

Sondheim 102 • Classes 6 & 7 • *Passion* (1994)
Music & Lyrics by Stephen Sondheim • Book by James Lapine

***Passion* (1994)—Scenes 1-8**

Stephen Sondheim, in *Look, I Made a Hat* (2011), writes: “The ‘songs’ in *Passion* lie somewhere between aria and recitative, with an occasional recognizable song form thrown in. The lyrics are best read as a versified short story. To this end, I’ve divided the show into its component scenes rather than individual song titles.”

However, the 1994 cast recording and the DVD of a full performance sometimes provide titles—usually the first line of the more song-like sections. The following selection provides these titles for clarity.—AT

Scene One

“Happiness”

CLARA:
I'm so happy,
I'm afraid I'll die
Here in your arms.

What would you do
If I died
Like this—
Right now,
Here in your arms?

That we ever should have met
Is a miracle—

GIORGIO: No, inevitable—

CLARA:
Then inevitable, yes,
But I confess
It was the look—

GIORGIO: The look?

CLARA:
The sadness in your eyes
That day
When we glanced

At each other in the park.
GIORGIO: We were both unhappy.

CLARA: Unhappiness can be seductive.

GIORGIO: You pitied me . . .

BOTH: How quickly pity leads to love.

CLARA:
All this happiness
Merely from a glance in the park.
So much happiness,
So much love . . .

GIORGIO: I thought I knew what love was.

CLARA:
I wish we might have met so much sooner.
I could have given you—

GIORGIO: I thought I knew what love was

CLARA: —My youth.

GIORGIO:
I thought I knew how much I could feel.

CLARA: All the time we lost . . .

GIORGIO: I didn't know what love was.

CLARA: I've never known what love was.

GIORGIO: But now—

CLARA: And now—

BOTH: —I do.
It's what I feel with you,
The happiness I feel with you.

CLARA: So much happiness—

GIORGIO: You are so beautiful . . .

CLARA:
—Happiness by chance
In a park.

GIORGIO:
Not by chance,

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By necessity—

CLARA: Surely, this is happiness—

GIORGIO:

By the sadness that we saw
In each other.

CLARA:

—No one else
Has ever felt before!

BOTH:

Just another love story,
That's what they would claim.
Another simple love story—
Aren't all of them the same?

CLARA:

No, but this is more,
We feel more!

BOTH:

This is so much more—!
Like every other love story.

Some say happiness
Comes and goes.
Then this happiness
Is a kind of happiness
No one really knows.

GIORGIO: I thought I knew what love was.

CLARA: I'd only heard what love was.

GIORGIO:

I thought it was no more than a name
For yearning.

CLARA:

I thought it was what kindness became.

GIORGIO: I'm learning—

CLARA:

I thought where there was love there was
shame.

GIORGIO: —That with you—

CLARA: But with you—

BOTH: —There's just happiness.

CLARA: Endless happiness . . .

[dialogue: Giorgio reveals he has been
transferred to a frontier outpost.]

GIORGIO:

God,
You are so beautiful.
I love to see you in the light,
Clear and beautiful,
Memorize—

CLARA: No . . .

GIORGIO:

—Every inch,
Every part of you,
To take with me.

CLARA: Giorgio . . .

GIORGIO:

Your feet so soft,
As if they'd never touched the ground—

CLARA: Don't . . .

GIORGIO:

—Your skin so white,
So pure,
So delicate.
Your smell so sweet,
Your breath so warm.
I will summon you in my mind,
I'm painting you indelibly on my mind.

CLARA: Let me go . . .

GIORGIO: We must fill every moment.

CLARA: All this happiness—

GIORGIO: No, don't.

CLARA: —Ended by a word in the dark.

GIORGIO: Oh, my love, oh my darling . . .

CLARA: So much happiness—

GIORGIO: No, please, you mustn't . . .

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CLARA: —Wasn't meant to last.

GIORGIO:
I am here,
I am with you,
I am yours.

CLARA: I never knew what love was.

GIORGIO:
Your skin,
Your silken hair . . .

CLARA: I always thought I didn't deserve it.

GIORGIO:
Your breasts,
Your lips . . .

CLARA: I didn't know what love was.

GIORGIO:
I want you every minute of my life . . .

CLARA:
I don't know how I'll live when you're gone!

GIORGIO:
I will always be here.

CLARA:
I don't know how I'll live . . .
Giorgio . . .
Don't leave me . . .

Scene Two

“I Read”

FOSCA [spoken]:
I so enjoyed the novel by Rousseau.

GIORGIO [spoken]:
It's wonderful. It's my favorite, really.

FOSCA:
The character of Julie is a great mystery.

GIORGIO:
You should have kept the book longer to
meditate over.

FOSCA:
I do not read to think.
I do not read to learn.
I do not read to search for truth,
I know the truth,
The truth is hardly what I need.
I read to dream.

I read to live
In other people's lives.

I read about the joys
The world
Dispenses to the fortunate,
And listen for the echoes.

I read to live,
To get away from life!

No, captain, I have no illusions.
I recognize the limits of my dreams.
I know how painful dreams can be
Unless you know
They're merely dreams.

There is a flower
Which offers nectar at the top,
Delicious nectar at the top,
And bitter poison underneath.
The butterfly that stays too long
And drinks too deep
Is doomed to die.

I read to fly,
To skim!
I do not read to swim . . .

I do not dwell on dreams.
I know how soon a dream becomes an
expectation
How can I have expectations?
Look at me.

No, captain, look at me,
Look at me!

I do not hope for what I cannot have!
I do not cling to things I cannot keep!
The more you cling to things,

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The more you love them,
The more the pain you suffer
When they're taken from you . . .

Ah, but if you have no expectations,
Captain,
You can never have a disappointment.

[spoken] I must be mad to chatter on about
myself like this to you. Forgive me . . .

GIORGIO: I assure you—

FOSCA: No, forgive me, please . . .

GIORGIO: But truly, there is nothing to forg—

FOSCA:
Have you explored the town?
It is remote, isn't it?
And provincial, don't you think?

GIORGIO: Yes.

FOSCA:
And everything so brown:
The streets, the fields,
The river even,
Though there are some lovely gardens.

You do like gardens, I hope?

GIORGIO: Yes.

FOSCA:
Good, I can show you gardens.
And then of course there is the castle.
The ruined castle.

GIORGIO: Ah.

FOSCA:
I find it lovely. Probably because it's ruined,
I suppose.

GIORGIO: I didn't know there was a castle.

FOSCA:
I like to take excursions there—
When I'm in better health.
Perhaps you join me—
—And my cousin . . . One day . . .

Scene Three

“Garden Sequence”

Clara—back in Milan—is reading a letter
from Giorgio as Giorgio and Fosca stroll
through the castle garden. Her reading of the
letter overlaps with the dialogue between
Giorgio and Fosca.

GIORGIO [singing the letter he has written to
CLARA]:

All the while as we strolled, Clara—
—I could see you reading my letter.
All the while as we strolled—

—All I saw,
All I knew,
All that I could think of was you.

CLARA [continuing to sing Giorgio's words]:
—All that I could think of was you.

How ridiculous—
—To be looking at her—
—And be thinking of you.

How could anyone—
So unbeautiful—
—Stir my memory of you?

CLARA:
To feel a woman's touch
To touch a woman's hand,
Reminded me how much
I long to be with you,
How long I've been without you near.
And then to hear a woman's voice
To hold a woman's arm
To feel a woman's touch . . .

[Dialogue between GIORGIO and FOSCA]

CLARA [continuing to read GIORGIO's letter]:
Perhaps it was the dress,
The fragrance of her dress,
The light perfume of silk
That's warm from being in the sun,
That mingles with a woman's own perfume,
The fragrance of a woman . . .

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The garden filled with you—
—And all that I could do—
—Because of you,
Was talk of love . . .

[GIORGIO sings to FOSCA as CLARA continues to sing the letter]:

CLARA, GIORGIO:
Love that fills
Every waking moment,
Love that grows
Every single day,
Love that thinks
Everything is pure,
Everything is beautiful,
Everything is possible.
Love that fuses two into one,
Where we think the same thoughts,

GIORGIO: Want the same things.

BOTH: Live as one.

GIORGIO: Feel as one.

BOTH: Breathe as one.

CLARA: Love that shuts away the world,

GIORGIO [overlapping]:
Love that shuts away the world

CLARA: That envelops my soul,

GIORGIO: That envelops your soul,

CLARA: That ennobles my life

GIORGIO: Your life

BOTH:
Love that floods
Every living moment,
Love like—

CLARA: —Ours.

GIORGIO:
Like wine.
An intoxication . . .
A great blindness, if you will.

FOSCA [spoken]:
Yes, I have read about that kind of love. But
you speak as one who lives it. I don't feel
well. I must go home.

GIORGIO: I'm sorry

FOSCA:
You can be incredibly cruel, Captain.

GIORGIO: Cruel?

FOSCA:
To speak to me of love—
To dangle words like “happiness,”
“Beautiful,”
“Superior”—
You can't be that naive.

You with all your books.
Your taste,
Your sensitivity
I thought you'd understand.

The others—well,
They're all alike.
Stupidity is their excuse
As ugliness is mine,
But what is yours?

I've watched you from my window.
I saw you on the day that you arrived.
Perhaps it was the way you walked,
The way you spoke to your men—
I saw that you were different then.
I saw that you were kind and good.
I thought you'd understood.

They hear drums,
You hear music,
As do I.
Don't you see?
We're the same.,
We are different,
You and I are different.
They hear only drums.

All the time I watched from my room,
I would think of coming downstairs,
Thinking we'd meet,
Thinking you'd look at me,
Thinking you'd be repelled by what you saw.

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Don't reject me,
Don't deny me, Captain.
Understand me, be my friend.
They hear drums,
We hear music.
Be my friend . . .

SCENE FIVE

On one side of the stage, Giorgio—back in Milan—passionately embraces Clara. Fosca—at the outpost—reads a letter from Giorgio.

“Trio”

FOSCA [reading Giorgio's letter]:
I am writing to you,
Signora,
Just as soon as I've arrived
With a most unhappy heart.

GIORGIO: God, you are so beautiful—

FOSCA: I do not wish to cause you pain—

GIORGIO: As I remember every night—

FOSCA: So please consider what I say—

GIORGIO: Clear and beautiful—

FOSCA: —With calm.

GIORGIO:
—Every night, every day, every part of
you. . .

FOSCA: My heart—

CLARA: You feel so good—

FOSCA: My heart belongs—

CLARA: As if you'd never been away—

FOSCA:
My heart belongs to someone else.

CLARA:
Your breath so warm. your touch so sure—

GIORGIO: Your skin so delicate . . .

CLARA: Your arms so strong . . .

FOSCA:
I am in love,
Hopelessly in love—
Hopelessly in love,
And am loved hopelessly in turn,
Signora.

GIORGIO, CLARA:
All this happiness—

FOSCA: You and I—

GIORGIO, CLARA:
—Being here with you in the dark.

FOSCA: —Were not meant for each other.

GIORGIO, CLARA: So much happiness—

FOSCA:
If I seemed to imply
Something more—

GIORGIO, CLARA:
Even more than what I felt before!

FOSCA: —I apologize.

GIORGIO, CLARA:
To feel your touch again—

FOSCA:
But since we're forced to be together—

GIORGIO, CLARA:
—When so much time has passed—

FOSCA: Let us try to face the fact.

GIORGIO, CLARA:
To dream of you and then
To be with you again
And have some time at last . . .

FOSCA:
Let us both behave with tact.

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GIORGIO, CLARA:
How long were we apart—

FOSCA: If this letter seems cold-hearted—

GIORGIO, CLARA:
—A month, a week, a day?

FOSCA:
—It conceals my own distress.
Nonetheless—

GIORGIO, CLARA:
To feel your touch again . . .

FOSCA:
—We must end what never started.

GIORGIO, CLARA: You've never been away.

FOSCA: You must recognize—

CLARA: Still, I've missed you—

FOSCA: —There is nothing—

GIORGIO: Hush.

FOSCA: —Between us.

CLARA: —So much.

FOSCA: Nothing . . .

GIORGIO:
Shhh.
I'm here now.

FOSCA: Nothing, nothing . . .

CLARA: Welcome home . . .

SCENE SEVEN

At Fosca's request, Giorgio spends the night in her bedroom, just sitting on the bed. When he prepares to leave the next morning, Fosca asks him to write a letter that she will dictate to him. He agrees.

“I Wish I Could Forget You”

FOSCA:
My dearest Fosca . . .

I wish I could forget you.
Erase you from my mind.
But ever since I met you,
I find
I cannot leave the thought of you behind.

That doesn't mean I love you . . .
I wish that I could love you . . .

I know that I've upset you.
I know I've been unkind.
I wanted you to vanish from sight,
But now I see you in a different light.
And though I cannot love you,
I wish that I could love you.

For now I'm seeing love
Like none I've ever known.
A love as pure as breath,
As permanent as death.
Implacable as stone.

A love that like a knife
Has cut into a life
I wanted left alone.
A love I may regret,
But one I can't forget.

I don't know how I let you
So far inside my mind,
But there you are and there you will stay.
How could I ever wish you away?
I see now I was blind.
And should you die tomorrow,
Another thing I see:
Your love will live in me.

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Scene Eight

A flashback. Colonel Ricci (Fosca's cousin) tells Giorgio of Fosca's past. At the same time, on the other side of the stage, Fosca writes a letter to Giorgio. Together they describe a sad sequence of events that helps explain Tosca's illness.

Scene Nine

Giorgio reads a letter from Clara.

“Sunrise Letter”

CLARA:
Giorgio, I stand here
Staring at the sunrise,
Thinking how we've never seen a sunrise
together,

Thinking that the sunrise
Only means another day
Without you,
And thinking:

Can our love survive
So much separation,
Keep itself alive,
Much less thrive?

If only you were here,
If I could feel your touch,
I wouldn't have such fear.
If only we had more than letters
Holding us together,
If we just could hold each other now,
The sunrise then could be
A thing that I could see
And merely think, “How beautiful . . .”

CLARA, GIORGIO:
Giorgio,
I now sit
Staring at the mirror—
You may not believe it, but I swear
As I stare,
There it is,

Plain as day:
A gray hair,

GIORGIO:
Of which I was unaware,
Which is more than I can bear,
Which I'm ripping out right now
And am sending on to you
As a milestone of my age,
As a turning of the page . . .

Perhaps when next we meet,
I'll be a sorry sight,
You won't know who I am,
My hair completely white,
My face
A mass of wrinkles.
What will you feel then,
My Giorgio?
Time is now our enemy . . .

[Fosca enters unsteadily, and forces Giorgio to have a conversation. She insists on a kiss. When he refuses, she grabs his hand and starts kissing it. He pulls away.]

“Is This What You Call Love?”

GIORGIO:
Is this what you call love?
This endless and insatiable
Smothering
Pursuit of me.
You think that this is love?

I'm sorry that you're lonely,
I'm sorry that you want me as you do.
I'm sorry that I fail to feel
The way you want me to feel.

I'm sorry that you're ill,
I'm sorry you're in pain.
I'm sorry that you aren't beautiful.

But yes, I wish you'd go away
And leave me alone!

Everywhere I turn,
There you are.
This is not love,
But some kind of obsession.

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Will you never learn
When too far is too far,
Have you no concern
For what / feel,
What / want?

Love is what you earn
And return
When you care for another
So much that the other's
Set free.
Don't you see?
Can't you understand?

Love's not a constant demand,
It's a gift you bestow.
Love isn't sudden surrender,
It's tender and slow.
It must grow.

Yet everywhere I go,
You appear,
Or I know
You are near.
This is not love,
Just a need for possession.

Call it what you will,
This is not love,
This is a reverse,
Like a curse,
Something out of control
I've begun to fear
For my soul . . .

Scene Eleven

Giorgio leaves for Milan. Fosca follows him to the train. He rebukes her. She accuses him of heeding only what he sees: if she were beautiful, he would feel differently.

“Loving You”

GIORGIO [spoken]:
No! Your appearance is no excuse for the way you behave. My feelings towards you are a result of your relentlessness,

your constant selfishness and insensitivity.

FOSCA:
I'm sorry. No one has ever taught me how to love. I know I feel too much. I often don't know what to do with my feelings. You understand that, Giorgio. Don't you?

GIORGIO:
Fosca, you have to face the truth. Please. You have to give me up.

FOSCA [sings]:
Loving you
Is not a choice,
It's who I am.

Loving you
Is not a choice
And not much reason
To rejoice,
But it gives me purpose,
Gives me voice,
To say to the world:

This is why I live.
You are why I live.

Loving you
Is why I do
The things I do.
Loving you
Is not in my
Control.
But loving you,
I have a goal
For what's left of my life . . .

I will live,
And I would die
For you.

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Scene Twelve

In Milan, Clara and Giorgio sit on a bench near the train station.

“Milan”

CLARA:
Giorgio,
I didn't tell you in my letter
Something even better,
A surprise here at home:
In a week my husband goes to Rome.
It's the first time he's away,
He'll be gone at least a day,
Maybe two or even three.

I can visit you at night,
We'll be lighted by the moon,
Not a shuttered afternoon.
Just think of having time
That we can call our own.
Together and alone.
Perhaps we'll take a drive
Into the country,
And perhaps at last
We'll share a sunrise.
Wouldn't that be beautiful—?

[Giorgio tells Clara that he is returning to the post rather than take a forty-day leave. He assures Clara that he loves her but that Fosca needs him more.]

Scene Thirteen

During a Christmas Eve party at the post, Giorgio reads a letter from Clara.

“Farewell Letter”

CLARA:
Giorgio . . .

I am writing to you,
My angel,
Though not long since you've been gone,
With a most unhappy heart.

Because, in truth, as time goes on,
I think of nothing else but you—
And us.

Oh, my love, my sweet,
You've changed,
I've watched you change.
You're not the man I thought I knew.

At times, these past few days together,
I would wonder whether
You were here,
Really here with me.

I thought, was I naive
To believe
We'd continue year by year?
Is it over forever?

[spoken]
It seems to me the answer rests with you.
Yes, I have obligations at home, but my heart
is yours. When my son is older, when he
goes off to school, there is the chance for us
to be together. I will make the sacrifice you
ask of me then. Please understand why I
can't now. Will you wait for me, Giorgio? I
have to know. We both have to know.

[music resumes]

GIORGIO: Just another love story.

CLARA: No one is to blame.

GIORGIO: A temporary love story.

CLARA: But it needn't end the same.

GIORGIO: I thought that we had more.

CLARA: We had more—

GIORGIO: We had something more—

BOTH: —Than any other love story.

CLARA: All that happiness—

GIORGIO:
Is this what you call love?

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CLARA:—We had then—

GIORGIO:
This logical and sensible
Practical arrangement—

CLARA:
We can have that happiness—

GIORGIO:—This foregone conclusion—

CLARA: —Once again!

GIORGIO: —You think that this is love?

Love isn't so convenient.
Love isn't something scheduled in advance,
Not something guaranteed
You need
For fear it may pass you by.
You have to take a chance,
You can't just try it out.
What's love unless it's unconditional?

Love doesn't give a damn about tomorrow,
And neither do I!

CLARA: All that happiness—

GIORGIO: It was fine.

CLARA: —In the past—

GIORGIO: I was yours, you were mine.

CLARA:
That was not just happiness,
Love was in that happiness,
That's why it will last.

GIORGIO: Love is more, I want more.

BOTH: I thought I knew what love was—

CLARA:
I didn't know that love was a complication.

GIORGIO:
I do know that it's not a negotiation.

CLARA: We'll take it in our stride.

GIORGIO: What we had—

CLARA: You decide.

GIORGIO: —Wasn't bad.

CLARA:
We could have everything.
I want you more than anything.

GIORGIO: How sad—

CLARA:
To wait is nothing.
We're young and time is nothing.

GIORGIO:
—That what we have is nothing . . .

CLARA: Nothing . . .

BOTH: Nothing . . .

Scene Fourteen

Giorgio visits Fosca in her bedroom.

“No One Has Ever Loved Me”

GIORGIO:
No one has ever loved me
As deeply as you.
No one has truly loved me
As you have, Fosca.

Love without reason,
Love without mercy,
Love without pride or shame.
Love unconcerned
With being returned—
No wisdom, no judgment,
No caution, no blame.

No one has ever known me
As clearly as you.
No one has ever shown me
What love could be like until now:

Not pretty or safe or easy,
But more than I ever knew.
Love within reason—that isn't love.
And I've learned that from you . . .

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Scene Sixteen

“Finale” [excerpt]

[Giorgio reads a letter from Fosca, written just before her death.]

GIORGIO [spoken]:
My dearest Giorgio. The end is near. The time has come for me to surrender life gracefully. These past two days since you have left, since we were together, have been a revelation.

[sings]
Now at last
I see what comes
From feeling loved.
Strange, how merely
Feeling loved,
You see things clearly.

FOSCA's voice joins GIORGIO's:
Things I feared,
Like the world itself,
I now love dearly.

I want to live.
Now I want to live—

FOSCA:
—Just from being loved.
All that pain
I nursed inside
For all those years . . .

GIORGIO:
All that vain
And bitter self-concern . . .

BOTH:
All those tears
And all that pride
Have vanished into air . . .

FOSCA: I don't want to leave.

GIORGIO: Now that I am loved—

FOSCA: —I don't want to leave.

BOTH:
Everywhere I turn,
You are there.

FOSCA:
Everywhere I look,
Things are different.

BOTH:
Everything seems right
Everything seems possible,
Every moment bursts with feeling.

Why is love so easy to give
And so hard to receive?

FOSCA:
But though I want to live,
I now can leave
With what I never knew:
I'm someone to be loved.

GIORGIO: I'm someone to be loved.

FOSCA: And that I learned from you.

[The company becomes visible behind them]

ALL:
I don't know how I let you
So far inside my mind.
But there you are, and there you will stay
How could I ever wish you away?
I see now I was blind.

FOSCA:
And should you die tomorrow,
Another thing I see:

GIORGIO: Your love will live in me . . .

FOSCA: Your love will live in me . . .

GIORGIO, FOSCA, COMPANY
Your love will live in me . . .

GIORGIO: Your love will live in me . . .

FOSCA: Your love will live in me . . .

GIORGIO: Your love will live in me . . .