

I can cook too

Leonard Bernstein (1918 – 1990)

On the town

Betty Comden (1917 – 2006)

Adolph Green (1914 – 2002)

This song is introduced early within the first act of the musical when Hildy, a young woman who works as a cabbie is desperate to find a lover and sets her eyes on shy American sailor, Chip during his 24-hour shore leave in New York City during the Second World War. Set in 1944 Brooklyn, Hildy's first encounter with Chip is by the largest naval construction facility in the states at the time (Berner, 1999) where Chip is eager to visit the sites of the city. Hildy insists that Chip cancel his ludicrous expedition to visit all 'the now disappeared sights' (Torgovnick, 1991) around the city and invite him to her apartment where this song takes place. In Hildy's apartment she attempts to seduce Chip by convincing him that she is the 'jewel in the crown' (Baber, 2013, pg.16) or the perfect woman in this era by advertising her culinary expertise, abilities to complete household chores and most importantly her flirtatious insights on being a great lover. These are all the things' men would have desired, that she "can cook too" all in the face of the reality that it might only last for one night (Berman, 2009, pp.74).

Bernstein was known as the first symphonist to collaborate on an American musical in the 1940s (LBO, M 2018). His compositions focused on taking ecumenical approaches to classical as well as vernacular styles, introduced as eclecticism which challenged the distinctions between high and low musical styles (Baber, 2017). Within this song, Hildy embodies a jazz-driven energy conducted by the brassy syncopated rhythms of the piano when listing her impressive culinary skills.

Throughout the song, we observe Hildy's behaviour when introducing key motives to seduce Chip which includes her boastful manner in showcasing her abilities to balance work, chores, and affection "I'd make a magazine cover, I do keep house on a dime, I'd make a wonderful lover. I should be paid overtime!". Contrastingly, a play on words on culinary phrases "I'm a brand-new note on table d'hôte, but just try me à la carte" ironically fixates her comedic yet flirtatious attitude as table d'hôte is known to be a set menu at a fixed price. Whereas à la carte is more of a tailored experience for a diner to choose their dish for each course of the

meal (Messerli, 2017). Finally, a strong declaration of Hildy's incomparable personality "I'm an ordure a jelly preserve, not in the recipe book" delivers the commotion of a woman who is distinctly aware of her variable talents, whilst being sensible in identifying the kind of man appreciative of them. Her plea for love goes beyond any possible relationship, a statement of her accomplishments that represents a pre-feminist declaration of her value and talents (Messerli, 2017).

Come to your senses

Jonathan Larson (1960 – 1996)

Tick, Tick... Boom!

Tick tick boom was Larson's response to the sense of rejection felt within the musical theatre industry due to investment opportunities and failures of the play *Superbia* that he worked on between 1987-1991. The musical follows his journey within the industry, his inspiration Steven Sondheim, and his mentoring relationship with Larson during his composition reviews and process over the years, all whilst working as a waiter at a local diner to make ends meet living in New York City. Originally performed as a rock monologue, this one-man show was previewed between September 6th-9th in 1990 under the title of *Boho Days* in a workshop at the Second Stage Theater (MTI, 2021). This new form of Larson's work dove into the themes and exposition of multiculturalism, substance use disorder, and homophobia (Hulan, 2018) all revolving around the present news, issues, and reality of Jonathan's life whilst entering his 30s.

After the success of these performances, Larson was praised by director Jeffrey Seller and continued developing the piece creating several versions, including one which was performed at the Village Gate Theater in 1991 (Jones, 2016). Additionally, this piece was presented at the "O Solo Mio" festivals at the New York Theater Workshop in 1992 and 1993 where the title eventually became *Tick, Tick... Boom!* (MTI, 2021). After Larson died in 1996, productions were halted just as his other musical, *Rent* made its debut and immense success.

Come to your senses is presented within tick tick boom as the eleven o'clock number from Jon's newest musical comedy, Superbia which is currently at a workshop stage waiting for investment approval in SoHo, New York. Karessa, an actor working alongside Jon throughout the musical's workshop to interest investors sings this song telling the story of two lovers, with one begging the other to wake up and realise the love that he has is in front of him. The lyrics "deep in my sighs, listen to me" makes subtle hints at the relationship of Jon and his wife Susan due to the daily struggles appearing in their marriage. Trust and honesty are absent within their relationship, Susan spies on Jon and misreads his interactions with Karessa as an affair. Come to your senses is a cry of Jon's love towards Susan, outlining all the imperfections in their communication and how this has had a toll on their relationship.

"Love is passé in this day and age; how can we expect love to grow?" ("Come to Your Senses, a stargate: sg-1 fanfic | FanFiction") ("Come to Your Senses, a stargate: sg-1 fanfic | FanFiction") is a consistent motif running throughout the song, emerging with the idea that the world has no appreciation for love and romance in this modern day. Taking into consideration that Larson started composing this song during the 1990's it's very precise on the irony and its growth throughout the decade (Deleon, 2021).

This fascinating storyline of the song and complexities revolving around the daily life and legacy of Jonathan Larson introduced within the production allows deep reflections on how 'we are still faced with similar issues in the 21st century' (Robbins, 2018, pg.251).

Communication is core to our survival in this world, and it seems that Larson's quick-wittedness to test the facts and beliefs throughout his career creates a revolutionary shift in how we see and appreciate the smaller details in life.

Pretty Funny

Benj Pasek (1985 – Present)

Dogfight

Justin Paul (1985 – Present)

Set in 1963 we are introduced to U.S. Marine, Eddie Birdlace and his two friends, Boland and Bernstein who call themselves "We Three Bees" (Ranke, 2019). It's their final night in the States and they're eager to take on San Francisco by participating in a dogfight, a cruel game

where each Marine bets \$50, and whoever brings the ugliest date to the party wins the money.

Birdlace enters a diner where we're introduced to Rose the protagonist of the song, an awkwardly shy and idealistic waitress sat playing her guitar quietly in a booth. He flirts with her and extends an invitation for her to be his date for the evening. Rose unaware of the evening's purpose naïvely accepts, beaming with excitement she rushes home to get ready. Once they arrive at the Nite Lite club, Birdlace questions his plans to subject Rose to the event and suggests that they go somewhere else. Rose takes offence as she believes that this change of heart indicates Eddie's embarrassment to introduce her to his friends. Conflicted Eddie is reluctant, and they both enter the party where he drinks heavily and becomes unpleasant and sour with Rose. Marcy, one of the other marine's guests reveals to Rose the true nature of the party "Dogfight" which leads us to this number within the musical.

Heartbroken and humiliated, the song, pretty funny takes place in Rose's bedroom when she is all alone after the events of dogfight. She is surrounded by the rejected dress options for her date and pities herself for believing Birdlace and his lies. The song contrasts with the exciting atmosphere and expectation of her previous song 'Nothing Short of Wonderful' creating an empathetic atmosphere as the closing piece of act one (Bao, 2019).

Navigating a character's defiant moment throughout a song focuses on the environmental musical language (Swainm 2002), in this instance framing Rose's surroundings and how this connects to her emotional state as the song progresses. An open chord voicing at the beginning of the song "Close the window", followed by frequent pedal points and a wide harmonic space and texture for the melody to travel evokes the lack of control Rose has by the end of the first chorus "Isn't it funny you believed that it was real" (Benedict, 2016) Pasek and Paul take further actions in the second verse and chorus by introducing Dorian modal progressions and modulations in thirds. This captures the eternal conflict Rose faces, yearning for a connection but split due to societal pressures and historic elements of the war.

Rose has a heart of gold and is always striving to find the best in things, she tries to cheer herself up and think about what good she's gained from this experience although she's hurt "all disasters have an upside". Tragically she gives in to her anger and indignity "Aren't you funny, pathetically naïve" and can't help but see things as they truly are, creating a poignant reminder of the event.

References

Baber, K. (2013) Manhattan women': Jazz, blues, and gender in *on the town* and *wonderful town*," *American Music*, 31(1), pp. 73–105. Available at:

<https://doi.org/10.5406/americanmusic.31.1.0073> (Accessed: 28 April 2023)

Bao, J. (2019). 'Dogfight': A Beautiful, Nostalgic Social Critique. Gale Academic OneFile. April 29. Available at:

<https://go.gale.com/ps/i.do?p=AONE&sw=w&issn=&v=2.1&it=r&id=GALE%7CA584026780&sid=googleScholar&linkaccess=abs&userGroupName=anon%7E2aecf941> (Accessed: 06 2023)

Benedict, T. (2016). *The Melody of Time: Music and Temporality in the Romantic Era*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Benson, E.A. (2017) "The Estill Voice Model: Theory & Translation," *Voice and Speech Review*, 11(1), pp. 112–114. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/23268263.2017.1370810> (Accessed: 25 April 2023)

Berman, M. (2009) *On the town: One Hundred Years of spectacle in Times Square*. London: Verso.

Berner, T.F. (1999) *The Brooklyn Navy yard*. Charleston, SC: Arcadia.

Bernstein, L. (2017) *Obo*. Available at:

<https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/document/obo-9780199757824/obo-9780199757824->

[0050.xml#:~:text=In%20addition%20to%20blurring%20boundaries,confines%20of%20a%20single%20composition](#) (Accessed: 28 April 2023).

Hulan, H. (2018) *Bury your gays: History, usage, and context*, ScholarWorks@GVSU. Available at: <https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/mcnair/vol21/iss1/6/> (Accessed: 04 May 2023).

Jones, K. (2016). 'Tick, tick... Boom! Cast Album Released Sept 11'. *Playbill Archive*. Available at: <https://www.playbill.com/article/tick-tickboom-cast-album-released-sept-11-com-98538> (Accessed: 03 May 2023)

LBO. (2018). *Leonard Bernstein at 100 Works*. Available at: <https://leonardbernstein.com/works/view/8/on-the-town> (Accessed: 28 April 2023).

Messerli, D. (2017) *Leonard Bernstein: On the town, my favourite musical theater show*. Available at: <http://ustheater.blogspot.com/2017/08/leonard-bernstein-i-can-cook-too-from.html> (Accessed: 26 April 2023).

MTI, (2021). *Tick tick... Boom! Show History*. Available at: <https://www.mtishows.com/show-history/1353> (Accessed: 03 May 2023)

Ranke, C. (2019). 'BWW Review: DOGFIGHT at Riksscenen, Oslo – Outstanding Musical with Tender and Heartfelt Performances'. *Broadway World*. August 16. Available at: <https://www.broadwayworld.com/norway/article/BWW-Review-DOGFIGHT-at-Riksscenen-Oslo-Outstanding-Musical-Dazzled-With-Tender-And-Heartfelt-Performances-20190826> (Accessed: 06 May 2023)

Robbins, H. (2018). *Boho Days: The Wider Works of Jonathan Larson*. *Studies in Musical Theatre*. 14(1). pp.197-300. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1386/smt_00025_5 (Accessed: 04 May 2023)

Swain, P. (2002). *The Broadway Musical: A Critical and Musical Survey*. 2nd ed. United States of America: Scarecrow Press.

Torgovnick, M. (1991) *Gone primitive: Savage intellects, modern lives*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

