

LIBRETTO

for the

HIP HOP BALOPERAMASM PRODUCTION OF

of

LA VALSE

ACT THREE: DAWN

By BILL DONNELLY

T M P C

LA VALSE: DAWN
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ACT THREE: DAWN

The Barker – A circus barker about 20 years of age, who calls passerby's to his attraction

Harry – A lovable picturesque man about seventy years of age.

The Beginning of Fire – The spirit of comfort.

Clair – A beautiful sylph in a gossamer gown.

SCENE

A fantasy. A revolving door merry-go-round.

BARKER

Happiness is only a say yes and three pennies away. Say yes to me here

(Pointing to his ear.)

And drop three little jingler pennies here

(Pointing to the palm of his hand)

And you too can step upon, not a ride, but a beginning: a tingle in your blood, a blush in your cheek, a breeze in your hair, a moment of joy when you mount one of those majestic wooden steeds in the King's playground. Step this way ladies, gentlemen & children. If you are too young to walk you're not too old to be carried. You too can be among the thoroughbreds.

HARRY

I fell in love the moment I turned the corner, when I saw her on the fairground in front of me. That was over fifty years ago. The rest of the world has gotten a little worn and shabby during the years, but when I look at her now it seems as though no time has passed since that first moment. Look, she really hasn't change; the carousel is still as shiny and sparkling as she was then.

BARKER

Everyone: runners, crawlers, draggers and mopers, stop! Be aware of the work of art before you. Let your eyes be excited and your ears delighted. Begin at the top of this royal carousel and look at the brilliant glass globe all white and lighted from within. See how it momentarily rests on the wooden roof. A borrowed moon which can, upon heavenly whim, be spun from the carousel edge to resume its place in our night. Follow the lines of the roof, a celestial slide shaped like a billowing and sagging round tent top from a sun baked and fig laden oasis. Focus your eyes on the intricately hand carved medieval and modern tradesmen standing guard atop each of the polished brass poles which create a forest of arms to hold the roof. Herdsmen, farmers, bankers, lawyers, soldiers, chefs and students, no matter who you are or what you do, this is your way.

HARRY

I walked straight ahead and just gazed ahead trying to understand why I hadn't seen anything like her before. Probably with my mouth still wide open in awe, I remember going over to her owner. Everyone called him Tubs and that's how he introduced himself. His eyes sparkled as he patiently answered all my questions. One could see that he and the carousel had a special relationship. When he was there on his days off polishing, fixing and painting her, they probably shared and exchanged secrets. He admitted that she was generous enough to be loved by many people and he said that he wasn't jealous. In fact, one could see that he was even proud.

BARKER

A dancing parade in circular motion is before you exposing its beauty with every spin. Birthday cake roses on ivy stems rambling neath the tradesmen's feet. Gilded cherubs, there, to hold the paintings of the seasons in miniature spaces: golden rich harvests, icy pink skies with blue white snow, brown earth with bud green leaves, and fruited orchids of apple red and peach orange. The story of time, as written in nature, is here. All of your Summers, Winters, Autumns and Springs ride with you when you jockey the King's ponies and ride their track through time and space.

HARRY

Tubs and I could hardly stop talking about the carousel for she has a history as significant as any queen. She has known kings, presidents, foreign dignitaries, movie stars, symphony conductors and people of all walks of life. But Clair and I had come to the playground for a picnic and to enjoy the rides. As it was already late afternoon and we had been with Tubs for many hours Clair and I were both hungry and Clair was anxious to see the rest of the park. When I told Tubs that we had to leave, he asked for my full name and address. As I gave it to him, I felt as though a door was opening and that something good would come through it. I guess Clair or I had mentioned that I was looking for a job and that once I found one we were going to be married. When I look back to those days it's like looking at someone else's life. That young man was in love with Clair but he hardly knew her. I guess that's why Clair and I were always talking, so that the other person knew, and therefore loved, every little thought and every little emotion.

BARKER

Stallions, mares and ponies trotting the circle round. I ask you, could an artist have carved these beautiful moments in thoroughbreds' lives? Sense the eagerness in their faces and tension in their legs as they achieve their final moments of victory only moments in front of their hoofs. There is a legend surrounding these animals which has survived for you to wonder. There once was a beautiful and benevolent sorceress who needed the excitement of victory as an ingredient in one of her mysterious spells. In order to capture it she placed delicate trances on winning horses the instant that they crossed their finish lines. Late that evening she would go to each winning horse's stable. By magic she would carry it through the air to her cave. In the flickering light of her fireside she transformed the horse into a wooden carving in the shape it had crossing the finish line. Climbing upon it she would feel the vibrations of the crowd's cheers and the thrill and excitement of the jockey's victory. After collecting many champions and finishing her recipe she gave her stable to the master keeper of the playground.

The carousel is slowly stopping and the last ride of the day is about to begin. Ponder the legend and climb upon the horse whose color and whose neighing grin you fancy. Grasp the leather reins and listen to the frozen heartbeat of the thundering animal under you as it breathlessly and victoriously passes the finish line on the circle of its history, the course of its future.

HARRY

I remember telling Clair that we had to walk past the carousel in order to get to the ferris wheel for I wanted to be with the carousel a few minutes more. As we looked and listened to it again, I saw things which I hadn't seen before. She had hundreds of tiny mirrors on her. It was as though we were gazing into a magic mirror which was made of colorful and constantly moving parts, but was still able to reflect images standing still. I could see myself so clearly. I was grinning and happy and full of joy.

BARKER

The last ride is slowly beginning. Reach out and step on the carousel as the fantasy of music is played by her miniature orchestra.

HARRY

About two weeks later I received a letter from Tubs asking me to work as his assistant. That not only meant that I had a job but it also meant that Clair and I could get married. We would have been married fifty years this year. A month ago we were both looking forward to it. But now, there is only me.

BARKER

Well, I did it Harry. I finally memorized my speech. I just gave it without making any mistakes.

HARRY

That's hard to believe.

BARKER

Didn't you think I could do it? It takes time to learn all of that you know.

HARRY

When you've given your speech for a week without having to look at your words, then I'll believe that you've learned them.

BARKER

I'll prove to you I know it. This is my only copy. Now it's all up here.

(He rips it up)

HARRY

We're in trouble.

BARKER

People told me I talked a lot before I started this job but now I know I do. I talk constantly.

HARRY

You'll learn that everyone who walks past might be interested in going on the carousel. She has charm but it has to be brought to people's attention.

BARKER

If I talked this much before, people would walk away. But now, they sometimes even push in a little closer to hear me better. I love it.

HARRY

Do you think that the people are pushing in closer because of your charm and talent or do you think they want to see the carousel better?

BARKER

Well, maybe a little bit of both.

HARRY

You mean a little bit of your charm and talent but a lot of interest in seeing the carousel up close.

BARKER

Why don't you come home for dinner with us tonight.

HARRY

I'm very tired. I've been looking to the day ending so I can go home and rest.

BARKER

Joan isn't a good cook yet but it's better than going home to an empty house cooking for yourself. You and Joan should take cooking lessons together. When Joan lived at home before we got married she never cooked. Her mother used to prepare all the meals. It will take Joan a while before she learns the ropes.

HARRY

She won't have to do that with you.

BARKER

What do you mean?

HARRY

You don't have any ropes. Puppets your size just have a couple of strings.

BARKER

Very funny. I wish you would come home for dinner. I would feed you sawdust; that's all we puppets eat.

HARRY

You're finally learning.

BARKER

Finally learning. I told you I know my lines. Listen, if you would rather eat your own cooking or go to a restaurant and then join us I wouldn't mind. I wish I could do it some nights. Joan's meals are awful sometimes. If you come over after dinner we could play cards.

HARRY

Tonight I can't. I have to rest. But thank you.

BARKER

(They are looking at the carousel)

I see you fixed the broken part. You certainly keep the old carousel beautiful. She's quite a complex machine.

HARRY

When you know the carousel as well as I do, you realize that she is really quite simple.

BARKER

How can you say that?

HARRY

For the first few years on the job the carousel seemed totally strange and exotic. She seemed to move almost with no explanation. I didn't understand how her parts were interrelated or why she was so beautiful to me. But gradually as I touched her and cared for her, I began to understand. Today, I know her.

BARKER

Do you still find her beautiful and interesting after all these years?

HARRY

I find the carousel quite exquisite. She is still as beautiful as when I first saw her even though I know her now. Her charm is the result of the care and detail, I guess you could say the art, that she contains. There is no mystery or fascination in its creation though, just solitary hours of hard work. Painting a wooden horse a particular color is really no different than painting shutters on a house. But the fantasy in a horse's face is created by the care in applying the ten or fifteen different colored paints. The bright glossy red for the horse's lips and the dull fleshy color for its gums mustn't touch the teathy white color for the grin; that would be ugly and would prevent people from seeing the sorcerer's enchanted race horses. If great care isn't used people would just see a dry cracking piece of wood in the shape of a horse which had been painted by an old man with a shaky hand. Tubs taught me so much.

BARKER

Who is Tubs?

HARRY

Tubs was the original owner of the carousel who I worked for when I first started here. The world was different then. I would ask him what he wanted me to fix or clean and he would tell me to ask the carousel. He was so clever for she does let me know what she needs.

BARKER

What do you mean?

HARRY

Tubs used to say that the carousel was like a person. She needs people with patience to watch and listen to her. When the wooden horses need painting, little cracks appear in the paint. The carousel is saying that it needs someone to come and mend it before the wood gets exposed and starts to decay. When the mirrors turn brown and it means it's time to change them. If the lights

HARRY cont'd

don't seem as bright as they were, the generators should be checked to see if they need rebuilding. Once people are too busy to look at her or listen to her, she'll lose her identity and be destroyed. She'll be broken up into bits and pieces to be bargained for by the second hand merchants.

BARKER

Don't you think there will always be someone to look after her?

HARRY

After Tubs died she has been owned by several companies but no one has spent the time needed to know her. The world is moving too quickly and the carousel is moving too slowly for her to attract people for long periods of time. She is interesting enough for a ride but that's all. Oh, they may look for someone to care for her, but I don't think they will find anyone. But who knows, maybe the spirit that Clair used to see will save it, if it really exists.

BARKER

Why a spirit? I can save her. What spirit?

HARRY

As I said there won't be anyone knowledgeable to save her.

BARKER

Be careful, puppets can be nasty. When you come to dinner do you now what I'm going to serve you? Sawdust.

HARRY

Boy, are you learning.

BARKER

Now be serious and tell me about the ghost.

HARRY

Clair believed that a spirit lived in the carousel for when she would come and meet me here she would see it. First sparks would appear at its base which would burst into flames. The fire, she said, seemed to dance and spread in between the horses. Then at an instant, the fire would disappear, leaving no trace. The first few times she saw it, I examined the whole carousel carefully to make sure that nothing was burning and that there was no smoldering wood. There was no explanation for what she saw.

BARKER

Did anyone else see it?

HARRY

No, just Clair. She thought that the spirit was jealous of her. How silly but how beautiful Clair could be at times. Almost in tears she would stand in front of me fearing that I loved this old machine more than her. At times like that, when I realized how much Clair and I loved each other, my love would swell up inside of me to the point where I thought I was on fire.

BARKER

Maybe Clair saw the sorceress who enchanted the horses at their moments of victory.

HARRY

I helped write that speech that you give over and over every day. That's not the answer.

BARKER

I can't wait to tell my wife about the ghost. She'll want to come tonight to look for it herself. I want to go. Supper will be ready. Have a good evening.

HARRY

Good night.

(Barker Exits)

Even before the Barker announces the last ride of the day, it's easy to tell that it's finishing time. There are always the same signs. It's as natural as the changing of the seasons and from the carousel you can see them all. Suddenly, there is a new feeling in the air. The visitors to the park have walked around, have had some fun, but they become tired and want to rest. The visiting travelers all walk in the same direction of the arched exit gates to return home. As they do the sounds of the park change too. The birds and animals who are normally calling out to one another and scurrying about, begin to feel the chill of the evening shadows and become still as the sun lies low in the sky. I can imagine the birds and animals assembling quietly in the vaulted patches of darkness to watch the procession of the amusement park congregation leaving the aisles. Finally, as now, night descends. Silently and motionlessly the carousel rests. Even the rhythm from the mechanical arms and hands of her little doll orchestra in cloth costumes has stopped. She is completely at peace. Look, the bright full moon in heaven tonight resembles the darkening globe on top of the carousel which is now just a fading shadow. It's the silence and loneliness that hurts the most since she died.

(Enter The Beginning of Fire)

Oh my god the carousel is on fire.

FIRE

Don't be frightened.

HARRY

You can speak.

FIRE

Yes, I am the Beginning of Fire, the Spirit of Comfort. You can touch me and you will not be harmed.

HARRY

Are you the spirit my wife used to see?

FIRE

Yes.

HARRY

Why are you here? What do you want of me?

FIRE

I have come to bring you Joy.

HARRY

But why are you fire?

FIRE

I am fire because it is the source of warmth and light. Since Clair's death you have been living in the cold and darkness of night.

HARRY

But I have my friends whom I love and who have given me love and kindness.

FIRE

Their fire is candle like Harry. You need White Fire.

HARRY

But I don't know White Fire.

FIRE

White Fire is Joy. I have come to remove the darkness of your lonely night and bring you to the Dawn of White Fire.

HARRY

I don't understand.

FIRE

Your initial sparks of love for Clair set you on fire which began to consume your fear and loneliness. You have now become the warm person that you are. Although you have approached Joy by moving away from yourself through your loving experiences, the mystery of the life circle has always brought you back to the same point which is yourself. There is no freedom from the circle of one's own existence into total Joy except by being completely consumed by and becoming White Fire.

HARRY

What do you want me to do?

FIRE

I want you to dance Harry.

HARRY

But I am too old. And with whom?

FIRE

I have brought you a suit that I want you to wear.

(Fire hands Harry the same white tails that the MIME wore in NIGHT)

HARRY

(Harry examines the suit)

But this is for a young man.

FIRE

It is for you Harry.

(Harry puts on the young man's dancing suit and he becomes rejuvenated. He becomes young again)

HARRY

I am becoming young again and I feel like I want to spin around and around and blaze into dance. I want to move through time and space and become one with the universe. But why and with whom shall I dance?

FIRE

This will be answered Harry, but you must remember to dance the motion of the life cycle, the circle.

HARRY

(Clair Enters through one of the neon lit doorways which comprise the structural core of the carousel.)

Clair, we are young again. It's as though the same door that opened in my life when I first met you has opened again.

CLAIR

We are to dance together Harry.

HARRY

We shall dance and go round and round like a carousel for at every moment of our lives we came racing back to each other in love.

(Harry and Clair dance a beautiful waltz together, forever.)

Dawn Duet ONE/15: “WE ARE IN LOVE”

Performed by: Harry/Clair (with possible chorus)

Purpose(s):

- To conclude the production with an uplifting love song
- To positively reconcile the images of doors, relationships, love and light
- To inspire the audience with beauty

Content: (E.g.)

Refrain:

My love for you has opened the door to

Life, to the new world and to endless radiant light.

I am now one with the universe because we are in love.

You are my door to the universe.

A door opened in my life when I first met you

Which continued to be open throughout our life.

Through its transom you brought me to myself and to others

Through its transom you brought me to you.

Through its transom you brought me joy

We are in love

THE END OF ACT THREE: DAWN