

The Books of Daniel
A musical play in two acts
by
Richard L. Rose

Dedicated to Jo Evelyn Rose,
June 26, 1995
Revised in 2009

Libretto

With Notes

“This work intends to make the ultimate accessible.”
--Austin Elliott

Introduction

The libretto and orchestral score of *The Books of Daniel*, in four acts, were written in 1995. A reduced version was produced and performed in concert performance at Farmwell Station Middle School in Ashburn, Virginia on November 15, 1997, sponsored by the Loudoun-Northern Virginia Chapter of Phi Delta Kappa, as a benefit for the student scholarship program. Originally, the work, along with supplemental materials, was designed to be part of staff training for Loudoun County Schools.

Extract from the original program:

“The concert is sponsored by the Loudoun-Northern Virginia chapter #1578 of *Phi Delta Kappa International*, a professional organization of teachers, school administrators and those in allied fields. The goal of PDK is to promote public education by supporting educational leadership, research, and service. The proceeds from the concert will benefit the scholarship fund of the chapter. Scholarships will be given to selected graduating high school seniors who are members of *Future Educators of America* and who intend to pursue careers in education . . .

Music Under Construction, Inc., a local production company under the direction of David Barker, has assisted in the development of this project. Mr. Barker is the Musical Director of tonight’s performance.

Mr. Rose’s score has been digitally recorded from a Kurzweil MIDI. The music is scored, using *Encore* compositional software, for small orchestra, chorus, and soloists. Tonight’s concert performance features selections from the score, arranged for five soloists. The part of Darian, and ensembles from Acts I and III have been deleted. Regarding the absence of staging and costumes, we ask you, as Dr. Miriam Braun asks her students, to *use your imagination*.

In the Biblical story, a king is tricked into punishing his advisor for the very reason that he valued the man’s advice—his religious faith. The music depicts the same jealousy, scheming, and faith in the modern setting of a business merger. A teacher, Dr. Miriam Braun, reminds her modern Daniel that faith has always had a cost.”

Performers in the original performance were Dolly Stevens, as Vinny; Melinda Fausch, in several roles; Emma Cochran, as Dr. Braun, Dan Hermes, as the Gun Buyer, and Richard Rose, as Daniel. These performers were accompanied by a pre-recorded midi track.

On October 7 and 10, 2009, a revised, two-act version was produced in concert-format in Alexandria, Virginia. The members of the *Marginal Notes Ensemble* at that time were: Jennifer Paschal (Miriam), Bill Harris (Daniel), Ilona Dulaski (Vinny), Donna Kepler (Nicole, Abednego), Gene Vollmer (Mushovic, Meshach), Chris Hatfield (Abcek, Auctioneer), Wayne Shirley (Crier, Gunbuyer), Kathy Reilly (Land buyer), Donato Soranno (Hoe buyer), Eileen Warner (Shakespeare-reader), Jon Korman (Darius, Darian) Lisa Orr, Debbie Peetz (Students, Accountants, Board members). Accompaniment was a revised midi recording. The presentation also included a *Power Point* display of surtitles and images. The concerts were done to benefit the Arlington County chapter of *Habitat for Humanity*. Recordings were made using *Protools* on a digital audio workstation.



Rehearsal photo of Ilona Dulaski (Vinny)
Also shown: Kathy Reilly, Bill Harris, Donato Soranno, and Gene Vollmer

ACT I

The events in *The Books of Daniel* occur in Darian, a small town somewhere between Wando and Washington, two imaginary places. It is the home of Darian Community College, Darian Farms, Darian Stables, Darian Book Publishing, and Mr. Cyrus Darian, Esq., himself.

Scene 1, Office

5:00 A.M. Saturday Morning

Daniel Saperstein, Vice President of Darian Publishing, is seated alone at his desk, where, behind piles of financial printouts and books, he has worked all night and into the early morning. From the window behind him, the sun rises on cornfields surrounding the town. Lights are coming on in houses as the streetlights flicker out. The office is a converted barn. Farm implements decorate the walls and shrink-wrapped books are stacked on pallets between the cubicles. On the wall is the sign, **DARIAN PUBLISHING: BOOKS: Give the past, Share the future.**

Besides the window, the only other light in the office comes from Daniel's laptop. He sleepily reaches for a Styrofoam cup, finds it empty, and tosses it into a trashcan full of cups. He is so groggy that he can't keep from nodding. As he talks to Abček, one of the accountants, on his Bluetooth, Daniel is alternately agitated and groggy. He stands, paces, and finally sinks, exhausted, back into the chair.

The music is the vocal equivalent of an overture, in that it introduces most of the themes of the rest of the work. It does so in a brief, fragmented, and agitated way. Perhaps this is appropriate to an individual trying to converse while caught between wakefulness and sleep—a state of mind in which prophets often find themselves.

The spotlight is on Daniel, who touches the Bluetooth in his ear. He has just received a call from Abček. We only hear Daniel's side of the conversation. He frequently pauses to listen to Abček.

Daniel:

“Thanks for calling, Abček.
I've been here all night checking the books.

He stretches and yawns.

Yes, and Vinny's¹ messages.

No, nothing Vinny does surprises me.
Once the merger's finished,
Only the auction is left.
Then we get a new name
And old Darian's out of business.

¹ See note in Act 1, Scene 2.1 about Vincent, also called Vinny.

He stands, paces around his desk, picks up books and statements from the desk, and, just as quickly, puts them down again.

No, she's just the same.
Miriam doesn't change.
She's the only Board member
Who cares about books.
She'll bring the other votes around.

It's all been so foolish.
It's as if I have a fever.
We meet again today.
I took the class to win her vote.
Now *I* 'm lost in a landslide.

Abček, are you still there?

He stops pacing and sits down again.

Yes, the auction and Board meeting.

I'll be there, don't worry!
Just bring the other audit.

He takes a notebook from the desk, a fat textbook, stuffed with bookmarks, and a Bible. Pulling a slip of paper from the Bible, he looks at it and lays the books down again.

And make sure the school
Receives our corporate pledge
Before we're merged away.
Good night. *Yes, I'll be there!*

He disconnects, picks up the Bible again, and opens it.

What was it that she said then?
"Write a poem"? "Read a book"?
"Go kiss—"
Kiss a book?
"For knowledge"

He has a distant look. He kisses the Bible, yawns, and shakes his head, as if to clear his mind.

"And then a kiss for wisdom"?
"And then a kiss—"

He yawns again.

“—for courage”?

‘And then a kiss for vision.’

He wearily puts his head down, falls asleep, and dreams.

ACT I
Scene 2
Orchestral Introduction
(12 measures)

ACT 1
Scene 2.1
Daniel’s First Dream: *The Court of King Darius*

In Daniel’s dream, the office is transformed from a remodeled barn into the court of King Darius, the new Ruler of Medes and Persians. Daniel has been studying about him in the course taught by Dr. Miriam Braun. Instead of hoes and rakes, spears and shields adorn the walls. The star of Daniel’s dream is Vinny Joyner², the Office Manager, and self-appointed Mergers and Acquisitions Department for Darian Publishing. In Daniel’s dream, Vinny, dressed in a bathrobe and turban, is the Chief Satrap. Vinny darts about, waving a stick at the clerical staff, who cower and rush to obey.

Seated at her desk above the stage, Dr. Miriam Braun is reading from a fat textbook, like Daniel’s—also filled with book marks.. As she studies her texts and edits her lecture notes, she occasionally looks up from her reading to comment on Vinny’s desperate situation. However, Miriam does not interact with Vinny or the others onstage during the dream.. She is unaware that the story she is preparing for her lecture is actually taking place around her.

Vinny: Out of the way! Out of the way! Out of the way!
It’s the king! Darius live!

Office staff: Darius live!

Vinny: Darius live!

Office staff: Darius live!

Vinny: Darius live—like anything!

² Vinny, by the way, may be played by a man or woman, although the part is written for Tenor. The high “A,” in measures 146-147, is intended to be sung in a high, nervous falsetto at the breaking point. If sung by a mezzo, adjustments may be needed to maintain the desperate tone required. When casting Vinny, think of Cab Calloway or Ethel Merman. While Daniel is the typical passionate, slightly dense, operatic tenor, Vinny’s role is less about opera than musical-theatre.

Darius, King of Medes and Persians,

Miriam: Cyaxeres, in other versions.

Vinny: Bowmen are his, and industry.
We are his chattel, you and me.
Out of the way!

Office staff: Out of the way!

Vinny: Out of the way!

Office staff: Out of the way!

Vinny: Out of the way!

Office staff: Out of the way!

Vinny: Out of the way! It's the boss.
Look to your books!
Don't give me looks!
Out of the way!
Hide the loss!

Our recent leaders left us dreams.

Miriam: Most of them bad, or so it seems.

Vinny: Now there's a test of loyalty.
Tuck in your heads and bow with me!

|Darius live! Your blessing give!

Office staff: | Darius live! Your blessing give!

Vinny: Let your decrees split any hairs.
Divvy up shares as you please!

Miriam: One hundred twenty new satrapies,

Vinny: Each with its budget and agencies.

Office staff: Clerks without number, each with his cause:

Vinny: | All this we get from our new laws.
|

Miriam: | All this we get from our new laws.

Vinny: Make way, make way! It's the king!

| Than whom no greater, better be!

Miriam: | Than whom no greater, better be!

Vinny: Out of the way! Get on your feet!
At least, show deceit!
His consultant, you may recall,
Advised him not to invade at all;
Then, when Euphrates was turned aside,

| Guess who was swimming beneath the tide?

Miriam: | Guess who was swimming beneath the tide?

Vinny: You may ask, "Is there some way that we could bargain?"
You may ask.
You may ask!
No way! No way!

Miriam: Kings have last say.

Vinny: He has last say.

Miriam: There is no way.

Vinny: There is no way.

| No way!

Miriam: | No way!

Vinny: Get on your feet! Check and re-check every receipt!
Don't fail to tally rents and leases,
Unless you feature us rent to pieces.
All of our taxes pay in full—

Miriam: | Or maybe with lions you have some pull?
| Or maybe with lions you have some pull?

Vinny: Make way! Make way!
Here he comes now!
You cannot say I failed to give you warning.

Enter Darius, King of Medes and Persians, who is received with much bowing and servility all around.

Vinny: Good morning, sir. Good morning, sir.
Isn't it a pleasant morning sir?

His voice cracks as Darius stares at him without responding.

Good morning, good morning, sir!
I think you'll find our books are all in order, sir.

Darius is uninterested in both the books and Vincent.

Good morning! Good morning, sir!

Darius` You handle the books.
See that you show a profit!

Darius exits. As the scene fades, Daniel awakes at his desk. The room has changed back into an office. Clerks, accountants, salespeople, and other staff are coming in to work. Daniel's disheveled appearance gets some looks. Vinny is at work in his cubicle.

ACT I Scene 3, The Office

The staff slowly gathers around Vinny, who has come out of his cubicle and raised his hand. When everyone is ready to listen, Vinny enjoys alarming them about the coming merger. Daniel remains seated at first. When Vinny pauses, Daniel joins the group to offer his opinion.

Vinny: Business without mergers just taxis on the runway.
Solvency and service are fictions meant for leverage.
Power, lift-off, rising to escape the rules
Come from acquisitions when you seize the day.

During this argument, the staff is whip-sawed between the alarming comments of their Office Manager (Vinny) and the apparently self-delusional idealism of the company's Vice President (Daniel).

Daniel: Profit comes from purpose, and purpose comes from people.
Purpose turns a profit when people give to people.

He points at the company sign and motto.

Books are gifts whose value goes beyond the sale.
Books are like our letters, like our private mail:
Caught by ink and fiber—the thoughts and dreams that matter.
Who can tell what matters when futures are uncertain?
Every book we save and sell is like a share
In the future, rising from our work and hope.

Vinny: Selling books or sausage—it really doesn't matter.
The profit's in investment, provided you have courage.
Seizing chance and profit is not taught in schools.
Go to *that* world, if you're frightened of the real!

Business makes a killing and keeps it only one way.
It buys another business and loses costs on paper.
Mergers, acquisitions never see the light
When accountants shy from risk like dynamite.

Get your acts together, the auditors are coming.
Keep your books together. Our futures they are summing.
We will finally make it if you show our lead.
You're the cost absorbed, if we don't succeed.

Staff (chorus): We're the cost! We're the cost absorbed if we don't succeed!

Daniel raises his hands to calm them down.

Daniel: Nothing's more important than living in this moment.
Nothing in this moment should keep us from our mission.
If your mission is not love of making books—

Looking at Vinny, he points again to the sign.

Find another love of excellence and worth.

Any work that's not worth your personal investment,
Your heart and deepest feeling,
Your growth in skill and wisdom,
Your anger, indignation,
Your study and compassion—
Is work to leave to others.

Your have reached your ceiling.

Find another calling.
And love a new ambition.

Everyone looks at Vinny.

Staff (chorus): Find another calling.
And love a new ambition.

Vinny: | Business without mergers just taxis on the runway.
| Solvency and service are fictions meant for leverage.
| Business makes a killing and keeps it only one way:
| It buys another business and loses costs on paper.
|

Daniel: | Books are gifts whose value goes beyond the sale.
| Books are like our letters, like our private mail.
| Every book we save and sell is like a share
| In the future, rising from our work and hope.

Daniel picks up his textbook and Bible for Dr. Braun's "Bible as Literature" course at Darian Community College.

Now it's spring term, I'll return
To morning classes—Bible Lit. with Dr. Braun.

Vinny: As if you haven't had enough of books and learning—
I think it's you that's lit by Dr. Braun—and burning.

Daniel: No, I can't deny it, but—

He puts his book back on the desk.

Vinny: Then don't deny it.
Just remember, be on site.
The auction and the Board's tonight.
Then, our assets all in hand,
We will close this dime-bookstand.

Vinny hands Daniel an agenda for the Board meeting. Daniel takes a new book from one of the book pallets, inserts the agenda, and lays the book on top of his textbook on the desk.

Daniel: Close it and reopen?
And what do we become, then?

Vinny: Darian Books and Wythe Construction
Make DAREWYTHCO our name then.

Vinny hangs the new sign over the old one.

Daniel: With which we dare to pave our way
Into our readers' hearts?

Vinny: Saperstein, you know the drill.
Books of poems don't pay the bill.
Merging with a realtor means we won't go under.

Vinny pulls out an easel with a flip chart of bar and line graphs.

Daniel: Please, Vinny, don't explain it.
I've seen your presentation—
Your graphics and your timing,
Your high-res illustration,
The sales and profits climbing.

The Boss and Board have bought it.
It filled my heart with wonder!

The staff laughs until Daniel leaves and Vinny begins to speak.

Vinny: One boy-wonder less, I think you'll all agree,
Won't prevent your turning spreadsheets in to me.
Every transfer, every line:
Up to date, and in by nine.

ACT I

Scene 3.1, The Office (continued)

The Staff groans as Vincent exits to Mr. Darian's office. He shuts the door behind him and makes a phone call. The spotlight is on a trio of accountants, Abček, the balding Mushovic, and Nicole.

Abček: If you listened to them
You'd think they owned the business.

Mushovic: Each bureaucratic level makes a deadline.

Nicole: The deadline creeps up as it drops below.

Abček: And when it reaches us, what's left of lead-time,

Mushovic: Like my hairline, has nowhere left to go.

Nicole: If we find ourselves believing what they tell us,

We're the "organization that cares."

She points to some of the mottos on Daniel's cubicle.

Mushovic: But also we're the optimization
Of a workforce trimmed to empty chairs.

As they read more of the other mottos aloud, Daniel looks in through the window.

All: They say, "We serve because we're caring.
We take your needs to heart.
The burdens you are bearing
We beg you to impart."

Nicole: But if you raise an eyebrow,
Mushovic: Or whistle in the hall,

Abček: Expect that, by and by, now
The Pink-Slip Squad will call.

All: No good deed shall go unpunished,
No suggestion linger without pain;
No critique shall go unspoken,
Nor shall any heart be left to drain."

Abček: They ask us for our input,
As "workers on the line,"

Nicole: Then say their latest mandate's
A thing *we* helped design!

Mushovic: Like Trojans, duties tumble
Unruly from inside;
The gift-horse, once so humble,
Gets on your back to ride.

All: No good deed shall go unpunished,
No suggestion linger without pain;
No critique shall go unspoken,
Nor shall any heart be left to drain.

*The group falls silent when Daniel comes in and picks up his book from the desk.
He smiles and claps Abček: on the shoulder.*

Daniel: I came back because Mr. Abček and I
Are working on a project that affects you all.

Couldn't help over-hearing your comments—

He looks around the group and hands Abček a bound report.

—one and all.

You know, a policy is written
With everyone in mind.
But everyone is different—
A thing that you will find
When you have scaled the Ladder,
Become the Powers That Be,
Been asked to make exceptions,
And paid most piteously.

No good deed shall go unpunished,
No kindness, once discovered, be allowed
No exception be permitted
That makes a place for persons in the crowd.

As they sing the refrain together and Daniel picks up his books and leaves again, a squeaking door is opened and closed offstage. Abček looks up.

All: No good deed shall go unpunished,
No kindness, once discovered, be allowed
No exception be permitted
That makes a place for persons in the crowd.

ACT I
Scene 3.2

The Office, and Darian's Office

Abček: THE BOSS!
Hear him coming—hear him coming.
It's the boss. It's Mr. Darian.

Everyone scurries to their cubicles. As the elderly and eccentric gentleman-farmer, Cyrus Darian, patters around the office in his overalls and riding boots, it is obvious that he knows little about the actual business of publishing and visits the office very infrequently. It is also obvious that he is slightly deaf and forgetful—disabilities of which the office staff gleefully take advantage.

Darian: Please go on with your work. This is only a visit.

The staff quietly hums the refrain “No good deed...”

Please go on with your work. This is only a visit.
This is our big day. Time to grow with a merger:
Acquiring, and acquired.

We will still print our books.
Daniel always showed profit,
Though the margin was small,
We survived without mergers:
Unacquired.

You may not know how this began.

As he waves his arm around the room in proprietary pride, the staff roll their eyes. They know his rags to riches story so well that they quietly begin to say the next lines before he does.

Staff: The family business was a farm.

Darian: The family business was a farm.
Raising cattle I know.

Staff He knows.

Darian: Plowing time and harvest.
Steaming milk in the snow.

Staff Two or three below.

Darian: Every summer the drought's test:

He raises his finger to make a sage point about business.

These feed an inner fire.

Darian: And every spring comes calving time.
Now, no farmer I know—

Staff There's no farmer like him—

Darian: Makes his farming a business

Staff Giving farming the business.

Darian: Making anything grow
Is such a wonder to witness.
All gone now.
We're acquired.

Staff & Darian: Now every spring in calving-time,
When the full sun begins to climb,
One meadow-witness will be gone.

Staff: One witless fellow will be gone.

Staff & Darian: When we're acquired.

Darian: Please go on with your work. This is only a visit.
This is our big day.
Tonight the Board and the auction:
Tonight they sell the farm.
Acquiring and acquired.

Darian suddenly looks around the office, missing someone.

Where is Vinny?

Staff: Vinny Joyner?
Making calls in your office.

As Darian goes to his office, the spotlight is on Vinny, on the other side of the door, seated at Darian's desk and talking on his Bluetooth, his back to the door.

Vinny: Mr. Green, this is Vinny.
Vincent Joyner? From Darian Books?
In Mergers and Acquisitions?
Perhaps you recall—
When your trial recessed,
And you were waiting in the hall,
We talked about your shares,
And I said I would call?

“Perhaps you remember—
I said I would call
Whenever a certain business
Began to lean toward a fall?
Yes—today's the day.
And Vincent Joyner called you with the news.
Vincent! Vincent Joyner!
Goodbye, sir.

(Aside) Use your windfall to buy some clues.

He calls another client.

Mr. Wythe, this is Vincent—
Vincent Joyner? The stage is set.
When the farm's sold and the old man signs the papers,
Daniel Saperstein will lose the bet.
Of course, he didn't know that he was betting
And neither did old Darian, that fool.
The economics of the situation
Requires an eye for the underlying rule.
When the buyout and restructuring are over,
With Daniel CEO and him outside,
Darian will throw his options *my* way,
And, once we are faithfully allied—

Darian comes into the office, slowly followed by the other staff. At the sound, Vincent twirls around in his chair.

Darian: Vinny, go on with your call.
I'll just visit..

Vinny: *Vinny is still talking on the phone as he nods to Darian. He quickly stands up, sees the staff behind Darian, and becomes flustered.*

Yes, we are fried, I mean, allied—
I mean, we're tried—
That is, I mean—it's all tied down— That is, I mean—

He speaks to Darian.

Good morning, sir. It's morning, sir.
Yes, anyone can see it's morning, sir.
See any allies in the morning, sir?
I mean—you know I mean, Mr. Green was tried—
Some kind of fraud, I heard—
Yes, all tied down now—allied or tried—

Darian: Joyner, what do you mean?

Vinny: *With a distant look in his eyes, Vinny speaks again to Mr. Wythe on the phone.*

Yes, I'm tied up now.
I'll call you back.

He turns back to Darian.

Good morning, sir. Good morning, sir.
Our books are all in order, sir.
Good morning, Good morning, sir.

Staff No good deed shall go unpunished,
No kindness, once discovered, be allowed;
No exception be permitted
That makes a place for persons in the crowd.

ACT I
Scene 4

The Classroom for Dr. Miriam Braun’s course on “The Bible as Literature”

The community college in Darian consists of several rooms on the other side of the same barn. From the windows, the cornfields and other side of the town are visible on a sunny morning. The classroom is lined with bookshelves. A map of the ancient world hangs on the front wall, and, beside it, a banner: “**DARIAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE AND DARIAN BOOKS—*Give the past. Share the Future.*”**

Dr. Miriam Braun works at her desk as Daniel arrives early to class. He hands her the newly printed book with the Board’s agenda in it. She pulls out the agenda, glances at it, and then, slowly and carefully, opens the book, first finding the middle, then carefully thumbing through it, stroking and sniffing the pages, and enjoying the smell of them. Finally, she looks up at Daniel and smiles. The argument, or *flyting*, begun between Daniel and Vinny, continues, with Daniel now on the other side.

Miriam: Auditing again, Mr. Saperstein?

Daniel: I don’t need a grade, Dr. Braun.

Miriam: You’re not on the roll, Mr. Saperstein.

Daniel I hoped you’d let me in, Dr. Braun.

He picks up the agenda she had laid aside.

And tonight’s not soon enough—

Miriam: I’ll be there. Don’t worry!

What I had in mind, Mr. Saperstein,

Was *you* would register this time—

Daniel Dr. Braun, the love of learning brings me back to you—
The love of learning, and—and of—

Miriam: And of books?

Daniel Books—that's true!

Miriam: The love of books and learning brings me too.
I spend my days with children

She points to a school building, visible from the window.

My evenings with adults,
And, when classes end, Jane Austen,
Faust, and Lao, and Rabbi Eliezer keep me company.
I even have a little share of Darian Books—

She points to the banner.

Thanks to you. And thank you for your gift
To our Fund Drive. It will help us
Build a place where children dream
Of places other than this town.

Daniel Darian is small—

Miriam: Mr. Saperstein, it's not the size at all.

Daniel Dr. Braun, all small towns have their customs—

Miriam: Mr. Saperstein!
Not all small towns are fiefdoms like Darian.

Between the landowners and business trade—
The fine estates with private books and arts,
And merchants serving them in every way,
And tax laws that abet and aid—
The public cannot pay for schools or arts.

Daniel: But without capital, there are no arts.
When men like Darian take the risk
Of venturing to fund ideas,
We all advance; bonds rise; and housing starts;

And farmers buy more fields to disk.

Other students begin coming into the classroom.

Miriam: The class is coming, Mr. Saperstein.
You know we won't resolve this—“

Daniel Haven't yet—
From his expression, it is clear that Daniel's idea about a resolution is more romantic than Miriam's.

Miriam: I say, the risk of faith, unlike investment,
Makes its claim on *you*—
Not someone else's money that you bet.

Faith assures us—
Faith assures us of our hope.
Faith convicts us
Of a life beyond our scope.
By faith, by faith—
We may come to understand
Our world—one world—
Holy, forming in his hand.

ACT I

Scene 4.1

Classroom, with students entering

Miriam is embarrassed to notice that the class has entered and taken an interest in her conversation with Daniel.

Mr. Saperstein and I were talking
About Kierkegaard and certain phrases
Found in *Hebrews*—but that's another book.

Class: That's another book.

Miriam: As you know, we shall begin this term
With eleven books of *Writings*, taking first
The Book of Daniel, of them all most recent.

To *Daniel*, then.

She glances at Daniel Saperstein, who is gazing wistfully at her.

Class: To *Daniel*, then.

The students begin taking notes.

Miriam: In our literary study of the *Bible*,
We have touched upon the subject of the sources.
Often left unreconciled,
Different versions side by side
Suggest that the redactors loved *both* sources.

Daniel Loved both sources—

Miriam frowns at Daniel, who quickly looks down at his notebook. As she lectures, she walks up and down the aisle.

Miriam: *Immer Quellen lesen—*
Always read the sources!

Student: But what this really means
Is the text is patched like jeans
From a dozen colored sources.

The student points to her own ragged denim jacket. The class laughs.

Miriam: But remember, it was stitched in faith—
Like a quilt, whose patterns all relate.

Miriam lightly touches the student on the shoulder as she walks back to the front of the room—and brushes past Daniel—as she turns to face the class.

Thus, in reading, be prepared for contradiction.
For a metaphor's a limited maneuver:
Pose the lion proud and feared—
But *not* licking at his beard.

The class laughs.

Try to understand the functions of allusion.

Class: The functions of allusion.

Miriam: Some will tell you that mythology is fiction—
Just an opiate, or lie, or an illusion.
Others sell you foolish hopes,
Polished rocks, and horoscopes:

She picks up one of the students' magazines and waves it.

They've a jaded kind of faith in your confusion.

Class: In our confusion.

A student who wears beads, an ankh, tattoos, and other ornaments, raises her hand.

Student: What's wrong with that?
Isn't any idea worth having worth promotion?

Another student: And selling?

Student: And buying?

Class: What's wrong with that?

Miriam: Any faith must have an object of devotion.
For Modern Enterprise it's allocation.

Miriam looks at Daniel.

Allocate our time.
Allocate our toil.
Allocate the water,
Air, and soil—
Modern Enterprise!

A lion that devours
This consuming world of ours,
It never stops or hesitates.

Daniel Giving values their true weights,
Allocation is the means
To create the worlds we dream—

Class: What's wrong with that?

Miriam: Both Augustine and Saint Jerome agree
That a merchant pleases God infrequently
And that business is in itself an evil.

When you make a work of art—
When it pours forth from your heart—
How can a market price its equal?

Several students hold up the pop culture magazines they have been reading.

Class: But Dr. Braun—
What's wrong with that?

Miriam: Students, Students!

Daniel As an evil merchant, maybe I could answer:
Without money, power rules, and there's no freedom—
No risk, prediction, challenge or discovery—
Nor even height to see from.

But test ideas! Become a thought-investor!
Then, no country's arms can match its merchant forces!

Daniel is clearly still both sleepy and agitated. He stands up, as if to clear his thoughts.

That value's set in dirty trade
When we ourselves of dust are made
Is a strange objection—seeing what *our source* is!

Class: Seeing what our source is!

Daniel: Faith is living—
Faith is living out your hope.
Faith is seeing—
Seeing life beyond our scope.
When we've found our special place,
Faith lifts mountains into space!

While he is speaking, Miriam looks at him with admiration, but when he stops, she frowns. Daniel is embarrassed, wavers sleepily, and sits down.

ACT I
Scene 4.2
Classroom (continued)

Miriam: Back to *Daniel*, Mr. Saperstein?

Daniel Back to *Daniel*, Dr. Braun.

Miriam picks up the same fat book filled with book marks that she was reading in Daniel's first dream.

Miriam: When Antiochus Epiphanes was ruler,
In Second Temple times, this book was written.

He made himself a god,
Forbade Shabbes, forbade prayer,
And sold the priesthood to the highest bidder.

There was quite a living to be made
By anyone who made the trade
Of one god for another.

Class: One god for another.

Miriam: In such a time, stories are told
In an old way that we call *myth*—
Stories that *are*, stories that live
Because they inspire us to give.

Class: They inspire us to give.

Miriam: Sacred stories are reminders
That, though often losers,
We are also finders.
These special stories
Tell who we are.
That's why they have lasted.

In their own ways,
Both Lao and Shakespeare said,
“Within—within—be fed.
Without—be rich no more.”

Class: Within—within—be fed.
Without—be rich no more.

Miriam: The myth becomes the faith we need,
And, as we follow it, we lead.
As music moves us—and poetry—
Myth moves us to be what we can be.

Class: What we can be—

Miriam: Perhaps we've lost this in our art—

As she paces in the front of the room, she touches the video monitor and speakers.

We watch, but are not moved.
Never moving to respond,
Our souls are never fed.

All: The myth becomes the faith we need,
And, as we follow it, we lead.
As music moves us—and poetry—
Myth moves us to be what we can be.

Miriam: Why try to cultivate?
Why bother to create,

She looks at Daniel.

If consumption is all that really matters?
Modern Enterprise!

Daniel Back to *Daniel*, Dr. Braun?

Miriam: Never left him, Mr. Saperstein!

What I mean is: in our art
Myths are broken all apart.
To feed the soul, our myths
Must fit our time.

Miriam picks up another book, finds her place in it, and asks the student with the patched, denim jacket to read it aloud.

Consider this.

ACT I
Scene 4.3a
Classroom: Student reading a sonnet

The student reads aloud Shakespeare's fifteenth sonnet, a sonnet about cultivating the personal growth of a younger person as one cultivates a garden. This is Miriam's personal myth for why she teaches.

Student: “When I consider everything that grows
Holds in perfection but a little moment,
That this huge stage revealeth nought but shows
Whereon the stars in secret influence comment.
And when I see that men as plants increase,
Cheered and checked even by that self-same sky:
Vaunt in their youthful sap, at height decrease,
And wear their brave state out of memory.
Then the conceit of this inconstant stay,
Sets you so rich in youth before my sight,

Where wasteful time debateth with decay
To change your day of youth to sullied night,
Then all in war with Time for love of you,
As he takes from you, I ingraft you new.

ACT I

Scene 4.3b, Classroom (continued)

End of Act I

Miriam hugs the student and takes the book back to her desk, talking to it as she does so.

Miriam: If I misread you, Will, please let me be.
For your Dark Lover is a child to me—
A child and student, dark as any wood,
In whom ideas hiss, catch fire,
And burn forth—free!

Back to *Daniel*, then.

Class: To *Daniel*, then.

Miriam: And here is your assignment:
Consider *Daniel*.

Given such mortality and stars,
Chaldeans, and astrologers to read them,
Given the choice of personal power
Or faith unto death in a lion's den,
Given a lifetime to gather and consume—

Miriam looks at Daniel.

He chose death's narrow room.

Miriam begins packing her bag for her next class. The class continues to write down the assignment.

I ask you to imagine that God is in your reading,
Showing you the way your life of faith is leading—
Your movement through an inner darkness,
Your falling into inner depths.

As snowflakes kiss a wide, dark lake,
Imagine that you kiss this book.

She holds up the Bible before putting it into her bag.

You go to it for wisdom.
You search in it for courage.
You let it model vision.

All: You go to it for wisdom.
You search in it for courage.
You let it model vision.

Miriam: The myth of *Daniel* means “God judges well,”
But myth’s an inner story only you can tell.

The class exits, repeating the assignment. Daniel stays at his desk.

Class: Imagine seeking knowledge
Within this Book of vision.
Imagine it is wisdom.
Imagine it is courage.
And kiss it, seeking mission.

Miriam stands by her desk, holding her book bag.

Daniel Miriam, you’re just the same—
You never change. You’re just the same.

You know what I told you last term—
I know it was foolish.

But you’re—you’re —you’re so
Beautiful—I even tried quoting your Lao:

“What is of all things most yielding
Can overcome that which is most hard.
Being like water, it can enter,
Moving freely—even—
Even where there’s no crevice—
Even there.”

Miriam: And you impressed me.
But you and I will never agree,
And here is the same reply:

Though we live in this time,
We live also in another—
The holy time of myth—
Where action is not always actionless.

Daniel shakes his head sleepily.

Daniel: But what we want is not always
So higher-critical,
So deep and mythical,
So archetypical.

If I could only live with you,
Then any time would be a blessing.
If I could only dream with you,
Let any myth you want be true.

Miriam puts down her book bag.

Miriam: Daniel Saperstein.
Daniel—Danny.

As long as I have known you,
I have never said it,
And you never asked till now.
Though often you would start to,
I said we'd regret it
And you've backed away till now.

But now, you can't take
Heart-break—somehow.

She stands behind her desk, as if lecturing the class.

So I will tell you
Just what's to be done,
Since I won't let you
Speed up what we've begun:

Take a walk in the forest.
Write a poem.
Read a book.
A love that flares

With just one look
Is soon cold stares
Like a fish's
On a hook.

Daniel stands up, ignoring her objection.

Daniel: If I could only dream with you—

Exasperated, Miriam picks up her book bag and looks toward the door.

Miriam: You couldn't live without me.
Is this to my credit?
You ask me where we stand right now.
Though what there is about me
That led you to have said it
I miss—unless a chat's a vow.

So I will tell you
Just what's to be done,
Since I won't let you
Speed up what we've begun.

| Take a walk in the forest.
| Write a poem.
| Read a book.
| A love that flares
|
| With just one look
| Is soon cold stares
| Like a fish's
| On a hook.
|

Daniel: | If I could only live with you,
| Then any time would be a blessing.
| If I could only dream with you,
| Let any myth you tell be true,
And every dream we share come true.

Miriam leaves. Daniel sits back down, puts his head on the desk, and then looks up as Miriam passes by the window quietly humming "If I could only." He smiles, nods sleepily, and falls asleep.

ACT II

Scene 1

Daniel's Second Dream: *The Court of King Darius*

The scene is the same office as shown in Act I, Scene 2, except that a board-room table is center stage. Around it are seated the office staff, costumed as Babylonians—or Daniel's idea of Babylonians as people in bathrobes. Miriam is again seated at her desk

above the scene. Vinny, facing the Board members and the audience, stands at the end of the table and addresses the group. Seen in profile, his head bowed and wearing a prayer shawl, Daniel sits at a desk at the corner of the stage, below Miriam.

Vinny: Perhaps you haven't noticed
How things are coming apart.
Our land is disappearing into the pockets
Of a people we gave their start.

Board: Gave their start!

Vinny: Remember Nebuchadnezzar, King of Kings,
Forever to reign?
Who, for seven years, was really out to pasture,
Chewing roots in the wind and the rain?

Board: Wind and the rain!

Vinny: Perhaps you just didn't notice
What drove him into that field.
It was a people crushed and beaten
Who didn't know how to yield.

Board: How to yield!

Vinny: In short-sighted maneuvers
We trod upon their dietary toes.
We lost out in the fiery furnace.
Now Daniel leads us round by the nose.

Board: By the nose!

Vinny: A new approach!

Board: A new approach!

Vinny: That's what we need—a new approach!
A long-range projection,
A more complete conception.

A packaged plan—all tied down—
With nowhere left for him to move around.
A new approach—

Board: Yes, a new approach—a new approach!

Vinny: That's what we really need.

Now, I'd like to submit a proposal—

Some of the Board members speak and raise their hands. Vinny interrupts them and stares them down.

Board: A propo—

Vinny: On just what to do.
Of course, I want your input.
But wait till I am through.

Vinny holds up a slate with writing on it. He puts it on the same flip-chart easel, complete with bar charts, that appeared in Act I, Scene 3.

Let's draft a memorandum
To show our Leader just how glad we feel
That he is towering o'er us
And we are all under his heel.

I'm sure you remember
Public Law sixty six dash sixty five.
It came in with our Medes and dear Persians.
Now *we* need it to survive.

Once he signs our memorandum,
With all the conditions pertaining thereunto,
Like it or not, he can't revoke it—
No matter what he wants to do.

All: A new approach, a new approach—
That's what we need. That's what we need.
A long-range projection,
A more complete conception,
A package plan, all tied down,
With nowhere left for him to turn around—
A new approach, a new approach.
That's what we really need.

Vinny hands the slate to a Crier, who proclaims it to the audience. Vinny and the Board members exit.

Crier: Hear O People! Hear O People!
An Interdict! An interdict!
And Ordinance by King Darius,

By the power of his bowmen.

Whoever makes petition
To any god or man for thirty days,
Except to King Darius,
Shall be cast into a den of lions.

By the law of Medes and Persians,
Which cannot be revoked.
By the law of Medes and Persians,
Which cannot be revoked.

ACT II Scene 2

The Crier exits. Daniel and Miriam are in the spotlight. Wearing his talis (prayer shawl), Daniel is praying, his head bowed and palms raised. Miriam stands behind her desk, reading from her Bible.

Miriam: “When Daniel knew the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber, open toward Jerusalem; and he got down upon his knees three times a day and gave thanks before his God as he had done previously. “

Daniel: Whom have I in heaven but thee?
And there is nothing that I desire beside thee.
My flesh and my heart may fail,
But God is the strength of my heart.

When my soul was embittered,
I was a beast toward thee--
Stupid and ignorant—
For I was envious of the arrogant.

He gestures toward the empty Board Room.

They have no pangs.
Their bodies are sound and sleek.
They are not troubled as other men are.
They are not stricken as other men are.
They set their mouths against the Lord.
Their tongue struts in the Earth.

All in vain have I kept my heart clean!
All in vain have I kept my heart clean!
Nevertheless, I am continually with thee.

Whom have I in heaven but thee?

ACT II
Scene 3, Reprise
“New Approach”

Vinny reappears briefly from the wings, sings with the chorus (hidden or seated), & exits..

Vinny : We’ve got him now! Got him now!
A new approach. Can-do approach!
That’s what we really need!

ACT II
Scene 4
“You have a case”

Enter: Shadrach (Abček), Meshach (Mushovic), and Abednego (Nicole).

Abček: Daniel, we came soon as we heard.
Meshach and I both agree.

Mushovic: We do!

Nicole: Me, too!

Abček: This case of yours should be referred.

Nicole: There was a prior guarantee.

Mushovic: I know, I know! You want to pray!
And God will hear and answer you—some day.

Abček: But in this case, you have a claim,
And need not call upon the Name.

Nicole: It’s very clear we have a case.

Mushovic: And with your power and special place,

Abček: We can appeal this decree.

Mushovic: Given the promise Nebuchadnezzar made to me:

Trio: ”Full punishment!
All who defy the God of Israel

Either burn or comply!”

Mushovic: Though Medes are famous for their law,
Your case presents them with a little flaw:

Trio: Two interdictions in contradiction!

Mushovic: We can appeal, bring this to light—
Or, if preferred—

Nicole: A quiet settlement will be all right!

Abček: Like Jerusalem!

Trio: Jerusalem!

Holding hands, they dance in a circle as they sing together.

Jerusalem! Jerusalem!
We'll settle for Jerusalem!

Jerusalem! Our special place!
A quiet settlement will be all right!

Jerusalem—

They stop when they see that Daniel is praying again.

Abček: If you won't do what we advise
Then let us pray and lift our eyes
To the All Present,
Who may provide
An answer you will realize
Compels you to decide.

As the trio prays with Daniel, they also watch him to see whether their prayer is changing his mind.

Trio: In thee, O Lord,
In thee, O Lord,
Do we take refuge.

Our times are in thy hand.
Incline thine ear to me,
Rescue me speedily.
Our times are in thy hand.

Be thou a rock of refuge for me.
Rescue me speedily, O Lord.

Be thou a rock of refuge for me.
Our times are in thy hand!

(Return us to our special place,
Jerusalem, or bring disgrace.
Uphold our claim and free us—

They look at Daniel.

Or maybe you're too high to see us.)

Our times are in thy hand.

The trio exits.

Daniel: Whom have I in heaven but thee?

He bows his head.

ACT II Scene 5

King Darius (Cyrus Darian) enters. He frowns at Daniel and shakes his head. Daniel does not look up. Darian paces about as he tries to think of a way to avoid the legal dilemma of having to put his trusted counselor to death.

Darian: There is no power that can save you.
There is no legal way.
Once we have stamped our seal,
Once we have made a deal,
It is the law, my friend,
There can be no appeal.
There is no power that can save you.
There is no legal way.

Miriam: One is the hand swept o'er the lyre,
The rush of sparrows into flight,
The present and eternal hour,
The waking day in sleeping night.

One the All Present, one is the source,
One and holy the Name.
One that is moved, one moving force,
Never and always the same.

Darian: There is no power that can save you.
There is no legal way.
Loopholes I sought to find
Just for my peace of mind.
It is a fixed decree,
Binding both you and me.
There is no power that can save you.
There is no legal way.

Miriam: One is the hand swept o'er the lyre,
The rush of waters to the sea,
One holy ground, one holy fire,
One that we are and may be.

Sh'ma Yisroel, Adonai Eloihenu.
Hear, O Israel.
Adonai Eloihenu, Adonai Echod.
The Lord our God is one.

The lights come down as Miriam steps away from her desk to stand beside Daniel, her hand on his shoulder. The Crier returns, dressed carrying his bow. He gives the talis to Miriam and leads Daniel away. Miriam watches them exit and then turns back to face the audience.

Miriam: Faith assures us.
Faith assures us of our hope.
Faith convicts us
Of a life beyond our scope.

Through faith, through faith,
Some were tortured, some won strength.
Lions, kings, wars raged.
Who can ever name at length
All who suffered—
Wandering, beaten, dying, poor—
Faith assuring
All that they were hoping for?

The scene changes around Miriam, in the spotlight, center stage. As the set for Scene 6 is assembled around them, Abcek joins her. A stage hand takes the talis from her as Abcek hands her the report that he and Daniel have prepared regarding Vinny's merger deal. She holds the report in the same way that she had held the talis. She looks back in the direction where Daniel was taken, and then studies the document.

ACT II
Scene 6.1
Introduction to the Auction and Board Meeting

The scene is the office of Darian’s company. The Board Room table is still on stage, but the office is cluttered with boxes, books and farm tools and other objects, like two lion sculptures, made for lawn ornaments. Also being auctioned are busts of Beethoven, Shakespeare, a jade Buddha, many books and school supplies—to Miriam’s distress. Outside, seen through the window, it is a rainy, dark afternoon. A sign, visible from the window, reads “Auction Tonight.”

The auctioneer stands at one end of the table, surrounded by a small crowd. Most of the items have already been sold. The crowd follows the auctioneer as he goes from item to item. Some of them wear raincoats or carry umbrellas. The quartet (Miriam, Nicole, Abček, and Mushovic) is center stage. Abček shows Miriam the bound financial report that Daniel gave him earlier. Already distressed by the auction, she is visibly alarmed by what Abcek whispers to her as she scans the report.

Meanwhile, Darian trails the auctioneer and crowd, looking more bewildered and desolate every time an item is sold and carried off.

Abček: Where is Daniel?

Miriam: *(aside)* Danny—Daniel—

Abček: Soon the auction will be ending.

Miriam: After what you’ve shown me—
After what he told you—
I must see him—I must see him!

The auctioneer and crowd move closer to center stage.

Darian: Why must they sell the farm?
Every tree I remember.
Everything will be gone.

Abček & Nicole:
 Now he worries what will go!
 He only came by in September!

Miriam: If I could only see him now—
Not to give over and agree—
But only just to tell him how—
 He’s changed because I see.

Abček, Nicole, and Mushovic

: Soon the auction will be over.
Then the Board will hear from Joyner.
Where is Daniel?

Darian: Why must they sell the farm?

Miriam: | If only I . . .

Abček, et al. | Soon the auction. . . .

Darian: | Why must they . . .

Miriam: Now it comes, the final bidding—
Lions buying, lions selling—
All consuming, all acquiring.

Darian and others: And we're acquired.

Act II Scene 6.2, The Auction

The spotlight is on the auctioneer, center stage. He holds up some tools. First, he speaks, saying: "Hey now! What is my bid for a John Deere with a plow and a tiller on the side? Take the tools and the wheel hoe in the lot! What is my bid? What is my bid? What is my bid?" Then he sings:

Auctioneer: A rusty adze, a dibble—
Who'll take this old wheel hoe?
Give me a bite or nibble.
I'll let the whole box go.

If it were worth your trouble,
To come a rainy day,
To park and walk through stubble,
And sink in wet red clay,

Then take this adze and dibble,
Come take this old wheel hoe.
Give me a bite or nibble.
I'll let the whole box go.
I'll let the whole box go.

Three Bargain hunters:

The city people avidly examine the old, broken, farm tools.

Three Buyers Made to last
Through all the hurried ages
Of the past—
This handle of a hoe.

Buyer 1 From the heart-wood

All three: Of a mighty oak tree,

Buyer 1: Turned and sanded,

All three: Fashioned with a frow.

From the past:
This handle of a hoe.

Wherever you look around you,
Nothing's made to stay.
Whatever you touch around you
Will scarce outlive the day.

But here is a tool forgotten,
And dark with the stains of time.
Never its like you'll find now
For scraping out the grime.

Made to last
Through all the hurried ages;
Made to last—
This handle of a hoe.

The Bargain hunters exit with the tools. The auctioneer holds up an old rifle.

Auctioneer: A rusty adze, a dibble—
And now the guns must go.
Give me a bite or nibble.
I'll let the whole case go.
I'll let the whole case go!

Gun buyer: Our personal freedoms and our sacred honor
Are threatened on every side that we may turn.
To hold onto what we have we need some armor
And plenty of firepower to burn.

Every home should have a modest mortar.
Every boy should have his own grenade.
On the driveway you could have a rocket launcher
And on the lawn, your armaments displayed.

Give me an Uzi, Smith and Wesson, and an AK.

A thousand rounds a clip will probably do.
You never know when you are on the highway
Just what the other driver's gonna do.

Every home should have a modest mortar.
Every both should have his own grenade.
On the driveway you could have a rocket launcher
And on the lawn your armaments displayed.

The gun buyer exits with his purchase.

Auctioneer: A rusty adze, a dibble—
And now the land must go.
Give me a bite or nibble.
I'll let the whole place go.
I'll let the whole place go.

The last buyer is a property investor who speculates on land and houses.

Land buyer: When I find a place
Fallen in disgrace,
I'm the first in line
To make it mine.

Look for fallen trees—
Houses on their knees—
Just the properties
That I make mine.

And then you know you've got it made,
And you are living in the shade,
And you can hire your own parade
And fans to cheer the way.

Grease a palm or two—
Subdivide a few,
Win all the well-to-do
Who so incline.

As all the Earth I scan—
Only for the good of man—
Each Comprehensive Plan
Will show my line.

And then you know you've got it made,
And you are living in the shade,

And you can hire your own parade
And fans to cheer the way.

The Buyer exits with the deed. With the Auctioneer on stage are Darian, Miriam, and the office staff. The auctioneer packs up as he sings.

Auctioneer: You took the adze and dibble.
You took the old wheel hoe.
You took my time and trouble.
Where did the old place go?

If it were worth your trouble
To come a rainy day,
To park and walk through stubble,
And sink it wet, red clay,

Then give a bid for failure.
Give me your bid for fear
And for the tumbling tractors
Bringing these auctions here.

Long after crops plowed under,
Long after bones were set,
Then came the rain and thunder,
The loss, and mud, and wet.

Give me the price in acres.
Give me the cost in years.
Give dust to banks and bakers
And see if bread appears.
Give me your bid for honor.
I'll pay it back with tears.

Auctioneer departs, singing, along with the rest of the crowd. Vinny Joyner appears with the merger contract. Members of the Board begin to sit down at the table. The office staff watches from the perimeter..

A rusty adze, a dibble.
Who'll take the old wheel hoe?
Give me a bite or nibble.
I'll let the whole box go.
I'll let the whole place go.

ACT II
Scene 7.1, End of the Board Meeting

Vincent Joyner hands Darian a pen to sign the contract. Vinny, shaking his head and frowning, hands Darian a pen to sign the contract. Darian, puzzled by Vinny's behavior, studies the contract and looks up with surprise.

Darian: What has happened to my business?
 Who allowed it?
 Authorized it?

Vinny: Authorized it, schemed it,
 Signed it: Saperstein!

Darian: Saperstein?
 I can't believe that Daniel knew
 That signing this would shut us down.
 And now a holding company is all we are.
 I can't believe it.

Vinny: Believe it! Believe it!
 We're tied down so neat and clean
 Just for Mr. Saperstein:
 It all went how
 He wanted it to go,
 And now Mr. Saperstein's
 Our new CEO.

Board and Staff:
 Authorized it, schemed it, signed it!

Vinny: Mr. Darian, you hold the shares to stop him.
 I, for one, will help you stop him.

Board and Staff:
 So will we all!

Miriam: All but me!
 Not that my shares can hold you back.
 Not that my reasoning makes a difference,
 Not that you love books and learning—
 As your children are your witness.

Vinny: Irrelevant!
 You know the issue here
 Is Daniel Saperstein—not schools and learning.

This is just how
You finally get control—
So you and Saperstein
Can throw our earnings
Into every rat-hole dream.

I think we've learned enough
To wise up to that scheme!

Miriam: Mr. Darian, it's a lie!
It's a lie—

Vinny: Why don't you ask,
If it's a lie, how they explain
All of these schemes
To be giving books away—
These sinister misallocations,
These claims that corporate donation pays.

And look where the money's going—
Into a school that's a front
For dreaming and games,
And a library of molesting books
That breed cockiness,
Delusions, false expectations—

Board: If it's a lie, how do you explain it?
Sinister donations? Foolish expectations?
If it's a lie, how do you explain it?

Miriam: Very well. *Don't* let the children dream.

Their spirits might escape,
Ignite the world with light
And flare through every gate,
And send a flame-bright shape
Of vision, sure and clean,
With heat so pure and keen,
And logic true and lean
There isn't room for hate.
Don't let the children dream!

As she sings this, Miriam goes from one Board member to another, gently mocking their foolishness.

Books & their “molestation”!

Enemies everywhere!
Hearts full of expectation?
Beware! Beware! Beware!

Have no hope or outcome
For children from the start.
Drive all expectation
Swiftly from your heart!

Daniel enters.

Vinny: Just let me speak, now he is here—

Miriam: Keep every hope so low
That hearts will barely beat,
That blood will scarcely flow.
Let every dream retreat.

Fix all your minds on gain.
Teach children all your fear.
Keep all your worries near.
Ring children with defeat.
Don't ever let the children dream.

Miriam moves center stage and faces the audience.

When you lose your job or patience
When you read of crime and shame,
A conspiracy of secret agents
In the schools must be the blame.

Vinny: Let me speak—

One after another, Miriam holds up some books that weren't sold at the auction.

Miriam: Though Plato in a cave,
And Hawking in a star,
And Wordsworth in a flower,
And Descartes in a heart,
Have seen things as they are—

Just be content with how things seem
Without the bridge of dream
That leaps from heart to heart.
Don't let the children dream!

Staff (women):

Don't let the children dream!
Don't let the children dream!

Miriam again walks around the table, talking to her fellow Board members.

Miriam: Guiding, leading, aiming—
Schools aren't meant to do!
Schools are meant for blaming—
Better them, than you!

Daniel: I'm sorry I was late.
I was assigned some dreams,
And now, as I awake,
Another time it seems.

All (except Vinny):

And if the children dream,
Their spirits might escape,
Ignite the world with light,
And leave no room for hate.
Just let the children dream.

Miriam speaks to Daniel.

Miriam: Swift as a glance of yearning,
Deep as an ancient star,
Each into others turning:
We wonder who we are.

Each into others turning
In a twinkling of an eye.
New self from old is learning
As crocus from bulb or sky.

Vinny: Now you can see
All that I said:
It was their plan.
Now you can see.
Now you can see.

Miriam & Daniel:

And if the children dream
Their spirits might escape,
Ignite the world with light

And leave no room for hate.
Just let the children dream.

Darian: Let Daniel speak for himself.

Daniel: Darian Publishing—Darian Books:
This is the work I do for God.
It is an act of faith for me.

Darian: He says he does this work for God!

Miriam: It means *he* doesn't lie.

Vinny: If there's a way that we can lie
And still be paid,
Then anyone will lie.

Vinny waves the contract at Daniel. Meanwhile, unnoticed by Vinny, Abček hands Darian the bound financial statement that Daniel had given him in Act I.

Why don't you ask,
If it's no lie,
How he explains
Signatures on deeds,
Stories in the news,
Transfers in our books,
Missing stock issues?
How can he refuse
If he doesn't lie?
If he doesn't lie!

Daniel: It's a problem that requires elucidation.
Can we manage to achieve cooperation?
With animosity and doubt
Can we really work it out—
And not fuel another conflagration?

Daniel takes the contract from Vinny.

What I read here is an interesting endeavor
And the recent audit's figures all agree
That this merger turned into a corporate lever
That seems to lift the lion's share to me.

Daniel takes financial statement from Darian and holds up one with the other, as if balancing them.

But the independent audit,
That I authorized in secret,
Shows certain virtual transfers,
Virtual gains, and hidden debts.

Vinny backs slowly off the stage. Daniel points to the flip chart.

It was Vinny's presentation
That made Abček and me wonder.
It filled our hearts with wonder!

Darian: Where is Vinny?

All: Vinny Joyner?

Darian: What does this mean?

Miriam: Welcome to the holy presence!
More than a dream;
Less than a scheme.
Welcome to the middle way.

ACT II

Scene 8, Finale

Daniel and Miriam tear Vinny's contract in half. They sing to each other. Then the others join in. Even Vinny returns to sing in the Finale.

Miram and Daniel:

Find a middle way—
Sometimes cost is profit.
Sometimes even business-sense can feed our souls.
Sometimes holy dreams become our business goals.
Find a middle way.
Mutual agreement.
Can we live with partial truths?
Can we reach agreement?

All: Find a middle way.
Sometimes cost is profit.
Sometimes all our business-sense can feed our souls.
Sometimes holy dreams become our business goals.
Find a middle way.

Miriam and Daniel:

Each has a story. Each has a place.

Each one can listen, each confer grace.
Find a middle way.
Joy lies in the choosing.
Not by a command or purchase
Comes your bliss.
You are what is given.
What is given's this:
Be the holy way,
Way of understanding.
Find joy even losing.

Make a joyful noise
To the Lord, all lands.
Serve the Lord with gladness.
Come into his presence with singing
And into his courts with praise.

Know that the Lord is God.
It is he that made us, and we are his
We are his people and the sheep of his pasture.

Make a joyful noise
To the Lord, all lands.
Serve the Lord with gladness.
Come into his presence with singing.
Find a middle way.
Find a middle way.
Sometimes cost is profit
Sometimes all our business sense can feed our souls.
Sometimes holy dreams become our business goals.
Make yourself the way. Be the holy way.

Afterword and References

First, an apology: The original version was in four acts, both ponderous and eclectic. Although the revised, two-act work is still eclectic—containing elements of jazz, gospel quartet, Klezmer, musical theatre, and even country-western music—it remains an opera, because of its structure and because it is written primarily for *bel canto* singing. Because of the weighty ideas it tries to convey—with as much humor as I can summon—it remains ponderous. While I apologize for its shortcomings, I have finished the revision and am too weak to look back.

The *Afterword* of the original program included the statement, “You are the Gift,” given below, which later became part of the poem *Finding a Purchase*, later posted on

the website (marginalnotesinwordsandmusic.org). This statement was a summary of my belief that public education was a matter of giving and evoking gifts. I learned this from colleagues, especially Susan Irene Rose, who said, “Gardeners and teachers hope for the flowering.” The opera was originally developed as part of a staff training workshop for school administrators. Those interested in the ancillary materials for break-out sessions may contact the composer.

The audience included colleagues from both school systems in which I had worked. They understood the personal subtext of my comments. For those in Loudoun schools and the local chapter of PDK, the opera also culminated a series of articles and meetings on the topic of “connections and communication” in schools, and the improvement of a local teacher-training course, entitled “Artistry,” which presented teaching as an artistic practice and discipline. Teachers and administrators recognized references to these topics.

The work is conceived as a disputation, or *flyting*, like *The Book of Job*, which argues that education is central to the human endeavor to “get wisdom, get insight,” and comprehends that the human condition and human relationships trump artifices of nationality, creed, specialty, and every other subdivision. Humans come from one source. We have a choice about how to think about this source. We have one great, joyful endeavor—an endeavor that requires all of us, for we are all part of the same “procession,” as Walt Whitman observed.

None of this would have occurred to the composer had he not known Susan Irene Rose (1945-2008).

References

Of the many references upon which the opera was based, these were informally listed in the original program and libretto:

“Faith assures us”	<i>The Book of Hebrews</i>
“Immer Quellen Lesen”	Karl Lehrs
“For Modern Enterprise”	Alfred Chandler, <i>The Managerial Revolution</i> (<i>Science v 248, 1667</i>)
“a lion that devours”	<i>I Peter 4</i> (See added note on lions, below.)
“on our backs to ride”	After writing this, I discovered Emerson’s remark: “Things are in the saddle and ride mankind.”
“No good deed”	Anon. Many claim credit. A likely source is Gore Vidal, cited in the <i>Friar’s Club Joke Book</i> .
“Both Augustine . . .”	St. Augustine
“A man who is a merchant . . .”	St. Jerome
“Without money, power . . .”	Eric Hoffer, <i>Truth Imagined</i>
“Stories that are . . .”	Sallust, and others, on myth. For example, T. Mann, or Gilbert Highet’s preface to Bulfinch’s <i>Mythology</i> , “ <i>The myths are permanent. They deal with . . . the problems which do not change, because men and women do not change.</i> ”
“Within be fed . . .”	Shakespeare, <i>Sonnet 146</i>
“Our myths must fit out time”	Gary Snyder

“What is of all things . . .”	Lao tsu
“When I consider everything . . .”	Shakespeare, <i>Sonnet 15</i>
“Hear O People”	<i>The Book of Daniel</i>
“In thee, O Lord”	<i>Psalm 31</i>
<i>‘Lions buying, lions selling’</i>	The buyers & collectors in the auction crave, like gamblers, a great return from a rare event—the chance that a humble property may be a treasure. As Vinny bets on his own ploy to gain market share, to multiply his reward out of proportion to his efforts, so do hedge investors, tulip speculators, and so do any higher level consumers, human or leonine, thrive atop a food pyramid.
“Find a middle way.”	Aristotle, Deming, Dalai Lama, Edwards Deming & others, speak of <i>sophrosyne</i> , and cooperation being to everyone’s benefit, with each taking no more than he makes, and making work joyful. Of course, the opposing view is found in Whyte’s <i>Organization Man</i> , but that’s a subject for another <i>flyting</i> .
“Make a joyful noise”	<i>Psalm 100</i>
“Whom have I”	<i>Psalm 73</i>
“The Gift Outright”	Robert Frost, <i>The Gift Outright</i>
“Despite your wishes”	<i>Pirke Avot</i>
“The sacred grass”	The <i>liao</i> or “parent grass” (Huston Smith, <i>The Religions of Man</i>)
“like breath on a mirror”	Rilke, <i>Duino Elegies</i>
“part of the procession”	Whitman, <i>Leaves of Grass</i>
“the full exercise. . .”	Aristotle’s definition of happiness

Note: The *Shema* If the opera is performed before an Orthodox group, this will be offensive, and should be omitted. An alternative to this piece was written but never performed with this opera. It is a setting of Psalm 1, *Blessed is the Man*. It was performed several times as a solo, notably for the funeral of Truman E. Bruch.

You are the gift

Miriam Braun, the teacher, argues that education should move us to become solution-finders, visionaries, dreamers, and builders of good faith and community. Dr. Karen Armstrong, who, based on her deep study of religion, now advances her Charter for Compassion, would perfectly understand Dr. Braun. The opera was written before I had read any of Dr. Armstrong’s books; so I was surprised to discover how much she

resembled Miriam. (See CharterforCompassion@mail6.subscribermail.com) Consumption and production are not enough. Like any great teacher or artist, she is dissatisfied with the reduction of artistry to the status of a service for a fee. She would also be dissatisfied with any performance of this work which did not conclude with a didactic message about what the work *means*. So here goes.

As Lewis Hyde writes in *The Gift* (1979), “a work of art is a gift, not a commodity. Or, to state the modern case with more precision, that works of art exist simultaneously in two “economies,” a market economy and a gift economy. Only one of these is essential, however: a work of art can survive without the market, but “where there is no gift there is no art.” (p.xi). And where there is no gift, there is no education. A school succeeds to the extent that its instruction, organization, and human relationships support each other. For schools to work, they must be run by people who both respond appropriately to others and have a sense of urgency about giving their heritage to young people.

The heritage—the “gift”—is rich and varied. It is not only a canon of knowledge and procedures; it is also a gift of attitudes, approaches, perspectives, and contexts. It is the best of what we want to remember, use, and celebrate. It is the basis for all future intellectual growth and inquiry. It is too great and diverse a gift to be delivered by one person or to be understood in only one way. Because “all are part of the procession,” as Whitman wrote, we must be able to moderate our appetites and find balance in our relationships. We must find “middle ways.”

No one individual can transmit the whole gift of heritage. What it takes to transmit this heritage is a school system and a community. The system and the community support and defend the efforts of the givers and the special strengths of the students. Like the heritage, the strengths of students are rich and varied. Good teaching does not trample dreams or turn the heritage into a burden—or a bargain. Good teaching makes unique, personal connections between individual students and the gifts that evoke their strengths. A community must continually refine its own myth, and metaphors, and shared language to explain to itself and others what its education is doing, instead of borrowing models second-hand from business or some other endeavor.

Transmission of heritage is not about this year’s model. It is about modeling yourself on others. It is not about products and customers. It is about futures and responsibilities. It is not about bottom lines—because its line is the horizon. The values it conveys are survival values. The message that heritage conveys is that true communication builds relationships. In the word “communicate” one finds the “commons” of all those fundamental connections that link thought to thought, heart to heart, hand to hand—and thereby create community. And the givers of heritage, by their attitudes and by the urgency of their efforts, convey to their students a deeper message, a message that explains artistry, teaching, and all great, soulful giving—

YOU ARE THE GIFT

You are the gift—the gift of survivors. The gift outright. The gift of land, of family, of culture. The gift is as diverse as the human family—all trades, and manners of invention, and ways of knowing. The gift is the word—all languages—the languages of music, science, mathematics, and philosophy. The gift is faith—faith in meaning, pattern, structure, relationship—faith in the reliability of reality, trust in rationality, and belief in the inevitable consequences of actions. Despite your wishes, you are the gift, the gift of survivors—the sacred grass of your ancestors, the parent-grass. What is the response to such a gift?

There is no payback, no recompense, no adequacy or sufficiency for the price paid by survivors. There is no way to replace the lives, dreams, conceptions, creations, relationships of those who did not survive—heroes and nameless, wise and innocent, brave and cowardly. There is no payback. Revenge is hollow, retribution is empty, remembrance finally dies back like grass at first frost. Words often repeated become like dust in the mouth. There is no retrieving those who are gone, no holding, no clinging touch to bring them back—no returning. How does one repay them—those who fade into leaves, who disappeared like dew, like breath on a mirror?

One learns what has been given. One attends.

To become aware of what is given is a lifework. What is given is human and inhuman, constructed and chaotic, beautiful and terrible, complete and yearning for completion. What is given is reality. There is no argument with reality. There is only alignment, atonement, unity, acceptance of consequences. There is only reality and attention to reality. The rest is illusion. What is given is reality—terrifying and tender, safe and uncertain, perfect and broken, plain as an invoice and elusive as dreams about the dead. To attend to the extent and quality of reality is a lifework, never completed. To accomplish even a portion of this work, what is needed?

All tools and perceptual channels are needed.

Both sound judgment and imagination are needed. The full range of human diversity is needed. The full range of understanding and

conception is needed, as are the expertise that comes from specialization and the breadth that comes from openness to experience. All are part of the procession. All are needed.

You are the gift, the gift of survivors. Now you, too, survive. What can be the response to such a gift?

To give as a survivor. To respond with music, and invention, and the full range of human achievement. Not for entertainment, not to pass time, not to fill the hours and days and schedules with events—but to be responsive, responsible, human beings—human beings aligned with reality—blades of grass that confer grace by the colors of their multitude, by the energy they capture and transform, by the music of the wind that makes them instruments. Give with the full exercise of your powers along the lines of excellence. You are the gift.

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