



A LIFE IN SONG

A play with music in two acts

"soundtrack of a mind"

**Written by Stephen Stahl
for
Katt D'Ambrosio**

A LIFE IN SONG

This one women show is written for the production value of multi media. This play with music can be produced with or without the use of this theatricality. The playwright's suggestion is, "the experience of multi media delivers a stronger emotional impact and enlarges the productions scope."

Setting- Present day. The stage is dark. Upstage there are three split screens. One center, one angled up stage left, the other angled up stage right. The screens enclose the playing area surrounding the actress.

Preset dims / house goes to black.

Out of darkness the screens vibrantly come to life with the richness of a blue sky with quickly moving white billowing clouds.

Sixteen pulsating bars played with energy and resonant in sound begin. An orchestrated version of 'I'M FLYING' plays.

The screens and stage lights quickly fade to black. A tight white light center stage appears. The actress is found within its light. She is simply dressed in black slacks and a starched white shirt, opened at the neck with the collar adjusted to stand up. *I'M FLYING* fades as the musical introduction to *NEVER NEVER LAND* begins.

She sings.

KATT

I know a place where dreams are born,
And time is never planned.
It's not on any chart,
You must find it with your heart.

It might be miles beyond the moon
Or right there where you stand,
Just keep an open mind,
And then suddenly you'll find
Never Never Land.

And that's my home where dreams are born,
And time is never planned.
Just think of lovely things.
And your heart will fly on wings, Forever in Never Never Land

(Music underscores as actress speaks.)

Never Land for me lives in music. It became my friend, my protector. Music allowed me to feel a part of, to be loved, understood and helped me to understand. The notes each placed where they should be, making the composition dependable, made me feel safe. Within the songs susceptibility I became enveloped with emotion... A release... Through a song's melody I always felt I had the freedom to express myself without judgment or ridicule. Music... (Beat)... a place in my heart I would fly away to, for it became my home where my dreams were born, and time was never planned. For me forever in the music of Never Never Land.

(As the actress sings the screens once again light up with sky.)

You'll have a treasure if you stay there,

More precious far then gold,
For once you found your way there,
You can never, never grow old.

And that's my home where dreams are born,
And time is never planned.
Just think of lovely things.
And your heart will fly on wings,
Forever in Never Never Land.

(Projections fade as an aria from Madame Butterfly is heard.)

This show is not so much about me. It's really about you, the music and me. It's a journey of discovery and the adventure of this amazing *thing* called life. It's the sound track of *my* mind. I relate to life through song..(Fast beat).. You might to. ... (She suddenly stops and hears the background music. She becomes comically upset.)

I wish that bitch would commit suicide, get it over with already (Beat) stay dead! (She laughs at herself.) No, no it's not the opera, that opus is stunning, glorious and magnificent!... it's the memories.. It's all I *ever* heard in my home, classical music and opera. One more time hearing Butterfly I felt I would go nuts. (Music fades.) I kind of wanted to be like the other kids, you know Rock n' Roll, Motown. See my mom was an opera singer. Always readying herself for the lead role in *Madame Butterfly* or *Mimi* the prima donna in *La Traviata*. (As she speaks slides of the great leading ladies of opera appear on the screens.) She was always rehearsing one of the great diva roles. Thinking her next break could be in *La Bohemia*, *Sour Angelica*, *Pagliacci*, *Rigoletto* or singing *Der Holle Rache* from *Mozart's Magic Flute*, *The Jewel Song* from *Faust* and completely emerging herself

into each and every character...She was so many different women. I would come home from school never knowing who the hell I would find in the kitchen. One day I found my mother dragging herself across the living room floor, I panicked! I was sure she was dying or trying to recover from a stroke or some kind of physical assault. But no, she was practicing the part where Madame Butterfly stabs herself and is about to become a corpse. She was crawling painfully and dramatically along the living carpet. I really thought she was going to die! Then grandly standing up she told me she was just working out the hara-kiri scene. Was I pissed!... Well I'm sure we all have mom stories. Is there anyone out there that does not come from some kind of dysfunctional home?... Even if you are that healthy, you're welcomed to take this trip with me. Come, fly along...

(Screens once again come to life as the sky moves quickly by.)

The smells, sights and sounds of my neighborhood felt like a pause in music. When silent it was still filled with exuberant poignancy. ...Listen!

(Screens run slides and video of a close knit Italian neighborhood. The streets, it's families, food markets, Sunday's at church and at leisure, street fairs etc.)

She sings *LUNA MEZZO MARE/VOLARE*

*U' rassolu manu teni.
Si ci pigghia la fantasia
Mi rasulia la figghia mia.*

*Volare, oh oh oh oh oh
E contare, oh oh oh oh
No wonder my happy heart sings
Your love has given me wings
Penso che un sogno cosi non ritorni mai piu
Mi dipingevo le mani e la faccia di blu
Poi d'improvviso le mani e la faccia di blu
Poi d'improvviso venison dal; vento rapito
E incominciavpo a volare nel cielo infinito*

*Si ci dung falignami
Iddu va, iddu veni
'u chintzy manu teni
Si ci pigghia fantasia
Mi chiannuzulia la figghia mia.*

*Let's fly way up in the clouds
Away from the madding crowds
We can sing in the glow of a star that I know
Where lovers enjoy peace of mind
Let us leave the confusion and all the disillusion behind
Just like bird of a feather, a rainbow together we'll find*

*Volare, oh oh
E contare, oh oh oh oh
No wonder my happy heart sings
Life has given it wings
Penso che un sogno cosi non ritorni mai piu
Mi dipingevo le mani e la faccia di blu
Pol d'improvviso venio dal vento rapito
E incomincivavo a volare nel cielo infinito*

Guess you figured I'm Italian. In my hood the spaghetti sauce that was cooked on Sunday was called gravy. Dare not call it anything else. I felt safe and secure in my

little 10 block world. Whether winter or summer, the Italians of my neighborhood never locked their doors. They lived more on the street than in their homes. In summer the mothers with children sat and waited on the outside steps 'till the last minute, waiting for the return of their paterfamilias. The sounds of English and Italian rang in the streets. The voices, a reassuring song to my ear. The narrow back alley ways looked like a continual holiday. The days wash hanging on clothes lines with their bright colors unfolded and fluttering in the wind like rainbow colored flags. The cry of the occasional vender and the canzonetta sung by the idle passerby, the sound of the mandolin and guitar coming from the corner barber shop. Who would swear he was a cousin of Caruso or a nephew of Verdi. Each street with its own patron saint. The priests of the neighborhood thundered and cried. And oh the men! Especially the Neapolitans, tall and blue eyed, with coal-black mustaches and sonorous voices. They are easily distinguished from the other Italians. There is something easy about them, something about the blue sea in their soul. The smells of fresh bread, garlicky pasta and the sweet sounds of "la dolce vida." (she sings *THAT'S AMORE*)

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What wasn't pleasant was those old women from the old country, dressed in black never minding their business. Nagging my mother day in day out "You should be pregnant by now, what are you waiting for? There's no Hollywood studio knocking on your door. You owe it to your husband. Give him a -nice a- nice dark haired boy." Well here I am. And glad of it! My life became a world of entertainment, at least in my mind... I damn well loved it!!!!

(Lights change as the screens display brilliant ever changing wheels of color.)

The real world was too dark a place for me so I went where it was brightest. The Great White Way. There it was always lit in vivid, brilliant and dazzling colors! I *flew* into a *land* of my own. Into the *fantasy* world of show business and its celebrities. Here I felt safe and accepted. Especially by my *new* mom, Judy Garland. (Beat.) I know you're thinking I'm crazy. It's okay. After my grandmother died Garland saved my young impressionable life. I looked at Judy not as a weak woman but strong. Always enthusiastic, ready to say *yes!* (Beat.) Alright, maybe there were a few times in her life she should have said no but, she was determined to do it *her* way. I respected that. I wanted that for myself... Like everybody else I saw the Wizard of Oz but, it was when I was a kid watching her black and white television show that her strength and intensity of expression was released into my soul with full potency. Soon after the assassination of President John F Kennedy, Judy was indomitable about commemorating his death. Not only were they good friends but JFK used to call Judy late at night and ask her to sing OVER THE RAINBOW to him so he could fall asleep...The CBS executives wanted nothing to do with her giving Kennedy a tribute.. Flatly they told her no, not under any circumstances "besides, no one will remember Kennedy in a month." Angry and deeply hurt there was no way in hell anything or anybody would stop her. Not even CBS! Not clearing it with the producers and right before the end of the show Garland gave an unexpected introduction to a song and then said on live-TV-"This is for you Jack".

(Black and white footage of Kennedy, his term in office, his family, the hope of the early 60's, finishing with his death play on the screens)