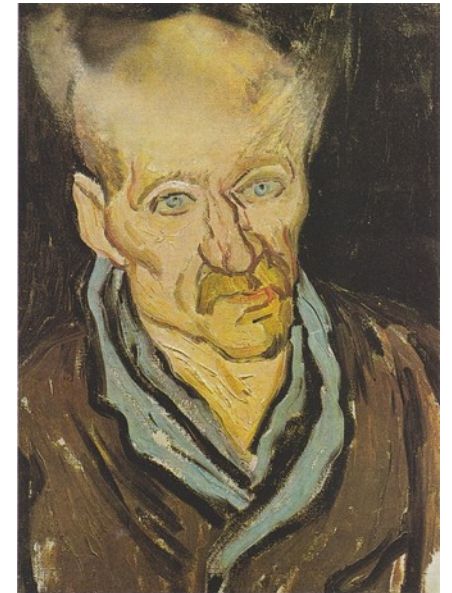
Vincent: Grey wallpaper with sea green curtains with pale roses brightened with touches of red, a very worn armchair in patches of brown, red, pink forget-me-not blue, white, cream colored, bottle green...from the barred window one can see wheat fields...(voice faded to 0)

(From the word 'armchair' his Voice is slowing fading into inaudibility over the sound of footsteps climbing stairs and an occasional moan or shriek.

Administrator: So in cases like this.... we move.... hmm...slowly.... these things take time, but at any rate Mr. Van Hook, I assure you that in the meanwhile, we shall be making every effort to see to that your brother is as.... comfortable as is possible ...under the circumstances of course...

As the door opens and they enter with the Nuns passing them... Theo interrupts

Theo: Vincent... Oh my God ...Vincent!



Vincent who has been staring out the window, let's his upper torso turn slightly and slowly looks down at his brother in silence. He appears as a beaten down despondent individual.

After a pause and realization that his brother is only minimally responsive and in fact somewhat despondent...

Theo: And what is *this*?

Theo notes the straps of a restraining sheet on Vincent's bed , that has been left behind by one of the orderlies .

Administrator: Well... Unfortunately, that is a necessary evil in these kinds of institutions. You understand it is of course.. for their own protection. Sometimes... in a fit they....

Theo: *sniffing the air.*

Administrator: Oh! and that's 'camphor'....that's also quite necessary....it has a stabilizing effect and... they sleep better, and of course ...insects and vermin, ...we need some kind of control and ..a... *Clearing throat....* Humph! ...Well we're just getting settled in now Mr. Van Hoof and, by weeks end your brother will be quite acclimated. It's unfortunate, but the nature of your brother's condition requires that we take the utmost precaution. It's for....
In a low voice

Theo: Yes, yes... You mentioned all of that on the steps...

The young novice re-enters the room here alone this time, and places a wet package on a table and starts to unwrap it as the two men prepare to exit.

Administrator: Yes, of course..Umm well, it's late now.....and you can come back in the morning....and see your brother then.

Theo: *(going back on one knee again to Vincent..and at loss for words)*

I'll be back in the morning Vincent ...I...I won't forget you ,
.....Everything will be fine soon! I just...I...

Vincent has turned slightly and accepts his brothers embrace while remaining seated .

Administrator: We really have to go now Mr. Van Graf

Theo gets up slowly and turns to the administrator

Theo: *(after a pause)* Gogh...

Administrator: Pardon?

Theo: ...Van Gogh...the name is Van Gogh.

Administrator: Yes, of course*mumbling....*Van Hoof...

There is the sound of soft thunder...very soft thunder...and then the sound of rain begins...

*The Music commences here with the
first violin softly comping the action and mood , with the opening
figures of Song
'His Memory'*

Theo and the Administrator exit and we hear their voices fade to zero over the faint sounds of the asylum.

Administrator: Such terribly damp weather.... just seems like this rain will never end...?... and then before this it was so dry you'd think... *fading*

As they leave, we see that the young novice has already opened the wet bundle she brought with her, revealing a beautiful bouquet of yellow flowers, which she places in a vase on the table. She addresses Vincent in a gentle calming voice.

Novice: *(In very sweet French accent)*

Voila! These should make you feel a bit better Monsieur Van Gogh...

Now whereas Vincent had been still staring despondently out the window, he has now turned slowly , taking notice of her and the flowers. after a brief pause, he suddenly, reaches out with both his hands to her and says:

Vincent: Vincent.... I am Vincent, Vood... I am a Dutchman!

Novice: *(taken aback for a second and then accepting his hand smiling)*

Vincent! ...I have always liked that name! *(then looking at the flowers)...*Ahh, and you like the flowers...!

Vincent nods with his eyes brightening!

(At the door ready to leave the room she turns with her back to the door and speaks somehow intuitively ...knowingly..)

Novice: I love flowers too Vincent... I love *all* of nature....

She pauses before saying goodnight and turning to open the door

Novice: You know! I am thinking ...we are going to be ‘good’ friends Monsieur Vincent.

Bon nuit...sleep well...!

As the door behind her closes, the violin becomes more pronounced with emotion. The voices of the administrator and Theo have faded into the distance along with the occasional moan or shriek, and as

Vincent has again slipped into melancholy, he resumes staring out of the asylum window on the verge of tears. Then, suddenly, as it seems that something has caught his attention in the distance beyond the window of his room, the beautiful aged Johanna Van Gogh Bonger rises up from her rocking chair and commences to sing the first notes of the opening song Memories,

“There is a space beyond your windowpane

Where brothers ...”

the stage(s) then separates and rolls away to stage left and stage right, and we.. (or, the stages are rotated if projectors are used)

TRANSITION TO...

Scene 1b

Song

Locs. and Actions for first two verses reflect the years from Vincent's birth to age 18 from Parsonage to Goupil & Cie in London

See detailed description of action for song below in Appendix 1a

Note: song is reflection of earliest letters of Vincent Van Gogh to Theo.

His Memory

Johanna sings

There is a space beyond your windowpane
Where brothers walked between the spots of rain
There memories and pages lost in time
Are brought to heart in light of verse and rhyme
To where the wick burns low
And the sunsets glow

Yes, I know a place beyond the city lights
Where we can sit and watch the starry night
Where memories are places made of dreams
Where winding paths descend through verdant greens
To where a streams flow
And a lone sunflower grows

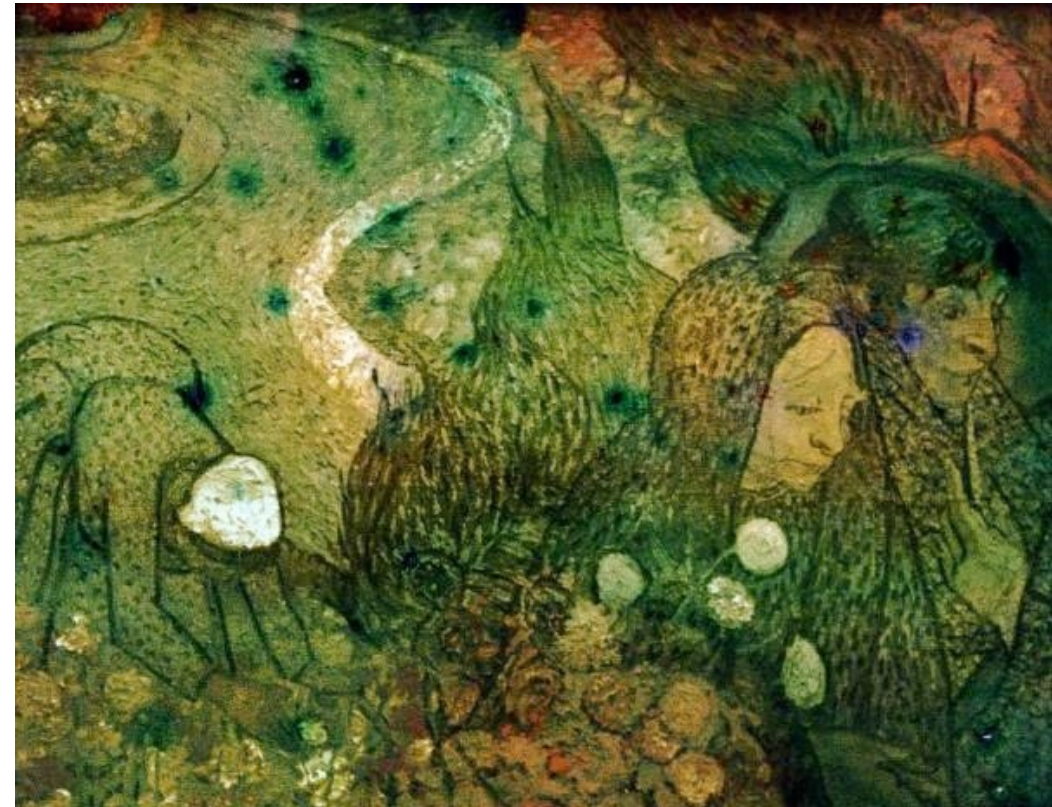
*A mature Vincent in his 20's steps out of one of the doors on the stage
and sings the chorus*

Chorus

Vincent singing

One Life
One chance
To live your dream

To nobly bare what trials may come
To sow upon each rocky turn
Leave sweet blossoms long the way



So

hurry now before the day is done
We still have time to catch the setting sun
The nightingale will want to sing a tune
He's waiting now beneath the waxing Moon
Where he'll render sweet songs
To us ...and tenderly

*Through winding paths and pages turned
We'll listen as the candle burns
Yes we'll listen till the morning light

As we wander through the starry night
Then we'll ride out on the wings of his
memory

Transition to...

Scene 1c

*From the asterisk *above, I.E. the last verse of Memories, commence the background voices of Vincent and Theo in correspondence. With... Dear Theo... Dear Vincent, ...Dear Theo...etc. with snippets of actual letters (See asterisk * below for the text)*

Note: The above transition takes place in the 2 minutes and 40 seconds it takes to sing 'His Memory'. The effect is meant to convey a period of seventeen or eighteen years from the birth of Vincent until the days of his employment at Goupils & Cie London branch. The director should feel free to ad lib the actions that take place during the delivery of 'Memories'. What is written above is only a suggestion containing the elements of what would lend nicely to the scene. Obviously the logistics of executing all the above would push the limits of possibilities to the extreme. This difficult scene has to 'flow'. So therefore execute 'only' what is possible within the physical and budgetary limits of the individual production.

V.O. .slowly raising in audibility.. woven together with a combing effect...

Dear Theo, so many thanks for your letter and glad to hear that you have arrived back safely. I have missed you these last these first few days and...

Dear Theo, such good news I've read in Fathers letter. I wish you luck with all my heart and I am sure that you will like it there.... Goupils is such a fine firm and...Dear Vincent, it is true what you

say about Balzac, that one must read hisDear Theo... and here are the names of a few of the painters I like in particular, Sheffer, Delararoche, Hebert , Leys...

Note; the above are mish mashed and woven one into the other and should serve to create an ambient suggestive of Vincent and Theo's world of communication by Post. The audibility should not interfere with the last verse of the song 'His Memory'.

Dear Theo

Scene 2, a, b and c



Scene 2 a

LOC: *Stage Right, Vincent's room in London. Prints of various artists cover the walls. This is a seamless continuation from the last scene. There is no break or change of scenery.*

Stage Left, Theo's Room at The Hague in The Nederland's

ACTIONS: As Vincent and Theo are writing from their respective homes, a postman moves between them bringing their letters each to the other. Just before the song winds down, Vincent's sister Anna enters the door to the left of Vincent. and she places fresh flowers in



a vase. At the completion of Vincent's vocal, we see their landlords daughter Eugenie pausing briefly in her passing the still open door of Vincent's room. As Eugenie catches Vincent's eye we see Vincent respond with a loving smile, while Anna then commences her narration to the audience directly.

Song Brother (Letters)

G
Brother

I've just arrived I'm with your letter here
But first just

Let me wish you Happy New Year
And may our friendship last forever

Oh.. and
Father wrote and told me of the talks you had and
How you shared your thoughts on art with him and
Mo-ther
And our sisters and
It seems (that)

A minor

So strong
Is our love
And that we are fa-mi-ly
that our hearts
lift
our eyes to
to god
and we pray...
Oh Lord

G

Let me not
Stray..
Too far from them..
And
Yes ..lad
It's good to hear you're reading Michelet'
And I'll close now
It's time to rise and meet the morning...

Bmi

So walk much
Eat lots of bread
Sleep well
And

C

Always
Your loving brother
With a handshake in my thoughts
Vincent
Gmag

Ami
Gmag

{Bmi
Well what with ,nature ,art
and po-e-try
Cmag
Mais bien tout'
If that's not enough
What is enough}

Transition to 2b

*Stepping out of the scene for a moment
Anna begins to speak highly expressively in
an aside to the audience*



Vincent's Sister Anna

Anna: It was the spring of 76 when I went to visit my brother Vincent in London—*Everything* was in bloom, it was just all so wonderful, *and*, he was in love.

Her name was Eugenie and she lived at the boarding house where Vincent and I both had rooms. She was just *so* beautiful, and everyday when Vincent and I would go for walks in the countryside his heart would just sing out in celebration of his love for nature and his love for life.

Scene 2b

Loc: *fades 'immediately' ... to: country lane.*

Action: *Vincent, is suddenly outside on a walk with his sister Anna. His eyes filled with love for nature and for Eugenie, he begins to sing...*

Song There's for Spring

When the phases of the moon
And the almond tree in bloom
Herald the season's end
Do not the sonnet and the heart
As do the robin and the lark
They not take wing and then

For theirs to sing ere the dawn
For theirs to sing on the morn
For theirs to sing

Singing songs of love
Of longing and embrace
A rare and precious ode
A sonnet bursting pure with verses of unbounded soaring grace
Singing songs of life
Of homage to the sun
A melody of praise
A celebration rife with verses that compare to none

Yes theirs is to sing on the dawn
Theirs is to sing aft the storm
For theirs is to sing, to sing to SING....

Scene 2c

Action: *As the song winds down and they again approach the rooming house, Vincent, spying Eugenie, runs ahead leaving Anna standing watching. Eugenie runs inside the house, but just as Vincent is about to enter the door, the landlord with an embarrassed Eugenie in tow, deposits his and Anna's bags unceremoniously on the Front porch. Vincent and Anna are both told to "Leave" Immediately, and Vincent is warned not to bother his daughter anymore. Anna looks toward the audience before walking toward the front porch to join Vincent...*

Anna: But Eugenie was secretly engaged and Vincent didn't know, and it so broke his heart.

Anna starts to walk toward the porch but stops and turns to the audience again just to say:

Anna: Oh!!...and there's one thing more I forgot to mention—Eugenie... was Mr. Loyer's daughter—he was our landlord!

Mr. Loyer: ...and *don't* be coming around here anymore, and leave—my- daughter- *alone*.

Note:" alone" coincides with the slamming down of the two valises on the porch by Mr. Loyer

Vincent and Anna pick up their bags, the train station appears on stage right and the house in center stage is darkened. A dejected Anna explains to the audience what ensued after the incident.

Anna: And so it was that my brother Vincent and I moved to Ivy Cottage, but we separated when I found work as a lady's companion up north in Welwyn. Vincent continued on in London, but his unrequited love for Eugenie cast *such* the dark shadow of gloom on the remainder of his stay there. After Christmas he and our brother Theo became much closer, and it was also about that time that Vincent started to become very preoccupied with religious ideas and reading the bible. It was as though he became sort of...*drunk* with piety.

Scene fades to dark

P.C. Gorlitz

Scene 3



Loc: A boarding house.

Action: There is a communal table and we see a young Vincent well dressed entering the room from stage right, and taking a seat (stage right) at the communal table. There are other borders to his right and a woman is cooking to the far right (stage left) while a girl is serving at the table.

An older gentleman comes out from stage left and speaks to the audience, and at one point, glancing at the scene to his rear, he points to himself as a young man seated at the communal table in Conversation with Vincent.

The Testament of P .C. Gorlitz

*The sounds of people dining at a large table in a communal kitchen.
Soft conversation below the Gorlitz monologue*

Gorlitz: I remember him quite well, Mr. Vincent Van Gogh. It was in Dordrecht that I met him where we were both borders at the rooming house of a corn and flour merchant by the name of Rijken, who we used to call the ‘boss’. One day he...Mr. Rijken asked me if I would object to sharing my room with a certain Dutchman, and seeing as the boss had no other space and wanted to accommodate

him, I said that I would agree on the condition “that he is a suitable person”. And so it was that I had no objection and Mr. Vincent Van Gogh and myself became fellow boarders.

As I came to know Vincent, – he preferred to be called Vincent, – it soon became evident to me that his religious feelings were *vast* and noble. It was more than just the fact that he was an Orthodox Protestant. On Sundays he would attend not only the services of the Dutch Reformed Church, but he was also to be found in attendance at the Janenist and the Lutheran and the Roman Catholic churches. Once when I inquired about it at the dinner table, he answered with a good natured smile and said:

(Turning to look at the table and himself behind him)

Vincent: “Do you think Gorlitz, that God cannot be found in the other churches?”

(Turning back to audience)

When meals were served at Mr. Rijkens, He would pray a *long* time before he’d commence to eat. He would *never* touch meat or gravy, sufficing only with a few crusts of bread...and he *never* used butter or *anything* like that. His face was often long and melancholy, but then suddenly... he would laugh, and he did so with *such* gusto and geniality that his face lit up-and the *whole* room brightened.

As time passed Vincent became increasingly more melancholy and it was apparent that he was not at all suited to his duties as bookkeeper and salesman at the booksellers, * Blusse and Van Braam. His head was always filled with pious thoughts and if something came to him, he would suddenly stop everything he was doing and write it down. Quite to the dismay of Mr. Van Braam, when clients came into the store to shop for prints, Instead of providing information that might lead to a sale, he would say

precisely and plainly what he thought about the artistic value of each one. He was most unsuited to business. His real dream was to become the minister of a religious parish, and *this*...obsessed him.

Vincent plodded along, pretending for the sake of his parents that he was content with his work, but when I stayed with his parents on the occasion of a job application, *I informed his mother of Vincent's true disposition and of his true aspiration to become a minister of the word. When I mentioned this to Vincent, he told me he regretted it, but that it was true.

His parents then urged him to leave his situation. It was then that moved to Amsterdam and went to live with his uncle Cor who was a rear admiral.

*When Vincent left he gave me as a souvenir *L'Oiseau* by Michelet, a book he passionately admired. I know that Mr. Rijken and his wife were very fond of Vincent. They respected his deep earnestness and we all missed his gentleness. In Amsterdam he would begin to tackle Greek and Latin under the tutelage of a Mendes da Costa. We were all sorry to see him go.

Lights dim on Gorlitz and scene

Mendes de Costa

Scene 4



LOC: *The house of Mendes de Costa. We see books in evidence in cases on the wall and a window to stage right. The entrance door is further stage left*

Action: *Mendes is standing, looking out the window as if waiting for someone. He then turns to the audience and begins to speak. When the bell rings his deaf mute brother goes running to the door to answer it.*

Mendes: It was about 1877 that Vincent's uncle, the Reverend J.P. Stricker asked me if I might possibly be willing to give lessons in Latin and Greek to his nephew in order to prepare him for the matriculation exams necessary for the university. The Reverend Stricker spoke with great affection for Vincent and his parents, though he did forewarn me of his unusual behavior and that I would not be dealing with any ordinary pupil.

Vincent was really quite charming, and our first meeting – which is always so critical between student and teacher – was by no means

unpleasant. We were very close in age, and I would say that we were ...very comfortable with each other!

I soon discovered that sincere friendship and gaining his confidence were most important in this case and so we made very rapid progress right from the beginning, but then, with the little Latin that he learned, his fanaticism took over and he immediately started applying it to translating Thomas a Kempis in the 'original'.

Everything was going well, but eventually the Greek verbs just became too much for him. He was just *overwhelmed*. No matter what I did to make the matter less tedious, it just seemed to make matters worse.

"Mendes", he said, "do you really think such horrors are necessary for someone who wants what I want: to give poor creatures a peacefulness in their existence on earth?"

I, as his teacher, could not possibly agree, but in the depth of my soul, in my heart of hearts, I knew that he, Vincent Van Gogh, was absolutely right. I defended myself as best I could, but it was all futile.

He would always say: "John Bunyan's Pilgrims Progress is of much more use to me; as is Thomas a Kempis and a translation of the Bible; more than that... I don't need." I went to see the Reverend Stricker I don't know *how many* times, but it was *always* decided that Vincent should give it another try.

At one point, it seems that Vincent had taken to some sort of self-chastisement as a means to setting himself straight in what he felt were his *duties*.

For example, if Vincent felt his work hadn't been up to par he would announce to me that he had taken a cudgel to bed and scourged his back. Or he would punish himself by making sure he

arrived well after the door had been locked at the Naval Base where he lived with his Uncle Cor... and so then, he would sleep outside, in a little wooden shack without bed or blanket, and, in the *winter* mind you.

Vincent knew that these announcements were anything but pleasant to me, and so in order to appease me, he would go out in the morning over to the Oosterbegraafplatz, where he loved to walk and he would pick ‘snowdrops’, preferably, from underneath the snow. I can still see him...from my third floor study on the Jonas Daniel Meyerplein, crossing the wide square from the bridge over the Nieuwe Heerengracht without an overcoat – another form of self punishment – with books under his arms pressed closely against his body, he’s be holding snowdrops in his left hand to his chest – with his head cocked to the right – while his face, because the corners of his mouth drooped down, displayed that indescribable veil of sad despair.

His voice would resound in a deep melancholy low tone. “Mendes” he would say, “please don’t be angry at me; I have brought you some flowers again, because you are so good to me.”

It was just impossible to be angry with him; he just had such a need to help those less fortunate. He was ‘consumed’ by it. I even took notice of this in my own home, in the way he treated my deaf mute brother with such compassion and kindness ...and well, we continued on for a while, but it was of no use. Eventually Vincent made a move on his own and found an appointment as an evangelist up the Borinage. It was only there that his concept of institutionalized Christianity would be forever shaken.

Lights Dim

The Borinage

Scene 5



Scene 5

Loc: A church setting

Action: We see Vincent in front of a congregation. He is well dressed as a “dandy” preacher evangelist. He steps up to a pulpit and commences to read from some prepared sermon on “the mustard seed”. One of the miners’ steps out



and starts to speak directly to the audience. Vincent’s voice resonates in boring pious tones but is well in the background as the miner speaks.

About the middle of his Lorem Ipsum monologue, the bored village folk are walking out of the church and we see Vincent standing alone, dejected and confused as the townspeople come and go, seemingly ignoring him.

Vincent preaching from the pulpit in Lorem Ipsum fashion
lj sdft tsdkldjlkdfgjgj fjijr
(Not included)

Miner: (In a rustic French accent behind Vincent’s sermon)

Yes I remember very well, Pastor Van Gogh. He arrived here in ...I believe it was...the winter of 78 to preach the gospel to us ...
Shakes his head

‘nd well, ... I can tell you truthfully...of all of preachers that they had ever sent up through here, Pastor Van Gogh was easily... the ‘worst’ that we had *ever* heard give sermon up at that pulpit. He would weary the congregation with long prepared sermons that he would work on *all* week long. *On* and *on*, he would go...twenty and thirty pages he’d have set before ‘im, and all that... he would have to read the better part of! And as it was..., well, no one really cared too much for ‘im one way or the other at first.

But, our opinions of him began to change the week he moved into a little shack on the north end, and commenced to live just like everyone else here... He’d be always out on his rounds ‘nd tendin’ to the poor then... and the sick...‘nd he would stay for days with them as I remember...But I think though, what really changed ‘our’ opinion of ‘im, was when one afternoon, tragedy struck over in one of the mines...that shook! him. He became a *whole* different person then...

transition to

Scene 5b

An alarm sounds... a whistle...!

Music begins, (inst.) at the sound of the alarm

Loc: The entrance to a mine. Dark sooty sky. Some smoke if feasible

Action: As the alarm sounds, Vincent looks down at his “dandy” attire, which suddenly falls away from him revealing tattered and torn clothing beneath. The scene is transformed to people carrying bodies and injured and dying from the mine explosion. Vincent is tending he wounded...

*Eventually other actions may be depicted from asterisk**

NOTE: the music:

Piano is staccato and the Bass fiddles and Cellos are “Stodgy and Dragging”

Miner: After that incident in the mine, it was as though he were a completely changed man. He gave away everything that he owned ...everything....! And I can't say that he *ever* saw a bar of soap again,least whilst he remained here.

I recall his brother came to visit him one time. It must have been quite a shock for him to see his brother in the condition that he was in, but, still though, he persisted and carried on like that, in rags, ministering to the poor.

When the people who sent him up here got wind of 'how' he'd been conducting his ministry, he was promptly asked to resign his evangelical position.

He went down to Cuemses then, and as I remember that's when he first took to drawing. When he returned, we'd often see him sittin' on one of those heaps* (*Pointing*) drawing as he liked to do.

We never paid any attention to it though ... we thought it just a hobby ... no one took 'im seriously. I know for sure, that he went back down down to Etten then ...he came back once more for a short spell ... and then, well, we never saw or heard anything of Pastor Van Gogh ever again.

Miner fades into darkness



A Bird in a Cage

Scene 6



LOC: Vincent's lamp lit room, stage right. Theo is reading in Paris in his apartment at, far stage left.

Action: A solemn Vincent is seen writing a letter as his voice reads over the musical introduction in simple piano. His brother can be seen off in the right hand corner of the stage (stage left) reading and contemplating the gravity of his brother's lament. Then, at one point, as Vincent rises up from his chair, the spotlight follows him to the darkened center stage, where a huge black birdcage descends over him. He then commences to sing 'Bird in a Cage'.

Commencing with the 5th verse, various characters enter and surround him. Among them are his former boss, Mr. Teersteeg, the neighbors and even his own father, who appear to mock and taunt him with condescending laughter. In the 5th verse, at the appropriate point in the lyric, Vincent bangs his head against the rails of the cage. In the end the cage is lifted and Vincent summarizes.

V.O. over Piano Simple'

Vincent: Dear Theo, I am writing to you rather reluctantly, because for a good many reasons, I have kept silent for a long time. To some extent you have become a stranger to me, and... I to you perhaps more than you think. It is probably better for us not to go on like that. I would not have written to you even now, were it not that I felt obliged...compelled, and be it noted, that you yourself have compelled me to.

I heard in Etten that you had sent fifty franks for me...Well...I have accepted them....with reluctance of course...and a feeling of despondency. But I have reached an impasse. and I am in trouble, what else can I do? And so, I am writing to thank you.

As you know, I am back in the Borinage. Father would rather I be near to Etten, but I refused, as I have become a more or less objectionable character in his eyes... a shady sort, and so, how could I be of any use to anyone.

...*What am I in the eyes of most people Theo? A non-entity or an eccentric and disagreeable man. Somebody who has no position in society and never will have, in short..., the lowest of the low.

Very well, even if this were true, then I should want my work to show what is in the heart of such an eccentric, of such a nobody. This is my ambition, which in spite of everything is founded less on resentment then on love...and in spite of it all, is based more on serenity than passion.

What the molting season is for birds Theo, the time when they lose their feathers; setbacks misfortune and hard times are for us human beings. You can cling on to the molting season, and you can also

emerge from it reborn. But it is not something amusing to be witnessed in a public way. Well, then so be it then.., I shall remain out of the way.

I am a man of passions Theo, capable of doing more or less outrageous things, which I am sometimes more than a little sorry for. Every so often I do something a little too hastily when I should have been more patient. But this being the case, what can be done about it? Am I to be considered a dangerous person, unfit for anything? I think not. Rather every means should be tried to put these very passions to good effect.

Well then, but what is your final goal you might ask? Well brother, be assured that that goal will become clearer and will emerge slowly, just as surely much as the draft becomes the sketch, which in turns become the painting through the serious work done on it.

There is an old academic school Theo, odious and tyrannical, an ‘abomination of desolation’ in short, it is made up of men who dress as it were in a suit of steel armor, of prejudice of convention. Where they are in charge, they hand out the jobs and try, with much red tape to keep them for their protégés and exclude the ‘man of dreams’ and the man with an open mind.

One reason I do not hold a job is that I differ from the men who hand out the jobs. It is not simply a matter of my appearance which they have so sanctimoniously reproached me with ... it goes deeper than this, I do assure you.

***Action:** Vincent from about the asterisk above moves toward the center of the stage, and huge bird cage descends over him as he commences to sing..*

Song A Bird in the Cage

Note: Parentheses indicate use in stage performance of the Musical and are for ‘phrasing’. The song is stand alone and can be performed without them

(Theo),...A bird in the cage in the spring
Seems content with his wage as he sings
His keepers surmise..
He’s is fed , he’s alive
He’s resigned to his fate of clipped wings

But there’s something the bird has forgotten
The bird senses that something is rotten...
He knows other birds fly, but he thinks,
then why can’t I....?

But then(Theo)
one day the bird comes alive with elation
He thinks,
of course ,
I shall join the migration
I shall mate
I shall nest
And then soar with the rest

(Yes, the bird in the cage somehow reasons
I shall make my escape in due season
In the cool of the night
I shall wing and take flight ...
Vincent ‘speaks’ the next line in bitter tones:
But the children have other plans for the bird Theo...
Continuing sung
The children they taunt him is passing

**They mock him with merciless laughter..
(various voices and laughter, mocking him)**

**{ Tsk tsk, Ohhhh...He thinks he can fly...Haha..
Huh...don't fool yerself...he's got salt on those wings..
He sings though..he's happy nuff.. }**

Continuing sung

**But then Theo..
The bird thrashes round in a rage...
'nd he bangs his head 'gainst the rails of the cage
For he is condemned to his cell
As a n'eer do well
Where he'll linger and rot till old age..**

**The cage is lifted and Vincent returns to his writing desk with V.O,
below, music continues in instrumental.**

V.O.

Vincent:

**Yes Theo... a bird in the cage in the spring
Is an old tragic tale of clipped wings...**

**But that cage Theo, that prison..., is prejudice, misunderstanding,
fatal ignorance of one thing or another, suspicion, ... false modesty.**

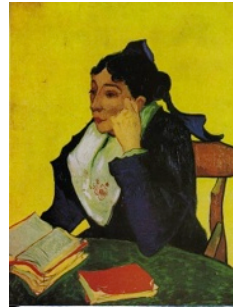
**Do you know what makes the prison disappear? Every deep
heartfelt affection, being friends and being brothers, and not just
loving, but loving with a sublime genuine profound sympathy. With
devotion and intelligence we must strive to know our brother better,
and yet more Theo. That will lead us to God and to unshakable
faith. This is what opens the prison, with supreme power, with some
magic force. Without these, one is as dead, but wherever affection is
revived, there life revives.**

**I have every hope Theo that these apparently fruitless struggles
are just labor pains, and that these thorns shall bear white blossoms
in due course.**

**For now I shake your hand in my thoughts Theo, and know that
it will be good to hear from you.**

Stage does not dim...The Actors remain in position

Kee Vos



Scene 7

Loc: *Again the brothers Van Gogh are seen respectively stage left and right.*

Actions: *In the letter that Vincent is writing, heard in voiceover, he speaks of love and the wonders of being in Love. He asks his brother if he has ever been in love. At this Cue, the music starts and we see Theo put the letter down and stare out toward and above the audience and slightly stage left. The stage starts moving and we see Theo coming closer toward the front center of the stage. He is obviously dreamily introspecting on something as he begins to sing on his cue.*

In the second verse, Vincent takes over the main melody and Theo answers in song. The Image is one of two brothers separated by space but very much at one in this moment of romantic introspection.

Just as we enter the C section which is instrumental, we see on Vincent's side of the stage that he hands a letter to a postman. The postman walks over to yet another postman and hands him the letter, which is then handed to Theo. Anna then enters through a door at stage left of Theo. A V.O. then begins in Vincent's voice as Theo is silently reading a part of the letter on the wind down of "Maria". Anna then takes the letter from Theo and after a moments perusal, takes the 'lead' in singing one of the harmonies of the melody of "Maria" which IS now become the main melody of "A Friendly Star". As they continue to sing, the Brothers are joined together on the stage with their sister Anna, in singing together arm in arm. The music comes to a fantastic emotional crescendo, as the three embrace each other.

V.O. Vincent;

Theo, there's something I want to tell you though it may not be news to you. I want you to know that I fell very much in love with our cousin Kee Vos this summer and that I can find no other words for it other than, "it is just as if Kee Vos were the closest person to me and I the closest person to Kee Vos", and it is in those words that I put it to her. She replied that her past and her future remained as one and the same to her and that she could never return my feelings, and so I found myself in a tremendous dilemma. Should I resign myself to that 'never, no never,' or consider the matter as unsettled, persevering with good heart and not give up?

Well old chap, I chose that latter, and to this day I do not regret my decision. Of course I am up against Father who says I am breaking family ties,* but I think that I shall not provide grist for those 'never no never' mills, and that they should rather go bankrupt.

You were in love once Theo,



what was here name...? **

Intro commences from asterisk* Theo commences to sing from
double asterisk **

Song

In the first verse below Theo leads and Vincent answers

In the second verse Vincent leads and Theo answers

Maria

Mariiii...aa

Maria, that was her name

Marii...aa

A child, so fair and tame(without blame)

Marii...aaa

I know, she was your first

Marii...aa

Those feelings that she nursed

Forever

They are forever you should know

Not ever

Don't ever let them go

**

Vincent takes lead

2

Forever

Will I remember how we cried

Forever

Those feelings deep inside

No Never

Would I have thought that it would end

Not ever

Will I ever love again.

Trio

Vincent and Theo

Then

Anna enters and

Song morphs to 'Friendly Star' over a brief V.O.

V.O. Vincent;

...Theo, did I tell you about the storm I saw ? The sea was yellowish, especially near the shore. The rain poured down in slanting streaks from immense grey clouds and there was a streak of light on the horizon.

That night I looked from my room over the town with its turrets, mills and slate roofs, and there against the dark night sky ...there was but 'one' single star... but a 'beautiful' , large, 'friendly' one. None of us will *ever* forget that view...

Trio

A Friendly Star

Anna commences to sing 'A Friendly Star' as she takes up the new melody in first position. There is no Break in the music. Timing very important here.

A single bright and friendly star

A friend indeed is what you are

A brother and a shining light

A beacon in the darkest night

A friend in more than word and deed

You're someone there in time of need

Just when I think I've lost the way

A brother's there to save the day

With each trial.. that comes anew

My brother's there to pull me through

**A guiding light that I might see
A helping hand to welcome me**

**One day I shall remember and
I shall repay your kindness friend**

*Here, at the Coda, Theo sings 'Maria'
Vincent 'forever' and Anna her last words of the verse...*

*Action: As the song ends here with a Grand crescendo, we see the
three siblings in reunion hugging each other, and then the scene fades
to darkness as we enter the V.O of the next scene.*

Rejection

Scene 8



Piano Simple'

LOC: The home of Kee Vos and the Rev. Stricker and finally to the streets of Amsterdam and a little hotel at the train station.

Action: V.O. with Vincent's voice reading from the letter describing the visit to the Rev. Stricker

Vincent has arrived at the residence of Kee Vos . Her parents tell Vincent that Kee is not there. He puts his hand in a candle flame to show he is strong. They stop him and tenderly relate Kee's feelings in song.

Vincent starts the song with the 'Never not Ever' promise that he feels Kee has made to him.

Vincent: V.O.

Theo, I don't know if I've already written to you about 'exactly' what happened to me in Amsterdam. I went there thinking perhaps that that: 'no, never, not ever' will thaw, with the weather being so mild and all.

And so one fine evening I lumbered along the Keizersgracht looking for the house, and indeed I found it.

Naturally I rang the doorbell (*voice fading to zero db*) and was told....

Action: Vincent enters stage right and approaches a cottage that we see from the side. After he rings the bell Mrs. Stricker answers. She turns her head halfway round briefly as if to signal the family that there is a problem. (Cutaway view of the house that the family is at dinner.) Kee , the Rev. Stricker and his cousin Jan who are at the table all look at each other and Immediately Kee takes here cue to leave with a hand signal from the Rev. Stricker. He wipes his mouth and goes to join his wife at the front door. He has also signaled to the housekeeper to take away Kee's plate. Kee is now seen exiting the back door (stage left) where she remains with her head cocked as if listening to what is transpiring inside the residence. Vincent seems to sense immediately that something is wrong and that they are hiding something from him.

Bell ringing.. and door opens

Mrs. Stricker: Vincent.. (Turning her head slightly to signal that Kee be ushered out of the dining room) what a pleasant surprise ... It's Vincent...

Vincent: Auntie M

Mrs. Stricker: We were just having dinner...but come in ...please please...come in

Rev. Stricker : (joining his wife at the front door) Vincent.... lad! What are you doing here in Amsterdam? You should have wrote and told us you were coming. We would have been prepared for you. Come in, come in. I see you have no coat;....you'll wind up with a terrible catarrh! Really, there's quite a chill in the air...

Vincent enters and makes with the brief formality of greeting his cousin Jan and another guest who disappear immediately leaving just the Rev., his wife and Vincent alone. There is an awkward tension....

Vincent: But... where is Kee?

Rev.:(feigning confusion)... Mother, where is Kee?

Mrs S.: Kee is out

Another awkward moment ensues and Rev. J.P.S turns Vincent's attention to his professorial cousin

Rev.: Vincent, did you know that your cousin attended the Exhibition at Atri last week?

Vincent: Oh, I've heard only good things from Teersteeg

Professor: Yes, it was most rewarding, nothing like I expected

After hemming and hawing for about 30 seconds...

Professor:....um...if you'll permit me, I'll have to excuse myself for just a moment..

*The professor exits, and then little Jan nervously runs off leaving Vincent alone with Kee's parents,
Awkward silence*

Rev. and Mrs. Stricker: Vincen.. *(They both start to speak at once and then catch themselves..)*

Rev.: *(Sighs, and then ,firmly and directly)* Vincent, I was just on the verge of sending you a letter! if you'd like, I'll read the letter out for you! *(starting to read after a pause)*. Dear Vincent, I am....

Vincent interrupts

Vincent: But where is Kee ?

Rev. Stricker: Actually Vincent,.... she left the minute that she heard you were in town.

Vincent: *(chagrinned...stunned...)*.... Let me hear then or not, I don't care much either way.

The Rev. Stricker starts to read and Vincent sits on the arm of a sofa. Mrs. Stricker smiles patronizingly at Vincent. It is yet another awkward moment.

Vincent 'suddenly' places his hand in a candle flame...The Rev. notices and reacts.

The Rev. Stricker:.. ...Vincent.... what are you doing *(now in a loud voice...alarmed)*...Are y... you Crazy?

Mrs. Stricker: *(shreiking...)* Oh my God...'Vincent'!

Rev Stricker: Get some butter.....quickly!

The maid rushes to the table to fetch the butter and then they apply first aid...Vincent starts to sing as if weeping as they wrap his hand in a cloth..

Vincent: But.. never, not ever, I heard her to say..

The Strickers sing

Song
Trio with chorus
Vincent

Vincent....

But never, not ever I heard her to say...

Strikers:...

Three simple words, she's expressed her dismay

It should all seem so clear

There's no mystery here...

can't you see, Vincent

my dear...

Oh Vincent dear Vincent oh why can't you see

For all you might give,

your reason to be

Is as naught in her eyes

It should seem no surprise..

You're in love with a minister's child

Oh Vincent dear Vincent

She knows how you feel...

Though it stings to the heart,

in time you will heal

You will see in the end

You can always be friends

You'll survive to find love again

Chorus

Love is a rose
A delicate prose
So much more than an art
Sometimes sweet sometimes tart
Some find it a
Thorn to the heart

Oh Vincent Dear Vincent oh what shall we do
This trial, this ordeal that you're putting us through...
You've your own self to blame
You're just fanning the flames
Have you no sense of remorse, of your shame ...

As the song closes with instrumental refrain, we see that Vincent has spied Kee hiding at the rear of the house. He runs off toward the back of the house stage left, but she dashes and brusquely exits the back door. As Vincent turns around, the Rev. Stricker and his wife both put their hands on Vincent's shoulders to console him.

As the song closes with simple piano variation we see the location is now suddenly a foggy rainy street at night. The rejected Vincent is being escorted to a hotel by the Rev. Stricker and his wife. We hear the voice of Vincent reading from the letter describing his departure into the night and the tender treatment he received from Kee's Parents.

This scene is continued into Scene 9 where the V.O should terminate and a second V.O begin..

V.O. Vincent:

So as it was we continued and every once in a while Auntie M would utter some Jesuitical work, and I got all steamed up, but I did not pull any punches and although anyone else in J.P.S.'s mood would have said 'God damn you'... he did not, and so I shifted my ground and took a little. In the end they asked me if I would like to stay the night, but I told them "if Kee leaves the house the minute I come to town, I don't think that this is the right moment then."

And then Uncle and Auntie, those two old people went with me through the cold, foggy, muddy streets and they did indeed take me

to a very good and very cheap hotel. I absolutely insisted on their not coming , but they absolutely insisted on showing me. And you see I found something very human in that and it calmed me down a great deal....

The scene fades to darkness here ...

Sien

Scene 9



Scene 9

NOTE:

This scene is highly transitional in that it is only a matter of dimming the theatre lights to execute this scene. And so the V.O. from the last scene simply continues into this one...

Piano simple'

From scene 8 reiterated.

Loc: *Between the Stricker residence and the good cheap hotel. Foggy streets of Amsterdam and then abruptly, in a darkened space.*

Action: *As Vincent has been brought to his place of boarding by the Rev. and Mrs. J.P.S., head down in shame, he is drawn aside as they leave. (Technically scene begins 'here'....) We now see him with what appears to be a much older woman in 'Sillhouette'. She is a lady of the evening, but one who tries to make ends meet outside of her daily routine of washwoman. We see them in embrace in her humble flat. The mood and feel is very bohemian. They speak in low tones beneath the V.O.*

NOTE: *This scene is projected 'live' on the 'back' of the screen* in 'silhouette', (*scrim substitute), so as to facilitate the setting up of scene Scene 10.*

Vincent:V.O.

And so Theo, as I told you that as far as I'm concerned even my secrets are no secrets, and well, I'm not taking that back. Think of me what you will Theo, but whether you approve or not does not really affect the issue. And as to that: "never no never" 'I thought to myself... "I would like to be with a woman for a change." But said I to myself then: "you said 'she and no other' and now you want to go to another woman? But that's unreasonable isn't it? Isn't that illogical...?" And my answer to that was: "who is the master, Logic or I? Does logic exist for me, or do I exist for logic?" And I made up my mind that I *cannot*, will not, may not live-without love. I am only a man of passions; I *must* have a woman!

I had in the circumstances fought a battle with myself, and in that battle some of the things concerning one's constitution and hygiene, that I have come to know more or less through bitter experience, gained the upper hand. One cannot forgo a woman too long with impunity, and I do not believe that what some call God and others the Supreme Being and others nature, is unreasonable and pitiless, In short I came to the conclusion: I want to see whether I can find a woman.

And, my goodness,... I found a woman! By no means young, by no means beautiful, nothing special if you will. Ah, but perhaps you are a little curious. It was not the first time that I was unable to resist that feeling of affection, that special affection of love for those women who are so damned and condemned and despised of the clergy from the lofty heights of their pulpits. Well, I do not damn them, I do not condemn them, and I do not despise them.

That woman was good to me, very good, very dear, and *very* kind in a way that I shall not even tell my brother Theo, because I strongly suspect that my brother Theo has had a similar experience. Tant mieux pour lui.

Did we spend much money? No... because I didn't have much, and I said to her,

"Look...you and I don't have to make ourselves drunk to feel something for each other, you had best put what I can spare in your

pocket”; and I wish I could have spared more, for she was worth it. And we talked about everything, about her life, about her miseries, about her worries, about her health, and I had more exhilarating conversation with her than, for instance, than with my learned, professorial cousin Jan.

The * **clergymen** call us sinners brother, conceived and born in sin...Bah! What confounded nonsense that is. Is it a sin to love ...to feel the need to love... not to be able to live without love? I consider a life without love a sinful and immoral state. For me the god of the clergy is as dead as a * **doornail**.

*From the ‘Cue’ word * clergyman above, the silhouettes fade and commences the intro to Song ‘Sorrow’ as the next scene is immediately illuminated.*

*Sein’s vocal commences with the word * ‘doornail’!*

Reiterated at the commencement of the action of following scene...

Note: the transition to the next scene is made possible by the use of ‘different actors’ to execute the above scene in silhouette. Their never being seen in full light in this scene, allows for Vincent and Sein to seemingly appear ‘out of nowhere’ in the following scene.

Sorrow

Scene 10



Scene 10

Loc: A street in Nuenen. **NOTE:** I have deliberately used the drawing of Vincent of 'Diggers on Noordstraat' because the image of the building in the background appear almost exactly as I had pictured the street for this scene. Just a coincidence that I happened to find it this evening while looking for an appropriate plate for scene 13.

Action: There are ladies of the evening vending their wares on the local stroll. One is particularly wretched and obviously somewhat pregnant. Her mother accompanied by her brother, trying to stay out of view of the clients, prod her out onto the street with a closed parasol. There are various 'types' of men curiously surveying the lady's wares. Off to the right side of the stage (stage left) is a tottering drunk with a fiddle and also a vender of some kind of hot street food for those who would like a little snack with their entertainment. As her mother pushes a somewhat reluctant Sien out into the street, she begins singing in broken toned Nederlandish cockney in interplay with the drunken fiddler. At the chorus, her plea for mercy, is of a 'virtuous' quality musically.

Vincent enters from stage left, at the second verse, and can be seen walking up the street. Crossing the stage he spies a particularly lewd banker type getting a little too familiar with Sein. As the cad starts to lift her dress with his cane to get a better look at her legs, and, just before she moves into the chorus with the phrase: (lift my knickers too), Vincent grabs the cane out of the Dandy's hand and raises it over his head as if to strike him if he doesn't move on. As Vincent turns to hear the lady's plea for mercy, (please taste my wares I pray thee) the scene immediately fades to the inside of a house (preferably via revolving stage or the parting of scrims) to Sein immediately disrobed, and set into the crouching position depicted in Vincent's famous work

titled "Sorrow" (photo right). As Vincent is tending her, the pregnant Sien sings the last verse out of the tub in a crouching position.

Note: As Vincent bends over to care for Sein in the scene transition from street to Sein's house, the mother and brother seem to follow them in tow reluctantly, with angry and embarrassed looks on their faces. Sien's little daughter enters the scene as all enter the house. She is ushered away immediately by the mother and uncle, as she had been trying to get a good look at the new visitor. She will appear in the next scene to sing about this "New Poppy".

I will reiterate here: from the last scene. The music intro begins with the word 'clergyman' Sein begins singing with the word 'doornail' from the previous scene's V.O.. The full stage is suddenly illuminated revealing the new scene.

Song Sorrow

It seems these days a
girl must have a
livelihood
So as a seamstress and
a cutter I must make
do...
So I beg you don't
begrudge me
try to understand, be
kind
For it is in sorrow that
I do the things I do...



Yes, sometimes a bit more is required with the price of pins and things

(with) Times being rough and all.. with what they are...
And so for only just one guilder I'll sew your britches up like new..And for just one more I'll lift my knickers too...

Sein' falls to her knees in supplication as her dress falls away

Chorus;

Please taste my wares I pray thee ...

I need a man, someone to save me

I need a man yes,

I need someone strong...

Someone to right this wrong

Yes sometimes the best of folk will fall upon hard times

And with a paltry pittance must make do

So I beg you don't begrudge me

Try to understand, be kind

For it is in sorrow that I lie with the likes of you.

Alternate chorus

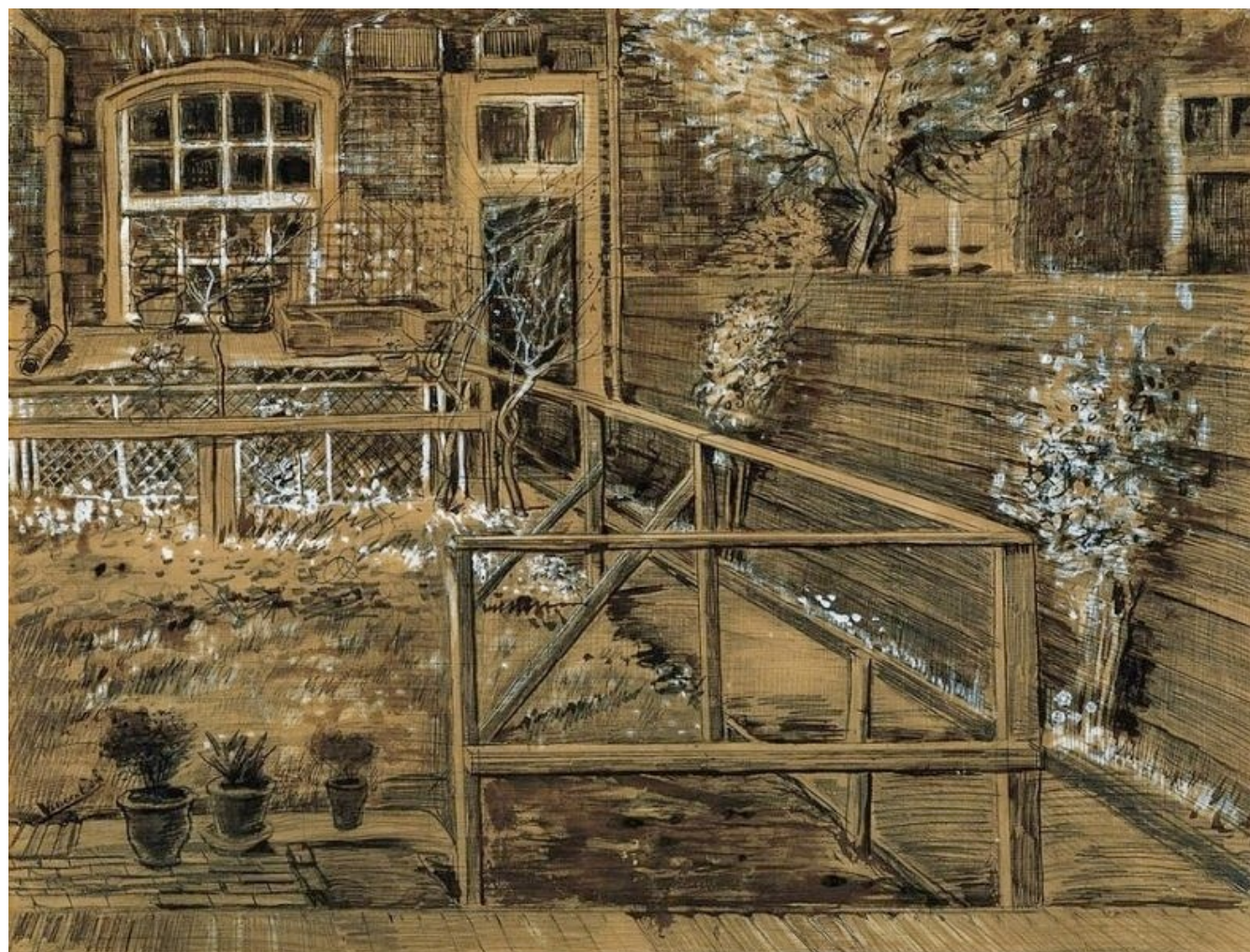
I need a man someone to guide me

Take pity on this child inside me...

I need someone to take me by the hand

Someone who'll understand.

Scene morphs into following scene and VO of next begins...



New Poppy

Scene 11



Scene 11

Loc: A room in the house of Vincent and Sein.

Action: Vincent and Sien are seated on the floor in an alcove at stage right. As he has been sketching Sien's daughter and the sleeping newborn (fig. ...See drawing) Sien's little girl gets up from her position to fetch something near the front of the stage. She picks it up, and then turns to the audience and starts to recite in soft whispering wondrous tones like any little girl would about the New Poppy that Momma has brought home. She is positioned just slightly stage left and glances at them before she faces the audience and begins to sing-recite. It becomes obvious that she has become accustomed to horrible abuse at the hands of her former 'Poppys', and is very pleased and enthusiastic about this 'New Poppy', who "Is not like the rest." At the final chorus cue, which is only instrumental, she runs up and re-joins the scene in her role as the perfect model for Vincent's study. The Scene darkens and the stages rotates to Scene 12



Note: VO begun in last scene over simple piano which leads up to 'New Poppy' intro at Cue* blow... Sien's daughter commences her recitation after the word 'childlike.... V.O.

At this moment Theo, I am sitting with the woman and the children. When I look back a year I see there is a great difference. The woman is stronger and stouter, and has lost much of her rough edge and agitated air. The baby is the loveliest healthiest merriest little fellow imaginable; and as for the poor little girl—you can see from the drawings that her former deep misery has not been diminished, and so I often feel anxious about her, but still,* she is 'different' from last year. Then she was in a very bad state. Now she is already looking more childlike.



Song

New Poppy

Things don't go so swell with my Mum's new beaus these days..
As new poppies' are ...
One's like the rest I guess..
New poppies come ...
and new poppies go
But this new poppy's different though
He's not like the rest
He's passed my test

He knows all of birds and owl's nest and things
His pipe smells just like burning cherry wood and
He can blow smoke rings
Sometimes when he works he sings

He is smart and has read *real* books
He knows how to draw real good...and, even though he tries
and he tries and he tries
...he cannot cook..

He knows where hidden treasures are
His says they're on the moon and stars

We walked with him once in the rain
he knew *all* flowers by their first name
When my mum waxed cross with him and said we had to go..?
I heard him not once complain
She shot a look at me though...take the paint of the cupboard it
would
All I did was ask when we could go again

Chorus;
I think he loves my mum and he will stay..
Last night I saw him pray
He wept until his face turned red
Then he asked for some tart named grace and a bunch of daily
bread
When he raised his eyes and spied me looking
I went to hide...
I thought he'd beat me like the others did
He came into the room and I feared as he
raised his hand above my head...
But ...
he just came to tuck me in my bed

Chorus:
I asked,
if he had to go
could he take me...
He said that ... though this could never be..
that in his heart of hearts there'd *always* be
A special place for a little girl
And that little girl was the likes of me
Yes this new poppy's different
He's not like the rest
He's passed my test...

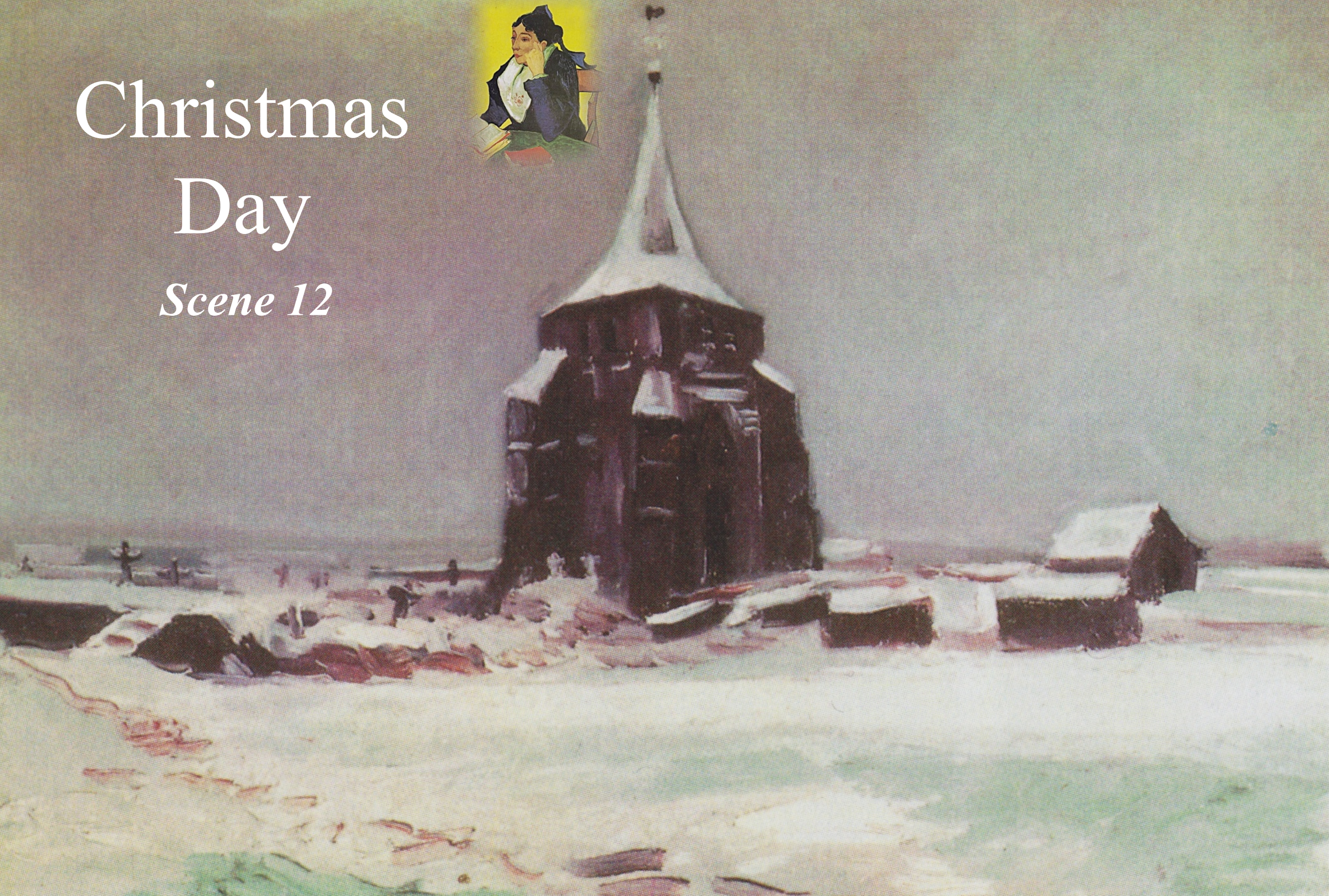
Action: Just a brief moment before the instrumental chorus, Sein has gotten up and quickly moved toward the right side (stage left) of the stage. Passing the little girl at that instant coinciding with the onset of the instrumental chorus, she pats her on the butt as if to say, "get back there". The little girl immediately runs up to Vincent and hugs him and then takes her position by the cradle. In this version, we can see the final drawing in projection on the scrim in the background.*

Version 2: In this version, the little girl runs back as Vincent and Sien are getting up from their positions, She looks at the drawing of herself, smiles and they both walk off to the right of the stage (stage left) as Vincent casually places the sketchpad on an easel facing the audience. In both versions, Vincent is smoking his pipe. This is very important to the mood of the scene.

*As scene darkens, we already hear the voices of Vincent's sisters
commencing the song 'Christmas Day'*

Christmas Day

Scene 12



Scene 12

Christmas Day

LOC: *The household of Vincent's parents on Christmas Day.*

Action: *The comings and goings of Christmas Day with all the Van Gogh family present. Each verse is followed by the action described in it. The song 'Christmas Day' which is sung by Vincent's Sisters is paused and modulated one half step on each verse. The effect should be Comic-Tragic. The Accapella singing has begun on the fade of the last scene...*

Song

Christmas Day

Sung by Vincent's sisters

Gathered here on Christmas day
All in finery arrayed
Daughters all and favorite sons
Deck the halls except for one

We see the Family of Vincent dressed for the Sunday Christmas service. They are slowly going to the table, served by Vincent's mother. Vincent enters at the beginning of the second verse. He is dressed in a big shaggy fur vest and old baggy pants with evidence of paint on them

Father speaks (reeks) of piety
Brother has no sympathy
Mother's mired in a bog

Treats brother like a shaggy dog

Vincent having entered the room goes to take a seat on the sofa. His mother immediately reprimands him..

Mother: No... not there

Vincent gets up and goes to sit on a chair and again ..

Mother: Vincent...please...

Finally Vincent goes and sits on a wooden chair at the table

The verse continues now modulated in key

Christmas is a kickball game
Fingers wag and point in shame
Father fights to take the floor
Tries to even up the score

Father: (sarcastically) Well, so nice of you to join us Vincent.
Hmmm!!! I see you're not dressed yet for church...

Silence...

Father: Well,... Where are the new trousers I bought for you Vincent ?

Vincent: *Silence..he is writing or sketching something.*

Father: Vincent ...Please...pay attention...it's Christmas Day. We go to church as a family and...

Vincent: (suddenly) I'm not going to church with you father...

The family is now restless. We hear the sound of silverware rustling and see that the sisters are feeling the effect of this dysfunctional behavior.

Father: Vincent..., we go to the service as a family! I am the Pastor here ..there are certain things expected of us and...

Vincent: I will not be a hypocrite father..., the god of the church and the clergy has no meaning for me anymore...

Theo: Vincent...

The tension is very thick now with Anna excusing herself from the table

Father: *(after a cold pause)* Well it seems that not much means anything to you any more Vincent. First you lose your job, then you try to take up with your cousin Kee, breaking family ties. Mauve is fed up with you.... and now you're taking up with prostitutes... You'll be bringing them in the house next.

Vincent: She is not a prostitute father, she is 'destitute'... a victim...!.You see this is what I mean about hypocrites

Father: and now, I'm a hypocrite Vincent? Don't force me to take actions that I...

Vincent: What actions father?

Father:I'll have you sent to the Gheel,Vincent, so help me.... I will

Anna: Pleeeeeze ...don't fight..!

Music continues;

Christmas chimes and sleigh bells ring

With merriment and mirth we sing

But in the seasons final call

Father wins, he owns the ball

We see father and son in standoff and then..

Vincent: I'll fight you for all I'm worth father...for all I'm worth

Father: Very well then...we'll go without you. ..You do remember how to find the door..?

So off to church we go again

Without our favorite brother and

In Irony and disarray

We celebrate our Christmas day

As the family files out and off too church, the scene ends with heads down and a feeling of resignation and shame hanging in the air.

Fades to darkness

Intro Music of Scene 13 song Shevenigen Green strikes up during fade...

Back on the Street

Scene 13



Loc: *In the house of Sien's mother and then suddenly at a fair.*

Action: *To the Instrumental intro of Song "Back on the Street" the scene opens in the kitchen of Sien's mother. Her brother is also present and they are both seated at the kitchen table, with the brother going through the pockets of Vincent's trousers. Sien is moving about the kitchen preparing for an outing to a fair, Sien's mother and brother are expressing their disapproval of Vincent in: no uncertain terms. When Vincent arrives, we are exiting the sixth or seventh verse and the stage suddenly breaks away to:*

Loc 2: *country fair where*

Action: *Vincent is holding the toddler in one arm and the hand of Sien's little girl in the other. Sien is moving through the crowd and has fallen into step in exposing her legs and strutting her 'Victorian stuff' to the rhythm of the piece. Now, as her mother and brother look on approvingly Vincent is seemingly overwhelmed with Sien's sudden vulgar display.*

All is very dreamlike, and Vincent is absolutely dazed.

Intro begins....The music is 'roiling' the Mother...furious...

Mother: (angrily) Mud and paint on everything.... Have you no shame?

Brother: (softly and methodically) Blue..Red..Hmm....here's some yellow...(Going thorough Vincent's pockets)

Sien: Vincent's an artist mother why can't you....

Mother: An artist....I'll tell you what kind of an artist he is..

Brother: *going through Vincent's trousers, holds them up with the pockets exposed inside out)* Violet, Chartreuse...but I never see no green. Where- is- the green? ...There's NO Green!

Mother: He's a 'vagabond' ,... he earns 'nothing'!

Sien: Mother he ..Mother, ... you have no heart

Mother: music of Intro more pronounced here). No Heart?.You mean no *heat*, ...don't you? We're *freezing* to death

Brother: (Softly and cynically) There's no money for 'char' Sister....

Mother: And the larders empty....don't tell me I have *no heart*.. I have a 'good' heart, I- just- can't- eat- **dreams!**

Song
Back on the Street
Sheveningen Green

Mother Speaks (not sings) 'melodically' in time with the music

Well, your suitors before
They brought gifts and fine treats
The larder was full
And the children had meat

Now we're all in a pickle
And we're facing defeat..
We were *much* better off
With you walking the street

**

This artist, this Vincent
His work it lacks sheen
He's no sense of color
He can't seem to earn beans

Let him sully his hands
Give up his big dream
And earn some old fashioned
Sheveningen Green

**

Brother sings
But we're not all that helpless
You've still got good legs
There's no need to reduce
your poor mother to beg

So to hell with the tubs
Admit it.. we're beat
You're worth more on your back
Than you are on your feet

Mother and Brother can alternate lines

So let's reason good sister

Let's not play the fool

** About here, we see the stage filling with fair goers with Vincent
joining the action holding the baby as Sien Dances about flashing her
'wares' by the fade out...*

Your mother knows best

We're not being cruel

In the name of God's mercy

Just give us a week..

We'll have you down on your back

And back on your feet

*Music fades here directly to Requiem theme of next scene, with
Vincent head down releasing the children...*

Drenth



Scene 14



Drenth

Loc: *The peat bogs, which are the Heath of Drenth*

Action: *We see Vincent on the barge with his VO over the Instrumental. As he sings in the chorus of the Requiem Kyrie, his tone is solemn. As he is mourning the demise of his relationship with Sien in the V.O., he remarks on an old woman with a child and compares her to Sien and then admits Sien's incurable nature. At the same*

time he speaks of the awesome beauty and loneliness on the Heath. All characters sing in the chorus.

Song

Kyrie

*To be sung softly and firmly with
Round tones and
Profound solemnity*

Kyrie Eleison 3x

Christe Eleison 3x

Kyrie Eleison 3x

Narrative over Instrumental

V.O. *Read in Solemn tones*

I am writing to you Theo from the remotest corner of Drenth where I have arrived following an endless passage by barge through the heartland. I don't think I shall be able to do justice to the countryside because words fail me, but imagine the banks of the

canal as miles and miles of say Michel's or Th. Rousseau's, Van Goyens or de Konicks. Level planes or strips that grow narrower and narrower as they approach the horizon.

This evening the heath was uncommonly lovely. The sky was of an inexpressibly delicate lilac white, the clouds not fleecy, for they were joined together more, but in tufts covering the whole sky in tones of more or less lilac grey white, with a single small break through which the blue gleamed. Then at the horizon, a glorious red streak....

You should see Theo, the barges drawn by men, women, children, white or black horses, all laden with peat, in the middle of the heath, just like the ones you see in Holland, say on the Rijswijk towpath. There are sheepfolds and shepherds more beautiful than those in Brabant.... *Slight pause in VO...A church bell ringing here with figures coming into light. This should be reminiscent of the Angelus!*

*VO continues....*Sometimes Theo I think with a great deal of melancholy of the woman and the children. And believe me, I truly would, that they were provided for. One could say that it is the woman's fault, and it would be true, and yet I feel that her adversity will be greater than her fault. I knew from the start Theo that her character had been tainted, but I had hoped that it could be reformed, and now? I am no longer able to reminisce and still ponder any of the good I once saw in her. I am more and more convinced that she is too far gone. But that conviction only increases my sense of pity, Theo, which gives way to a feeling of melancholy, and if it is for no other reason, it is because it is not in my power to help matters.

Slight pause in VO...

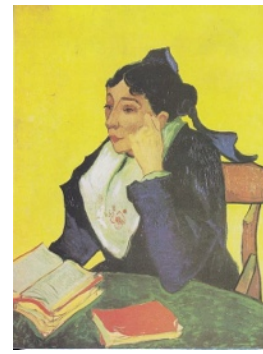
I have seen some superb figures in the country here, striking in their sobriety. A woman's breast for instance, that has that heaving movement that is the exact opposite of volupé', and sometimes, when the creature is old or ailing, this can arouse compassion or respect. And when I see a poor woman like that on the heath, with a child on her arm or at her breast, my eyes grow moist and I am

reminded of 'her'. But her weakness, her slovenliness, I can't help but to add to the likeness for, I know that she is no good...and that I have every right to do as I am doing. I know now that I could not stay with her there, and also that I really could not take her with me, and that indeed that what I did was sensible, wise, whatever you like, but that does not alter the fact that it cuts right through me when I see a poor little figure like that, feverish and miserable...and it melts my heart....

Stage slowly fades to darkness

Margot Begemann

Scene 15 a



from both sides of the stage, and then disappear as the song commences.

Loc: a garden between two houses

Action: *Vincent's friend Van Rappard steps out of the shadows and describes to us the situation as it stood upon Vincent's return from Drenth.*

We learn that Vincent has discovered the "girl next door"; literally that is!

Van Rappard: When Vincent returned from Drenth he was destitute, broke and his relationship with Theo was strained by what Vincent perceived as Theo's failure to even attempt to sell any of his work. Vincent was tired of feeling like a beggar receiving a monthly handout and he suffered further humiliation by having to move in again with his parents. To make matters worse, our own friendship was under a lot of strain, with Vincent feeling that I was too critical of him and that I did not understand his work. His only relief was in his new found interest in the girl next door. Her name was Margot Begemann. As it was, Margot's life was no bed of roses either. She had 5 wicked sisters, and so it was that when she and Vincent finally got together, it was as a new day for both of them.

Action: *At the musical intro we see Vincent and Margot coming together in embrace in the garden that separates their two houses. Vincent's parents and Margot's sisters are looking on disapprovingly*



Song
A New day
Duet

Alas a new day
The sky has opened
Now have verses replaced
The once vacuous space
Where two hearts once lie shattered and broken

Verse
The clouds have broken
The sun is shining
Now the hills are arrayed
In a lovely display
And the Lilacs have come out of hiding

Chorus
Verse
Now night has fallen
The sun has left us
The magnificent sight
Of the heavens tonight
Is enough to have left the moon breathless

Action: (continuing) Over the instrumental chorus-coda of 'A New Day', Margot's mother and sisters comes out and sings Nyeah Nyeah Nyeah, Nyeah, Nyeah Nyeah, like a little child making fun of Margot and Vincent's song. Both Vincent and Margot are seemingly oblivious to the onlookers (Mother and sisters). They now sing in trio, Vincent to the audience, Margot, to herself dreamily and the Mother overlooking the whole scene from stage left.

Song
(transitional)

Trio
Blue Gloves and Basket

Mother's part
Sang gruffly with a Nederland cockney

Mother's part
Nyeah nyeah nyeah,
Nyeah nyeah nyeah

With blue gloves and
basket
He takes it to task
That he will paint all things

A curious fellow
Obsessed with bright
yellow
And other strange things

Vincent's part
Sung sweetly and firmly



1.

A' Delacoix

Must man aspire to learn
Must loathe and shun fame
and stay near to the flame
that deep within burns

2.

If a man be a man
He must take a stand
He must clarify things

Margot's part
Sung sweetly

1.

I go to him ever so gen-ti-ly
How could he know the joy he brings to me
And is it all so wrong
And am I such a fool
To think that this could be

Loc: Same

Action: At this juncture it seems that Vincent has made up his mind about what appears to be another impossible situation, and so turns to leave. This action takes place over the Instrumental Coda of 'Blue Gloves' which also serves as the 'lead in' to the next song. On her cue, Margot suddenly exclaims in verse; "Away...make them all go awaaay..."

Song

How Shall The Sun Go Down

Make them all go 'way...
The deed is done the hours late
There's nothing more to say
Their spell has cast out lives to fate
The world that we once knew
Is folding crumbling into sand

And now this mourning due
Has caught up with our promise'
Just hold me close my friend...
That we might love
this one last time again

Don't hide your love from me
The wolves, the ravens compass near
What be is what must be
They've stole the moon and disappeared
What was rendered in the night
Must surrender now and face the sun
And embrace the morning light
They've left us nowhere but to run
Now hold me dear...
Say you care

Chorus 1

Without your love how shall the sun go down
Without your love where shall the moon be found
Without you love how shall the world spin round
Where shall I be without your love
Without your love how shall the robin sing
Without your love how shall my heart take wing
Without your love what might the morrow bring
How shall I live without your love

Hold me, kiss me, don't leave me hopeless,
Now say you'll stay..
Make the sun go away

Chorus 2

Without your love now shall the nights wax long
Without your love ,
long shall the veil be worn

Without your love how shall I carry on
How shall I live without your love

As the song goes out instrumentally Margot collapses in the garden.

Van Rappard relates to us exactly what ensued.

Action: *We see Margot faint and then Vincent move to her side. Suddenly we hear the bells of funerary as Van Rappard relates to us that Vincent's father had died suddenly.*

Loc: *2 at the Gravesite*

Action: *the Van Gogh Family, Vincent, Theo, their Mother and sisters all standing in the rain as the casket is lowered. Vincent sings "Rain." The song commences after Van Rappard finishes speaking. There is a burst of rolling thunder that coincides with the introductory A minor chord that opens the song. The casket is lowered on the final verse*

...continuing

Van Rappard: And so it was that an impossible situation went from the bad to worse. Margot had gotten a hold of some poison and ingested it in the garden. Vincent attended to her for the next several weeks, and although Margot recovered, still she had succumbed to the intrigues of her mother and sisters. Vincent described her now as a "fine Cremona violin with a bad repair," and so then, as distraught as Vincent was, he made the decision to move on without Margot.

But before any of this came to pass, his mother took a terrible fall and broke her leg. Vincent cared for her and nursed her nearly back to health and then ...the Rev. Theodorus Van Gogh, his father, died unexpectedly.

Scene part 15b

Action: *We see the action described above with Vincent's mother having fallen and Vincent at her side assisting her in walking and then we see his father fall clutching his heart as Van Rappard says "his father died unexpectedly"*

Note:

*On the chorus marked with *, the casket is lowered slowly into the ground. All are weeping as Theo and Anna nearly hysterical go to touch the casket one last time. They are restrained by the others.*

Song Rain

The sound of thunder...and then rain

Vincent Sings

If life were just a game

Some excuse they lived in vain

I might understand

If only just a farce

Not some passing through a flame

I might believe it then

Believe that

Life was just a tryst

Some boat some coach some train they missed

Believe that there was nothing left

But for to grieve for them

But life is so much more than a simple rite

Of passage through an open door

Far from a farce and a denial

It is a privilege and a trial

That sometimes waxes sore

**But
With love
We are made whole as
‘Healed’
And as are the flowers
Of spring so then revealed
With every precious
cold sweet drop
of
Rain that pours**

**Rain
So sweet the rain
Rain
So cruel the Rain**

Chorus

**But (though) in the final tolling bell
We’re as a tree that’s cut and felled
We are not as
Men undone
For every seed as yet unborn
Is as a page as yet un-torn, unread
(Is still a page)
As yet a war un-won
And perhaps with love
And just some rain
Those seeds
Are rendered
Whole and then
Their essence brought to
Flower and revealed
Beneath the sun**

**Rain
So gently fall he rain
Rain
So welcome the rain**

The stage is darkened to the sound of soft thunder and falling rain...

The Letter



Scene 16



Scene 16 a through c

The Letter

Very rapid transition to:

Loc: *Nuenen Studio, Theo's residence in Paris and Vincent's whereabouts in a continuously changing scenario that follows the images in songs 'The Letter' and 'The Potato Eaters'. These include images from the residences in Nuenen and Antwerp, and morphing images such as diggers digging, weavers weaving and peasants posing for the painting entitled "The Potato Eaters" See note* below*



Actions: *In this scene, we see three residences on stage at once with a postman coming and going between them. The Letters are moving between Vincent And Theo and Anna and Will. This movement of the postmen continues throughout the piece and is interrupted only by the Song 'Potato Eaters'. The postmen resume their deliveries again when 'The Letter' continues.*

Vincent gets up finally as they are singing well into third and forth verses and is seen working on models Nuenen and then Antwerp. The final note is a letter delivered to Theo. Theo looks toward the audience and Reads the short note announcing Vincent's imminent arrival in Paris. Theo appears 'stunned' when he reads that Vincent will be at the Louvre in Paris at Two O'clock the next day.

***NOTE:**

The stage action is continually moving to suggest the quick passage of time as it is reflected in each verse. So therefore Vincent sings the FIRST verse from his residence, stage right, Theo stage left. By the SECOND verse we see sister Wil and Vincent's Mother reflecting their actions as described in that verse. In the THIRD we see a parade of diggers, sowers and weavers etc. etc. until we finally see Vincent with his bags packed heading for the train. The finale' of Act I is that Vincent is on the train, with Theo, Will, and Anna saluting the audience as they sign out with "The Hannebeeks and Rooses send regards."



Van Rappard: Eventually Vincent and Theo worked out an arrangement that was satisfactory to both of them. Their friendship was renewed with a pact whereby Theo might consider Vincent's work to be his in exchange for a monthly allowance he would send to his brother. Vincent then began to work at a feverish pace and with renewed vigor, and as he had made the acquaintance of a family of Potato diggers , he commenced what he considered to be his first serious success at capturing the essence of peasant life. Eventually the Catholic priest in Nuenun interfered in Vincent's work by convincing the local peasants not to sit for him anymore. He then went on to Antwerp to study at the school of fine arts for a while only to become discouraged there too. Finally he went off to Paris to live with his brother. I received a few letters from him, but then our correspondence ceased abruptly, and I never saw Vincent again.

The intro to the song begins with Van Rappard's final monologue. a string quartet or two violins and piano.. VERY...uplifting.... Vincent commences to sing at the end of the monologue. Anna and Will sing harmony commencing with the chorus and they sing the second chorus on the wind down of the song!



Song

The Letter
(With song
'Potato Eaters' combined)

First just a word about your letter last
Which I read yestereve
For the contents of which are in safe receipt
I thank you brother heartily

And just to clarify again
The matter has been settled and
The work is yours to do with now..
and as you should so please...
Now, our sister Anna said she heard from
Wil, and that she wrote just to say...
That Mother now receives the best of
care, since Father up and passed away
Her leg has now completely healed
Your brother works with fervent zeal
And the work will soon be salable and
we'll make up for lost time



Chorus

I drew two diggers and a sower twice and a girl with a broom
I drew a shepherd leaning on a crook
A weaver weaving at his loom

Of peasants now I have
drawn fifty heads
Church tower and that
old dab drying shed
And if you could, a bit
more Ingress with
My order next time



*Loc: The actual painting
of the 'Potato Eaters'*

*Action: Here the Music
modulates to the key of C#
from C and Song, 'Potato*

*Eaters' commences with the new 'set' suddenly visible. One of the
potato eaters steps out of the scene, as Vincent appears to have set the
famous painting back on the easel in front of them to continue on the
work. The short V.O. by Vincent (below) is read during the intro. Just
at the end of the second and the beginning of the last verse, two of the*

woman get up from the table and carry steaming trays of potatoes out to the audience. After serving a few people in the Front rows, and with the audience having been invited to “partake”, they continue up to the lobby of the theater. The INTERMISSION is now palpable.



V.O. over the musical Intro:
 Theo, I have finally completed
 ‘The Potato Eaters’, mostly from
 memory and from those studies
 that I have accumulated of
 peasants heads, and Theo, I think
 it is ‘damned’ good.

What I have tried to bring out
 is that these people eating
 potatoes by the light of their oil
 lamp, have dug the earth with the
 very same hands that they are
 now putting into the dish,
 suggesting manual labor, and a
 meal honestly earned....

17b

Song

*(Potato eater steps up to face the
 audience and begins to sing rough
 strained tones...)*

A Potato

A potato ‘is’...

A noble Fruit

It lendeth pride, and more..

To those it suits

In sooth this humble seed

Doth fully fill our needs

And lend us dignity

It’s a treat with curds

Mashed fluffy light...

Boiled or baked, they are

A sheer delight

And for those in the cheap seats

We have prepared this treat

Of humble vegan meat

So stay on tonight

Partake with us

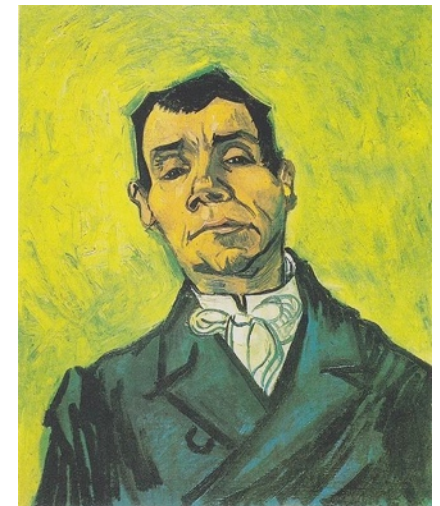
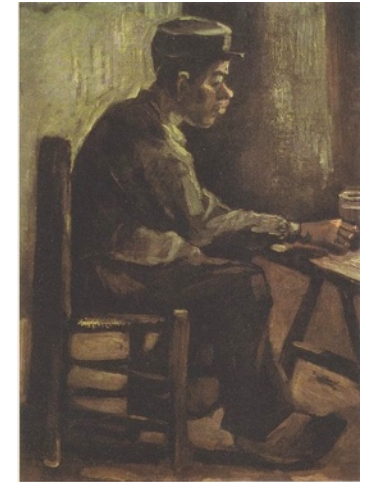
We’re serving baked , you see ...

We’ve made a fuss

Just know, with honest hands

That we have worked the land

For “this” God’s gift to man



NOTE: at the
 asterisks ***
 the women rise
 and bring the
 trays of
 potatoes up to
 the lobby

Action: *Continuously morphing action resumes to mirror the actions of the song 'The Letter'. So now with the potato eaters having handed out a few servings of 'baked' to the audience, and having proceeded to the lobby, the key is now modulated to D, as we resume with 'The Letter'*

We continue with the parish priest, now seen at the door of the cottage admonishing the peasants, and them then turning away from Vincent in shame. Finally the song culminates with Vincent with his belongings packed and on his way to Paris, Theo receiving the note appearing somewhat astonished and the Sisters Van Gogh taking out the song with the line "the Hannebeeks and Rooses send Regards".

*

Scene 17c **Continuing...**

The Letter modulated now to D major

...Now the parish priest has caused an awful stir
and the models won't sit

This Jesuit has now forbidden them..
and all the peasants here were forced to quit
Now I've broken ties with Van Rappard
know that your brother's working very hard
'nd that I've broken ties with Anton Van Rappard
and with a handshake in my thoughts,
regards to Teerstig and Wil..

The remittance of your letter last it seems
has all but been spent...
and has gone for Models, brushes, tubes ,
and the Landlord now
demands the rent
so all in all with what's been said
black coffee and some crusts of bread

will have to do until such time
as your next post comes through

* (to E flat_

In Antwerp here I have enrolled in
the School of fine Arts

The students here are quite a lively bunch,
The instructors' just old fossil farts
They say that putrid dogs like me
Will never earn their sympathies

Just as well ,
they can go to hell
for all that I care

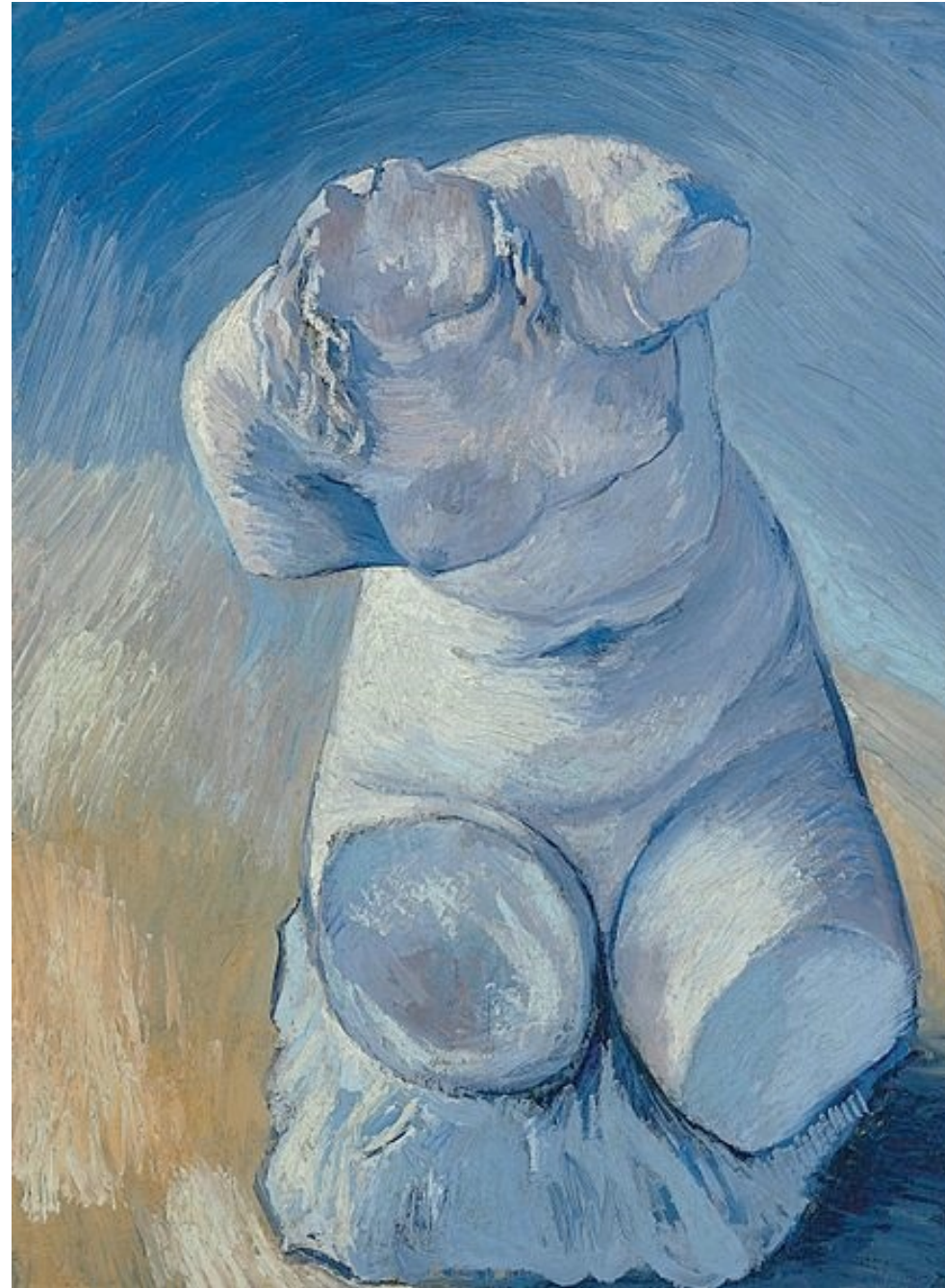
*

Yes in Antwerp here with sketches , one
earns a bit in the streets
But times are hard, and Galleries close ,
and so the best of artists face defeat
I'm tired of drawing plaster casts
The money here goes much too fast
You can find me at the Louvre tomorrow
between 12 and 3...

Repeat
(to F)
Diggers
Hannebeeks

*

Curtain



ACT II

Songs

Monday Afternoon Class

Bienvenu

The Dutchman is Crazy

Exercice au Fusain

Parisians

Segatorri

Was it Wrong

Our Friend Henri

Good Year for the Vintners

Gauguin's Lament

The Lady and the Painter



Monday Afternoon Class with Cormon

Scene 1

LOC: The Lobby and Intermission areas of the theatre

ACTIONS: At, or a few moments before the play would ordinarily resume onstage, there appears in the lobby a mobile group of musicians and Cormon's assistant. She commences to sing a song called "Monday Afternoon Class with Cormon". This amazingly bubbly figure is preparing for that class on what she says is: shaping up to be 'a lovely spring afternoon.' All present in the intermission areas are now aware that the action is about to begin onstage and that they should be getting back to their seats. As they do so they see in evidence both in the theatre lobby and the aisles near the front of the stage, actors in costume sketching, going over their notes and discussing class, completely oblivious to the audience in the lobby of the theatre. The mood is very much a combination of the feelings expressed in the impressionist paintings of that era. Starting with the second verse, the characters Monique, Cormon, Vincent and some of the more well known of Cormon's students ...(Lautrec etc.) appear in the lobby and make their way through the crowd and into the theatre and on to the stage. When Vincent appears dressed in a purple zinc workers smock covered with paint and carrying a wet painting under his arm, he is seen to be sketching something, seemingly oblivious to the world around him. In verse three when Cormon's assistant shouts out the words "Cast Properly frocked?" Vincent is immediately



flanked by Gentlemen in High Hats whom he gets paint all over as he passes through their midst. ALL...are now making their way into the theatre as Cormon's assistant begins the forth verse.

During the playful 'Mozart like' vocal trills of the chorus at the end of the tune, Cormon's assistant expresses shock and guffaws at the naughty behavior (butt pinching etc.) of the students entering the theatre. This is a setup for the 4th song of Act II, which will constitute Scene 2c. The audience should now be elated and the mood absolutely glorious. Just as the audience is almost all seated, Trumpets herald a Welcome to Cormon's class.

...

Cormon's assistant commences ACT II in theatre lobby with:

Song

Monday Afternoon Class With Cormon

First Monday in May
Clouds going away
Sun framing the day
And wouldn't you know...
It's going to be a lovely spring afternoon

Birds singing a song
Fresh dressed and adorned
All set to perform
And preparing for...
Our Monday afternoon Class with Cormon

*

**You'll Meet lovely Monique
Bear Cormon's critique
But hold onto your seats
You're in for a treat...
But first the birds ...are gonna sing ...
a few tunes**

**Then with Ink flowing in lines
Add fruit of the vine
We'll reach for the sublime...
With our Monday afternoon
Class with Cormon**

Below Not sung...called out in the lobby to all stage personnel ...

**Cast ... Properly frocked?
OK....Let's tittle and jot!
We're under the clock...
Now...ready or not
Act Two... is just about ...
to begin**

Below, addressed to the audience

**Now for those not in the know
This is the *fun* part of our show
Its called 'linear flow'
We're going to give it a go...
With our Monday afternoon
Class with Cormon.**

continuing sung.....

**Yes it's the first Monday in May
Clouds going away
Sun framing the day
And it's going to be
a lovely spring afternoon**

**We're fresh dressed and adorned
Birds singing a song
And now we're 'all' singing along
For our Monday afternoon class with Cormon**

CHORUS

**Mauves Theme
in vocal trills... very Mozart like**

Trumpets commence for song 'Bienvenu'

Cormons', Attelier



Scene 2



Scene 2 a

Cormon's in Paris

LOC: A workshop for artists in Paris.

ACTIONS: Students coming to and fro, readying for class, sing the welcome song 'Bienvenue'. They are setting up their easels and preparing for Cormon's entrance. This scene is seamlessly connected to the previous scene.

Song Bienvenue

(Heralding Trumpets)

**Bienvenue al atelier de Fernand Cormon
Bienvenue al atelier de Fernand Cormon**

**Chorus
In classes here
We are
The ones
In charge
We're thee a-vant-garde**

**Life is but a play
Work just gets in the way
Art is here to stay
Here everyone
Wins**

**So if you think you're smart
Go with the fine arts
Hard work is for old farts (fart sound)
The fun now be-gins**

**Bienvenue al atelier de Fernand Cormon
Bienvenue al atelier de Fernand Cormon**

Chorus

**When Cormon's here
We play it cool
Be-hind
His back
We make our own rules**

**Be that as it may
Everyone be gay
Let the music play
To art without end....
INST.
Let- the- fun- be-gin**

Transition to *Scene 2b*

The Dutchman is Crazy

Loc: Same as above

Action: AS Vincent enters wearing a blue zinc workers smock, all heads turn at the queer site of this Dutchman that get's more paint on

the passerby than he does on the canvass. The other students follow him around behind his back, pantomiming him as they sing...
“The Dutchman is Crazy.”

Song

The Dutchman is Crazy

*Recited musically and expressively behind Stodgy Trombones
and Tuba*

The students are ‘gossiping’ about Vincent in verse!

He polychromes the passerby
with bold impasto pasty
then looks at you with beady eyes
and if that’s not enough...

The way he reeks of turpentine
‘ts enough to make one hazy
it’s a wonder that he’s not gone blind..
The Dutchman must be crazy

He tried to kiss me in the hall
Thank god he only grazed me
He bruskiy clipped my derriere’
That beast should be ashamed

When he heard me laughing hind his back
I thought that he might chase me
Perhaps the Dutchman’s just gone mad
Perhaps the Dutchman’s crazy
Inst.

(with pantomime)

He gets his paint on everything
This Dutchman 's much too wasty
He’s spread out all across the floor
There’s no room left to play

The way he licks those brushes clean
They surely must be tasty
He’s the strangest sight I’ve ever seen
The Dutchman must be crazy... **crazy**

The Dutchman is Crazy is **Crazy...**
is **CRAZY!!!!** (reverberating)

out of control. (Note: Due to the complexity of the scene, the description of the action continues after the song... p.65)

Transition to Scene 2c

Action: On the Musical cue which is the Introduction of Classe' de Cormon, enters Cormon and the young woman who is Cormon's assistant. She is in her late twenties or early thirties and wearing spectacles with dark frames. She is wearing an artist's smock when she enters and her hair in a severe French bun. She is obviously quite pretty. The class seems to quiet in fearful respect for her. She has a pointing stick.

As the instrumental musical introduction commences, she relates the day's assignment to the class in sync with the music. The students on the left will prepare their exercise, which will be from the book, 'Exercise au Fusain.' When she mentions that those on the right will be working with a live model, the model steps out onto the stage from the rear clutching a sheet in front of her and then she proceeds to another small stage about three quarters of the way to the rear in the middle of the stage. When Cormon's assistant says "commence", the class begins.

Cormon accompanied by his assistant, then start to review each student's work in passing. Immediately silent pandemonium breaks out behind their backs. The boys start chatting with the girls and someone goes up to the Model and starts to do a closeup drawing of her 'derriere' much to her dismay. Lautrec walks over at one point and in animated gestures seems to be discussing and critiquing the drawing with that artist that drew it. When Cormon and his assistant finally get to Vincent who has all his work spread out on the floor like a linoleum salesman, Cormon looks down at him in passing, but then does a 'double take' as he gets a grip on himself. As he then continues on, rolling his eyes and shaking his head he turns again to check on Vincent, but then suddenly realizes what has been going down behind his back and realizes that the entire class is completely

Action in sequence...detailed:

Cue: Musical Introduction of "Class de Cormon"

On musical cue, from rear stage left Cormon's assistant walks up to the podium just left of rear center stage and begins to speak broken English mixed with French, in a musical fashion. Cormon stands quietly at her right as she faces both audience and students. She welcomes the students and then begins to explain the assignment. When she reaches the chorus, she sternly cracks the pointer against



the podium and demands that the students repeat what they have just heard. The students comply... Exercice au Fusain

Song

Spoken musically in French and broken English

Exercice' au Fusain

Bon jour
Bienvenue
Tout present'
Aujourd'hui'
Va commence'
La classe
De Cormon
A la gauche
We will work
Wis'model,
jeune Monique
On ze right ...
Exercisse au fusain
Repettez moi'
On ze right
We will sketch
From ze what?
Exercise'
From ze what?
Exercise au fusain
on ze left
We will draw
Dit moi'

La model juene Monique

A. Subject to..?

The critique of Cormon

B.



C. Commence.....

***Note:** When 'Monique' is mentioned she steps out from the rear and mounts the Model's platform, and faces stage right in profile. This reiteration is I believe a necessary clarification.*

***Action continuing:** As Cormon's assistant steps down from her podium to join Cormon on his right, silent pandemonium breaks out behind them. As they pass the various students in silence against the musical background, Cormon gives the appearance of a*

pompous windbag as he briefly critiques each student's work with his expressive eyes. To his rear we see that a student from stage right has walked over to the model Monique, and begun sketching her at very close proximity. As Lautrec comes from the left to join them we observe that it seems that they are in an animated discussion about what he is drawing..namely , Monique's semi-nude torso. At one point Lautrec is offered something to drink from the other student, but shakes his head, No, no, no, and then pulls out his own little snifter of brandy and sips on that. The model who is obviously embarrassed, looks to her rear at what is happening, clutching the sheet in front of her with ever more desperation. At a certain point, Lautrec goes back to his easel and the student that had been drawing Monique's butt has apparently said something to charm her and made her smile as though flattered...

Now, meanwhile, as Cormon and his assistant have been perusing the work of the different students, they suddenly come upon Vincent,

who is seated on a stool with his pipe in his mouth and his drawings laid at all over the floor. As Cormon and his assistant pass Vincent who is oblivious to them, Cormon does a double take in astonishment, at the spectacle which Vincent has created around him.

*Cormon's assistant has now become aware of the chaos in the studio...and commences two sets of three guffaws *trilling musically in sync, both with Cormon's 'double and triple takes and also with various little 'vulgar happenings that she is slowly becoming aware of around them.*

Then suddenly, coinciding with the second take by Cormon, at Vincent's work, Monique is suddenly coaxed onto her back in a copulatory position so that her legs are seen to be flailing in the air with the student having apparently mounted her. Here Cormon's assistant vocalizes here second set of musical guffaws, and then, just at this moment, (the third take) Cormon turns around for one more glance at the strange sight of Vincent, and then witnesses the pandemonium that has broken loose behind his back. this is accompanied by his assistants third guffaw... His assistant then turns to the audience and remarks...

'Voila toute, une Classe de Cormon'

and the music takes us out.

Finally just after Cormon 'loses it', and the students scatter, we see someone post a sign ATELLIER CLOSED...the scene fades into darkness...

NOTE: These musical guffaws (very Mozart like) coincide with Cormon's double and triple takes. This sequence must be 'precisely choreographed so as, to synchronize the three vocal 'trill's sung by Cormon's assistant, to Cormon's triple take, and also three trills to correspond to her reaction to those events that have come to pass behind both of their backs.

** The guffaws themselves are to be expressed as rather more of an 'embarrassed shock' the effect should be 'comical.'*



Thank you for reading Act I and the opening of Act II of

Starry Nights Musical

The Full Libretto is Now Available at my web store

www.fredpohlmanstore.com



Unfortunately the the vangoghmusical.com website will have to remain down until further notice. Until then, please go to my personal website for updates

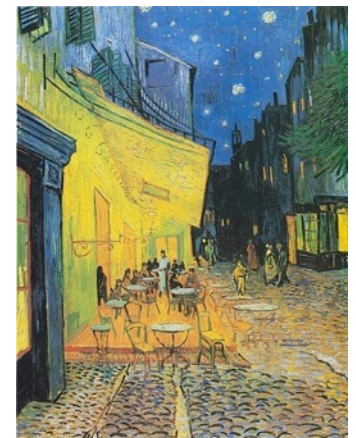
Please Note...

Without Your purchase of the Complete Book and Lyrics, the delivery of the Musical in it's entirety will be nearly impossible. ... here is my personal website.

www.fredpohlman.com

Thank you... Fred Pohlman Contact

odysseus96@yahoo.com



Morph

In this Musical the term implies the use of a sophisticated projection and stage lighting to change scenes with a smooth and seamless rapidity.

Related Glossary Terms

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Find Term

Novice

This term refers to the young nun who remains nameless throughout the Musical. She is obviously not fully ordained and stands in stark contrast in comportment to her ‘Superiors’ whom Vincent in one of his letters condemned as being rigid and overly pious.

Related Glossary Terms

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Sein

Readers who are familiar with certain translations of Van Gogh’s letters may be accustomed to seeing ‘Sein’ being referred to by the name Xien. I am using the name Sien for the reason that the vast majority of readers here will have never read the letters of Vincent Van Gogh, and it’s use otherwise would only serve to confuse them.

Related Glossary Terms

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Stage Right and Stage Left

Stage right and left indicate the opposite of what the audience is viewing. For the purpose of this publication, This will not pertain to the to front and rear of the stage.

Precisely what I mean is...any stage instruction to the left is actually to the right. Any stage action to the ‘right’...is to the left...

Any mention of the the front of the stage ...IS the front of the stage and any mention of the rear of the stage... IS the rear of the stage...

This is in partial deference to all those ‘dillitantes’ who would like to rain on my parade with their Pedantry... (see below)

Pedantry | *'pedntrē*

noun

excessive concern with minor details and rules: to object to this is not mere pedantry.

Related Glossary Terms

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Find Term

Transitional Scene

This term refers to a scene that is set up in such a way so as to connect both the previous and the following scene in such manner that the transition is smooth and seamless. For example Act I Scene ‘Unrequited” connects Scene ‘Sorrow’ through the transitional scene ‘Sein Hoornik’ . In that scene, the use of projection and images in silhouette give us time to connect two very difficult scenes to utilizing ordinary means. Even the actors who are acting out in silhouette, need not be the principals for their faces are never seen except in shadow...

Related Glossary Terms

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Transitional Song

this term refers to a short melody used as a ‘theme’ for the purpose of ‘weaving’ different aspects of the musical together. For example, the theme from Act I Scene 1b, ‘Brother’ is used to connect Scene 1a with 1c, and is repeated in melody at the end of 1c and also reiterated in the next to final scene of the Musical in order to bring us back to Square One in terms of the Emotional Tone-Set put forth at the beginning of the Musical. And so in truth, these transitional songs are not ‘songs’ per se’ in the classical sense.

Another example in the play: in Act II, “The Way Things Were Back Then’, is used again in Act III Scene 2 in order to establish the ‘mood’ of the camaraderie between Vincent and Paul Gauguin. If the play were ever re-written so as to emphasize for example: Vincent’s period in Arles, or in Paris, that piece would be elaborated and given a different status. As it is of course that this is a Biography, this is not possible here without running the play for many more hours than the general public could possibly tolerate, and so we have these nice melodies, delegated to the status of being ‘Transitional’ in nature. Please note though, that I may choose to record them as stand alone entities, that will not appear as such in the Musical itself. I have already had to eliminate several possible scenes in order to economize on time. If after recording the the complete musical I should receive substantial favorable response to these transitional numbers, I will probably go ahead and then elaborate on them with or without a request to write versions based on Vincent’s life in Holland or Paris or the South of France...

Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

VO or V.O.

In Starry Nights, the term VO or V.O. stands for Voice Over, and in every case, is the Voice of Vincent Van Gogh either quoting or paraphrasing from a letter to his Brother or One of his Friends.

Related Glossary Terms

Xien

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Find Term

Xien

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