

LOVE AND WAR

A theatrical production based upon
the game of chess and medieval war

Love and War is a musical about a war between two kingdoms, in medieval days. Its characters and story line were inspired by the game of chess, which in turn is based on people who lived in old times; however, people will not need to know how to play chess, to understand and enjoy the show. This treatment is written for a movie, for optimal flexibility, but it can be adapted for stage.

The author (so far) is an engineer and patent attorney, who does NOT claim or pretend to be professionally skilled in musical theater; instead, he hopes to use this introduction to begin making contact with people and organizations having those skills, to create what hopefully will become an terrific project with high artistic and commercial potential. So, please do not share this document with anyone else, without advance approval. It is still in an early formative stage, and needs more work, and as the adage says, "*You only get one chance to make a first impression.*" So, if you have received this, please regard it as a gesture of trust, and as an invitation to become involved in a team that may be able to create something worthwhile.

All songs listed below have already been written, and demo recordings are available, which hopefully will be enough to get people interested. I'm not happy with several of the vocal tracks, but the songs are in multi-track computer files, which can allow any vocals to be replaced; so, if anyone reading this knows of someone with a voice, for some particular part, which would be good enough to genuinely impress people at a major studio, please get in touch with me, via the contact info above.

The opening song, *Love and War*, is a duet between a farmer and his wife, asking the classic question of why a man should join an army, knowing he could be maimed or killed. As the song begins, a young boy and girl, in peasant clothes and playing in a field, hear something in the distance. They run to a nearby crest, and see a band of soldiers, marching toward their village. They turn and run to their village, and begin telling the villagers that people are coming. Soon everyone is standing on both sides of the road, as soldiers wearing red tunics march by. As a blur of legs and lower bodies marches past in

the foreground, the camera focuses on the faces of three different couples, in sequence. The first pair are the little boy and girl, who don't understand what is going on; the second pair is a teenage boy and girl; the third pair is an older couple, who lost a son in the prior war. Each of those six people is represented by a single line, in the interlude in that song. The farmer and his wife then finish their lyrics, and the song ends as the soldiers march away, into the distance, to the sound of military drums.

As the story opens, a Knight enters a tavern at mid-day, with no one else around. He quietly tells the owner that his squire was injured, and he is looking for any especially talented young men, as possible replacements. The barkeep replies that the last time he heard that, it was a pretext, and they were looking for the best men, for special training, before a second sweep would take the remaining young men into the army. The Knight sidesteps, and offers to buy a plate of food for himself, and one for the tavern keeper. As they talk, the owner tells him about a young man being raised in a nearby abbey, because his mother couldn't afford to raise him, after her husband was killed in the last war. The young man had always thought he would become a monk, but now he has fallen in love with a young woman from the village, and is agonizing over what he should do.

The scene changes to the abbey, after darkness. The Knight asks the abbot to speak to the young man, and must resort to mild threats to get his way. After talking to the young man, he goes to see the young woman, and her parents. A series of steps follows, leading to a secret marriage between the young man and the young woman, inside a locked room, while the Knight stands guard, outside. He does not want to know what happened, inside that room. As will be explained by the Knight to the woman and her parents, that tactic is used fairly often, by young people being sent to the royal court, because it directly follows and abides by the teachings of the Bible. In the Book of Genesis, because his wife Sarah was truly beautiful, Abraham knew he would be killed, by a covetous ruler, when they had to move to a new city, if the ruler knew Sarah was Abraham's wife. So, they pretended she was his sister, as a pretext that allowed him to sleep in the same room as her, and act as a gatekeeper, who could and would protect her, if any men were interested in her.

If time is available, another song or two can be inserted here, as the Knight takes the young couple to spend some time in a secret village, with a wise man and his helpers, who teach young people from small villages how to survive in a royal court. In addition to teaching them how to read, use weapons, survive in a forest, and a dozen other skills they may need, he and his assistants teach the young people how to analyze, plan ahead,

and recognize patterns and behaviors, and how to play the games that are played in the royal court – including chess. In a movie trilogy, or TV series, the entire first movie, or season, can be devoted to what the young people learn in that village; and, at the end, they leave it, and go toward the castle, with both hope and dread.

When the Knight re-appears at the village again, he brings a new set of young people to the village, and he takes the two “main pawns” with him, to take them (and several others) on to the castle. When they reach a village, they pass a minstrel entertaining a crowd. The minstrel sings *A Mission For The King*, the story of a young man (a pawn) who volunteers to become a soldier, dreaming of glory. It ends when the pawn realizes he has fallen into a trap on the battlefield, and will soon be killed.

After the minstrel’s song, the Knight enters a tavern, and begins bargaining with the bartender, to pay for a meal, that evening, for everyone from that village, if they will show up at a certain time, and hear him out. That evening, as dusk is falling, he and the young people burst into the front door, and the Knight loudly proclaims, “Barkeep! A round of ale, for everyone here, in behalf of the King!” The crowd cheers, but instead of simply serving the drinks, the Knight begins talking to everyone there, pointing out that none of the children will get ale, and then shifting into questions about who does get to share a glass with them – with any wife or mother who has lost someone she loved, or who supported any of the wounded, widows, or orphans from any prior war, going to the front of the line; then, every man who has served his kingdom, or his village, faithfully and honestly. Finally, he asks which boys and teenagers, in the tavern, should also get to join in, but instead of choosing by age and height, he chooses based on their willingness to make a solemn and holy commitment, while everyone watches, to fight for the village, if the need ever arises. His words show a shrewd and skillful pitch; without sounding contrived or manipulative, he does his genuine best to get every person in that village committed to fight, if necessary, to defend their friends, families, their village, and their kingdom. Finally, he goes to the bar, and carries out a mock negotiation with the tavern-keeper, setting a first coin on the bar, and then another, and another, until finally, after keeping the crowd waiting and watching, the barkeeper loudly slaps the bar and yells, “DEAL!” leading to great cheer and celebration. The entire crowd sings *One, Two, Left* (which is how Knights move, in chess), as a comic tribute to the Knight. Later that evening, the young female pawn sings a sad and wistful song, bringing everyone to tears.

After the Knight and pawns reach the castle, the Knight is called into a secret council, called by the King. Rumors are spreading that an enemy (Red) Kingdom is

arming, and preparing for war. The Knights, Bishops, and Rooks arrive, and the King and Queen enter. In a movie, the roles of the different pieces/players can be advanced by dialogue, between the Knight and the pawns, while they travel. In a stage play, the stage can fall dark, and everyone in the background can freeze in place, shown in silhouette, while the King steps out front and faces the audience. He begins by talking directly to the audience, telling them they will not be able to understand why the people at the table are arguing so vehemently, without knowing who they are. On his side of the table are men he has known and trusted for years. They earned their power and positions in an earlier war, years ago, and they do not want to risk everything, in another war. On the opposing side of the table are younger men who arrived in his court with the Queen, who married him to help create an alliance, after his first wife died. Her men did not fight in that earlier war, and they do not have the power or prestige of his men, so they want a chance to advance higher, if another war comes. Their arrival in his court, and his decision to accept them into it, were negotiated, as part of the marriage arrangement; and, rather than merely tolerating the new arrivals, he welcomed them into his court, despite the friction they created, because he knew he needed new blood, new strength, and younger allies and supporters. When he reaches the end of that brief talk, he shifts into his song, *The Roles That We Must Play*.

The King's song ends with the line, "Let me introduce you to my Queen." He steps back into the darkness behind the council table, and the Queen steps into the spotlight, stage front, to take her turn helping the audience understand what is happening, partly through talk, and partly through her song, *Because He Needs Me*. Whoever is chosen for that role will need an extremely powerful voice, and during the song, she will need to shift from regal control, into powerful and passionate commitment. If she doesn't receive a standing ovation when it ends, that will be a disappointment.

After her song ends, the lights slowly rise again, on everyone at the council table, and the talk focuses on what is known about the Red Kingdom's strengths, weaknesses, and likely responses to actions by the White Kingdom. Each White player describes his counterpart on the Red side. For example, the two Red knights are very different; one is young, aggressive, and quick to take chances, and the other is older, and plans carefully. Though they are very different, each one is a skilled and dangerous opponent.

No one knows whether the Red Kingdom intends to attack, and an argument arises; some favor of preparing for war, and perhaps even attacking the Red Kingdom before it can attack first. Others favor negotiation, and are worried that any efforts to

prepare for war, will only increase the chances that it will happen.

The deadlock is broken when someone suggests that a small group should travel into the Red Kingdom, under the guise of merchants, to find out whether war is likely, and how actively the Red Kingdom is preparing for war. This plan is adopted; a Knight and a Bishop are chosen for the journey, and each is told to take along a squire/pawn.

Later, the main male pawn – he is clever, strong, and gifted – eagerly tells his (still secret) wife that he has been chosen for an important mission. She becomes deeply afraid, and doesn't want him to go. But he is determined, and the scene changes to her, walking alone, in a forest, crying, as it begins to rain. The song will be *I Can't Stop It, So I Guess I'll Let It Rain*, with an unseen singer. At one point, she finds the carcass of a dead rabbit, and throws it into the river, but then, she suddenly becomes desperate to watch it, for as far and as long as she can see it, as the river carries it away.

The next day, she talks with her husband again, and asks him if he would want her to be there, to say goodbye to him forever, if he was wounded, and dying, on a battlefield. He gives a thoughtful and caring answer, about what he would want, for himself, versus what he would want, for her. There are flashes of anger at what is happening, and tears, and finally, she tells him that she wants to go with him, and with the party of merchants. He tries to talk her out of it, but she has her reasons, and asks him to let her ask the Knight and the Bishop who will be going; and, she will do whatever they decide.

The Knight is always willing to include a beautiful woman, in any group he is in; and, she manages to persuade the Bishop that the group might be in less danger, if a woman is one of the members. So, she joins the group, and learns (with the others) how to pretend to be a traveling merchant.

The rest can be condensed, for brevity: the young man is killed; she is taken as a prisoner by a brutal Red Knight; war arrives; the young woman is questioned and threatened by the cold-hearted, calculating Red Queen, who wants to know everything about the White kingdom's castle; the Red Queen mounts a surprise attack into that castle at night, creating a defensive stand, and announcing that if she can be allowed to speak directly to the White King, they can settle and end the war, so that no one else will need to die; her gambit fails, and both queens are killed. As the King grieves, the Knight and Bishop persuade him to let them lead a small group into the enemy castle, on the night before a great battle that is approaching, while nearly everyone will be at the battlefield.

They breach the castle, and find the female pawn, who helps them kill the Red Knight; they move on, and find the (fat and disgusting) king, toying with several young ladies in his bedroom. He surrenders; they announce it to his courtyard, and leave with him as their hostage. On the way back, the female pawn unburdens herself to the Knight and Bishop, and tells them what the Red Queen did to her. She is told that both of the two queens were killed, and the King will want to see her again, to thank her for her courage, and for all she did to kill the Red Knight, and guide the group safely through the castle.

When she meets the King again, with no one else around, he offers her anything she wants – new homes for everyone in her family, in any places they choose; a chance to go to the secret village and work with young people, alongside the wizard and his helpers; freedom to marry anyone she chooses, from among the aristocrats; or, perhaps, she might even become his wife . . . which would make her the new Queen . . . which everyone would understand, because it's like the game of chess. She is deeply impressed by his thoughtfulness, kindness, and compassion, and . . .

TWO ADDITIONAL OPTIONS

Without wanting to clutter up or distract from the above, I want to mention that I have identified a dozen different pieces, by Tchaikovsky, that would make perfect soundtracks for a dozen different scenes in the story above.

If invited to do so, and if the timing seems right, I can provide a complete recording of those works, in the proposed sequence, with a short narrative before each one, describing the scene which that piece can accompany, support, and advance.

And, if anyone wants to, they could turn that collection into:

- (1) a ballet that can stand alongside Tchaikovsky's finest works;
- (2) a narrated concert, as a special event, for any symphony orchestra; and/or,
- (3) a July 4 outdoor concert, every year, in a park, as the perfect counter-balance to *The Nutcracker* every Christmas (and, with fireworks going off, as part of the finale for *The Overture of 1812*).

Finally, if a movie is made, it could be expanded to invite the best actors and directors from a dozen different countries, to use the same sets and costumes, while filming in their own language. That could become an extraordinary world art event, which could allow every actor and director to watch and study how a dozen world-class directors get the absolute best performances they can get, from people they know how to work with.

And, to be fair, there should be at least one version from the white viewpoint, and a different version from the black viewpoint . . . by black writers and songwriters.