



# Let's Talk!

a short chamber opera  
for soprano & piano  
music by William Vollinger  
libretto by William Vollinger & Liana Valente



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# **“Let’s Talk!”**

## **INTRODUCTION**

**“Let’s Talk!” is a short (15 minute) chamber opera for soprano and piano, designed to open a vocal recital or concert. The singer arrives late at her own recital, and in so doing develops a rapport with her audience, explaining both the challenges and opportunities facing an opera singer advancing her career. It’s funny, but also touching.**

In 2010 soprano Liana Valente commissioned me to compose a short chamber opera to open her recitals. Her initial idea was to have the singer arrive late to her own recital, and hopefully fool the audience into believing this was really the case. So the accompanist stalls for time until the soprano shows up, playing some particularly ludicrous music. The singer then arrives, both apologizing and offering an explanation (complete with local references that the singer may insert), with a mixture of speaking and singing. Dr. Valente chose four representative arias from the operatic and vocal literature to be part of the opera. I arranged and adapted these excerpts, creating new words to go with the music, that simultaneously are her own commentary on them. The singer then sings a simple, at first unaccompanied aria. In it she explains that her desire to become a star is now tempered with the realization that the sky is full of billions of stars, and that therefore we are all “stars”. Her goal now is more to give other people enjoyment by sharing her talents with them, thus giving her a true sense of identity and importance. This is a valuable message to share with anyone, even when it’s with one’s self.

*--William Vollinger*

duration: ca. 15 minutes

commissioned by and dedicated to LIANA VALENTE. May this piece be a blessing for her and all who hear this piece.

## "Let's Talk!"

text by William Vollinger & Liana Valente

music by William Vollinger ©2010 (ASCAP)  
with added materials thoughtfully provided by J.S. Bach, William H. Hills,  
Eumphemia Allen, Gioachino Rossini, Giacomo Puccini and Franz Schubert

(At the start of the concert, the house manager welcomes the audience, maybe makes a cell phone announcement then exits. The accompanist sits down at the piano and waits. After an awkward pause the house manager returns, looks concerned, then talks into the accompanist's ear, who then looks around the audience in response. The house manager can be clearly heard telling the accompanist "Just play something for now." The accompanist shrugs, tries to think of something, fumbles through the pages of the score, maybe explaining to the audience, then starts to play J.S. Bach's C Major Prelude in C Minor.)

♩ = 140

*p* *expressively*

8

14

20

(Accompanist keeps playing but looks around hall.) (end abruptly)

26

*ad lib*

(Perhaps manager says something else, Accompanist thumbs through music again, and starts in on Scriabin in the Tavern in the Town.)

33 ♩ = 180

ff

Musical score for measures 33-36. The piece is in 3/4 time with a tempo of 180. It begins with a forte (ff) dynamic. The right hand plays chords and the left hand plays a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#).

glis.

Musical score for measures 37-39. Measure 37 features a glissando in the right hand. The key signature changes to one flat (Bb) in measure 38.

Musical score for measures 40-43. The right hand plays chords and the left hand plays a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The key signature remains one flat (Bb).

Musical score for measures 44-47. The right hand features triplets of eighth notes. The key signature remains one flat (Bb).

8va

Musical score for measures 48-50. Measure 48 includes an 8va (octave) marking. The right hand has a melodic line with grace notes, and the left hand has a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The key signature remains one flat (Bb).

f

(looks around)

Musical score for measures 51-54. Measure 51 starts with a forte (f) dynamic. The right hand has a melodic line, and the left hand has a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The key signature remains one flat (Bb). The piece ends with a fermata in measure 54.

55 *mf* (looks around)

60 (looks around) (shrugs shoulders) *p* *pp* *mf* *8va*

(Accompanist stops playing and apologizes to audience, produces an obvious copy of a level one piano book, puts it on stand, and spitefully keeps repeating **Chopsticks Boogie Woogie** over and over, even after the Singer finally arrives.)

69 *molto mf*

77 *ad nauseum*

(Finally the Singer hurriedly enters from the back of the audience, dressed in concert attire, but wearing sneakers and carrying an overnight bag. As she walks through the audience she says:)

Oh I'm so sorry I'm late. I'm so terribly sorry everyone. It's just you know every conceivable thing went wrong and I just don't know what to say except I'm so sorry I'm late and...

(Accompanist is unaware of the Singer's arrival and continues repeating "Chopsticks Boogie Woogie" until the Singer goes up on stage and touches the accompanist's shoulder, startling the accompanist who stops playing. The Singer continues talking:)

You might be interested to know that "Chopsticks", of which you've just heard a clever arrangement, isn't actually Chinese in origin but French I think and refers to chopping wood with an ax in each hand. Well anyway, as I started to say, I'm so sorry I'm late. Please let me explain. Perhaps the same thing has happened to you, although probably most of you don't do vocal recitals. Well anyway, I'm afraid I'm not familiar with \_\_\_\_\_ and I was simply exhausted from my trip here and

[NAME OF TOWN]

just thought I'd lay down for five minutes on my \_\_\_\_\_ queen size bed and dozed

[NAME OF HOTEL]

off and I woke up two hours later. I was so mortified! So I called a taxi, but the driver wasn't familiar with \_\_\_\_\_ either and couldn't find \_\_\_\_\_

[NAME OF TOWN]

[NAME OF HOTEL]

and I was waiting outside and my feet were killing me and look... I forgot to change my shoes. People say I'm very organized.

(The Singer vocalizes, then says:) \_\_\_\_\_, could you give me a middle C please?

[ACCOMPANIST'S FIRST NAME]

(She sings the following section while she takes a pair of dress shoes from her bag, takes her sneakers off, puts the dress shoes on and puts the sneakers into the bag.)



120 *(holding up hand to halt)* *spoken (distasteful)* *(gracious again)*

Yes that's the one, and I'm so sorry I'm late.

*(in response)*

125 *(semi-operatic)* *(pauses for audience response)* *(goes on regardless)* *(signals accompanist for intro)*

Do you all forgive me? Going on...

129  $\text{♩} = 92$

*glis.* *f* *tr* *molto rubato*

*("Una voce poco fa")* *("Quando men vo")*

133 *mf* *spoken as notated but as natural as possible*

*("Gretchen am Spinnrade")* I'll be-gin now with a com-bi-na-tion ex-pla-na-tion

*mp*

136

de - mon - tra - tion of some of my fav' - rite re - per - toire. First

138

two lit - tle snip - pets from two a - ri - as from Ros - si - ni's de - light - ful "Bar - ber of Se - ville".

*f* ("Largo al factorum")

141

Not that one. When I be - gan - to - sing this a - ri - a and

*mp* ("Una voce poco fa")  
sung *mp* patter with any needed rubato

*p*

144

learn the role of Ro - si - na, it was ve - ry much the fa - shion that so - pra - nos who could sing co - lo - ra -



146

tu - ra\_ sing Ro-si-na's role But it's writ-ten by Ros-si-ni for a ly-ric mez-zo so di-rec-tors changed their

149

minds a-gain. I'll on - ly sing this a - ri-a with

*f*

152

or - ches-tras un - til di - rec - tors change their mind and then start

155

u-sing so - pra-nos a - gain. But there's a-no-ther role:

*rit.* *p* spoken

*rit.* *p*

160

*sung mf* ("Il vecchieto cerca moglie")

It has al-ways been a plea-sure to per-form the role of Ber-tà. She's the ser-vant who keeps

166

eve-ry-thing so ti-dy and so neat. it's a shame and it's a pi-ty no one wants her for a

172

wife. But that's the way it 'll go when you know there's a call on your life. Art can

178

*aside*

im-i-tate your liv-ing when you make your art your liv-ing. When I sang this in Mi-a-mi I'd pick

184

up a prop or cane, sword or cos-tume that the ac-tor left on stage, I'd do the

189

same as poor Ber-ta who no-bo-dy mar-ried but then the di-rec-tor would put me on

194

stage just to ti-dy the stage and that led to more stage time for me

199

mi mi mi mi mi mi mi mi mi mi mi mi mi mi mi mi ME!

203

*mf* non-operatic & plain

You bet - ter be - lieve I made the most of it.

206

*mf* spoken

$\text{♩} = 72$

Ly-ri-cis-m in it's pur-ist form can be heard in eve-ry op'-ra by Puc-

209

*quasi rit.*

ci - ni, in - clu - ding this fa - mil - iar fab - u - lous flir - ta - tious a - ri - a from "La Bo - heme".

212

*sung p* ("Quando men vo")

*quasi rit.*

"Qua - do men vo" is such a love - ly

216 *a tempo* *quasi rit.* *a tempo*

love-ly thing, a thing I real-ly love to sing. Let me tell you

220 *appena allarg.*

I real - ly don't want to grouse but bud - get cuts cost me Mu -

224 *a tempo*

set-tas I was pro-mised twice by some op'-ra house.

228 *mf* *spoken* 3 3 3

The fol-low-ing is not ac-tual-ly an a-ri-a, but a song by Schu-ber't. How-e-ver it's

231

dark dra-ma-tic in-ten-si-ty makes it de-fin-ite-ly o-per-a-tic in char-act-er.

*sempre legato*

(8<sup>th</sup>)

234

*sung p* ("Gretchen am Spinnrade")

Mei-ne - Ruh ist hin, mein Herz ist

*p*

238

schwer; ich fin - de, ich fin - de sie nim - mer und

242

nim - mer mehr. How I

246

wish \_\_\_\_\_ this was staged, then I'd use \_\_\_\_\_ a real wheel. But the

250

pur - ists might not like it ve-ry much I'm a - fraid. This

254

world \_\_\_\_\_ needs some peace. \_\_\_\_\_ This world \_\_\_\_\_ needs a song. \_\_\_\_\_ This

258

world \_\_\_\_\_ keep on spin - ning, \_\_\_\_\_ our minds \_\_\_\_\_ spin a -

261

long, till sad-ness it - self be - comes glad ness. Such glad - ness is mad - ness. Stop

264

spin-ning your sad-ness. Poor Gret-chen I love but I know she's wrong! A

268

*mf*  
song is a beautiful thing. But a song can also be a dangerous thing simply because it's beautiful,

271

because it can make a bad thing sound good. I'm so sorry I was late. You know like ma-ny mu - si-cians,

276


I did-n't chose mu - sic, mu - sic\_\_\_ chose me. It went from just

281

be - ing a - no-ther vo - ca - tion to a cal - ling.




286 *mp* 3  
  
 I wan-ted to learn eve - ry - thing I could

291 *cresc.* *mp*  
  
 and do eve - ry - thing I could. I was grow - ing up.

297 3  
  
 I've sung op'-ras and songs, in - clu - ding new works by e - mer - ging com -


302 3  
  
 po-sers like this one. I've al - so worked with non - fit or-gan-i -


308 3 *cresc.*  
  
 za - tions be - cause the most pro - fi - ta - ble things that you do in life may

312 *mp*  
  
 not mean the most pro - fit. It's just do - ing the things that you're

317 *f*  
  
 good at and learn - ing how to do them bet - ter. Grow - ing up al - so means

322 *mp*  
  
 grow - ing out of things. When I star - ted it was of - ten a - bout me.

328 *ff* *rubato*  
  
 I wan - ted to be a star star star

332 *mp* spoken  
  
 star star, just like [NAME OF FAMOUS SINGER].

16 (moves to front of stage, maybe sits down)

335 Slightly slower ♩ = 112

*mp* sung even sweeter and simpler

I did - n't real - ize how ma - ny stars were

*ad lib*

*p*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 335 to 340. The vocal line starts with a repeat sign and a fermata. The lyrics are "I did - n't real - ize how ma - ny stars were". The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note bass line and chords in the right hand. A dynamic marking of *p* is present. The instruction *ad lib* is written above the piano staff.

341

up in the sky then. And there are bil-lions, bil-lions of stars there

*gva*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 341 to 346. The vocal line has a fermata over the first measure and then continues with the lyrics "up in the sky then. And there are bil-lions, bil-lions of stars there". There are triplet markings over the notes "lions," and "lions". The piano accompaniment includes a *gva* (glissando) in the right hand starting at measure 343. Dynamics include *mp* and *p*.

347

up in the sky up in the sky. But not too ma - ny,

*f* *mp* *p*

*gva*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 347 to 352. The vocal line has a fermata over the first measure and then continues with the lyrics "up in the sky up in the sky. But not too ma - ny,". Dynamics include *f*, *mp*, and *p*. The piano accompaniment features triplet markings in the right hand and a *gva* in the left hand.

353

just e - nough. That makes us ALL stars.

*cresc.*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 353 to 358. The vocal line has a fermata over the first measure and then continues with the lyrics "just e - nough. That makes us ALL stars.". A *cresc.* (crescendo) marking is present above the piano staff. The piano accompaniment continues with a steady bass line and chords.

358

*mf*

*mp*

8<sup>va</sup>-----

You and me, that's who I'm sing-ing for, that's what I'm sing-ing for.

This system contains the musical notation for measures 358 through 361. It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The piano part consists of a steady bass line in the left hand and chords in the right hand. The vocal line has lyrics: "You and me, that's who I'm sing-ing for, that's what I'm sing-ing for." Dynamic markings *mf* and *mp* are present. An 8va marking is shown above the vocal staff.

362

8<sup>va</sup>-----

Now when I sing it's more and more for you and your en-joy-ment.

This system contains the musical notation for measures 362 through 364. The piano accompaniment continues with a consistent bass line and chords. The vocal line has lyrics: "Now when I sing it's more and more for you and your en-joy-ment." An 8va marking is shown above the vocal staff. A triplet of eighth notes is marked with a '3' in the piano part.

365

And we real-ly need things to en-joy. That makes me hap-py. I hope you en-

This system contains the musical notation for measures 365 through 369. The piano accompaniment continues with a consistent bass line and chords. The vocal line has lyrics: "And we real-ly need things to en-joy. That makes me hap-py. I hope you en-".

370

*spoken*

3

joy the rest of this con-cert, and af-ter I'm through sing-ing, let's talk.

8<sup>va</sup>-----

This system contains the musical notation for measures 370 through 373. The piano accompaniment continues with a consistent bass line and chords. The vocal line has lyrics: "joy the rest of this con-cert, and af-ter I'm through sing-ing, let's talk." A triplet of eighth notes is marked with a '3' above the vocal staff. An 8va marking is shown above the vocal staff.